

# Riverdale Community Affinity Groups Artifact

**Summary:** The following data was collected through three Community Affinity Group Meetings held in the fall of 2022. Each meeting was held for one of our historically marginalized groups. Our three groups are:

- Caregivers of Students of Color and Caregivers of Color
- Caregivers of LGBTQIA2S+ Students and Caregivers who are LGBTQIA2S+
- Caregivers of Neurodiverse Students, Caregivers of Students with Disabilities, and Caregivers who are Neurodiverse or have a Disability

These were previously established groups that have met with the Director of Equity and Inclusion twice a year for the past two years. This structure was chosen because we have already established these as safe spaces for community members to share their needs and have used the input to guide our strategic plan.

Conversation was structured around a series of questions taken from the [ODE Community Engagement Survey Item Bank](#).

We used the following [Community Agreements](#).

## Caregivers of Students of Color and Caregivers of Color

This community is comprised of caregivers, parents, and guardians of students who are Black, Brown, Indigenous, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern/North African, Latine/Latina/Latino, multiracial or biracial. This community includes caregivers, parents and guardians who are in any of the above categories.

### School Culture and Climate

- Strengths:
  - Staff in both schools works hard to make students feel welcome
  - Students feel seen and cared for by peers overall
  - The increase in staff of color at the grade school makes students feel seen at school
  - There are more events acknowledging students and families of color
  - There is more curriculum in the classroom and more content that features people of color
  - Overall, positive changes have been happening around culture and climate
  - Great mental health support at the high school
- Areas for Growth:

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- While there is more curriculum around people of color, is it often only focused on oppression and not celebration
- Sometimes teachers ask questions or make comments without thinking about the students of color in the room and the impact it may have on them
- Students of color often feel like they stand out at school
- In the past, there was little or no celebration of different cultures in schools and this was hurtful, families felt like they had to make their children feel proud of who they are at home
- Students with accents or who speak a different language at home have felt they cannot speak their language at school or they get made fun of
- There is a need for more staff of color at the high school
- At times, there are microaggressions from other students about students of color only getting into good colleges because of their racial identity

### **Communication and Engagement with School**

- Strengths:
  - Administrative staff in both buildings are great communicators and deal with problems quickly and effectively while keeping caregivers involved
  - There is lots of information in newsletters
  - Overall, it feels like staff listen to and communicate well with families
  - Big improvement in communication compared to the past
- Areas for Growth:
  - Parents who did not grow up in the US do not always feel that they are heard by teachers, they feel as if they are treated as if they “don’t get it”
  - Wishes that there was more opportunities for families with students in conflict to sit down together in a way that was facilitated by the school
  - Sometimes, families feel their concerns are dismissed

### **Pedagogical Effectiveness and School Environment**

- Strengths:
  - Most teachers have high expectations
  - Students feel safe at school
  - Students feel like there are adults they can talk to when they need support
- Areas for Growth:

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- There is concern that some grade school staff give students too much leeway and don't have high academic expectations
- Sometimes the noise level in classes is loud
- Wishing there were more out of school activities similar to other high schools, as well as drama and music

### Caregivers of LGBTQIA2S+ Students and Caregivers who are LGBTQIA2S+

This community is comprised of caregivers, parents and guardians of students who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit, Aromantic, Pansexual, Non-binary or have their own label/non-label in regards to their gender or sexual identity. This community includes caregivers, parents and guardians who are in any of the above categories.

### School Culture and Climate

- Strengths:
  - The libraries and classrooms have a lot of texts that feature LGBTQ+ characters and students feel like they have choice to read what they want
  - There are conversations happening at the grade school about all types of families that include LGBTQ+ families, single parent families, etc..
  - There is an active GSA at the high school, one is starting back up at the middle school
  - In the classrooms, teachers are not organizing kids by gender in terms of lining them up/organizing them into groups and that's positive
  - Students feel like there are adults that support them and who they can go to if they are struggling or need someone to talk to
  - It feels safer for students to explore and talk about sexual orientation a gender identity than it did previously in Riverdale
  - Some students feel safer at school than at home in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity
- Areas for Growth:
  - Some students talk about being gay as being lesser at the grade school
  - At the high school, there are some students who use the word "gay" in a derogatory manner
  - LGBTQ+ families do not always feel included in community events, especially those held by the PTC or any events that are gendered such as "moms meetup"

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- The language used for some PTC events is not inclusive of all types of families
- LGBTQ+ families feel like they stand out here, both those in and out of district
- At the middle school, students do not feel safe being open in their sexual orientation

### **Communication and Engagement with School**

- Strengths:
  - Families have noticed that district-wide the term “caregiver” had replaced “parent” and this is appreciated
  - Pronouns are now listed on staff emails and documents and this is appreciated

### **Student/Teacher Relationships**

- Strengths:
  - It feels like students are overall able to share their identity and feel affirmed by staff
  - LGBTQ+ parents feel welcome by staff and like they are using inclusive and respectful language

### **School-sponsored Activities**

- Areas for Growth:
  - In the wider Riverdale community gender divisions still exist, especially around birthday parties that are “all girls” or “all boys” being invited. This is not inclusive to gender expansive students and families.
  - The “Stag” party by PTC and other gendered activities are being promoted by PTC that make LGBTQ+ families feel like they do not belong here

### **Caregivers of Neurodiverse Students, Caregivers of Students with Disabilities, and Caregivers who are Neurodiverse or have a Disability**

This community is comprised of caregivers, parents and guardians of students who have Dyslexia, Autism, ADHD, ADD, Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Auditory Processing Disorder, ED, specific learning disabilities, physical disabilities, any other

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categories under [IDEA](#) or a combination of these. This community includes caregivers, parents and guardians who are in any of the above categories.

## School Culture and Climate

- Strengths:
  - There is full academic inclusion at the high school
  - There are peers at the high school who enjoy working with and supporting students with IEPs
  - Overall, culture and climate is great in terms of feeling included at the high school
  - The no-cut sports make students feel like they can join in and be part of a group, this has been great socially
  
- Areas for Growth:
  - While there is academic inclusion at the high school, there is only some social inclusion, and it is mostly only during the school day, not outside of school
  - Aides being glued to a student's side makes it hard for them to fit in
  - At the middle school and high school, there is a need for structured social activities for students who feel isolated or do not know how to join in
  - The pull-out model at the grade school is not aligned with best practices and makes students feel bad and different from their peers
  - The marketing around Riverdale as a "private school equivalent" does not feel inclusionary
  - There is a narrative among parents, especially at the GS, that we don't want "those kids" (neurodiverse/IDEA) here and that they are taking up too much class time
  - There should be more celebration at the high school of student achievement outside of just sports and academics

## Communication and Engagement with School

- Strengths:
  - Most teachers at the high school do a good job of letting families know when assignments are missing or students are struggling
  - Administration and counselors are great and prompt communicators with families

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- Areas for Growth:
  - There are a few teachers at the high school who do not reply to email and do not post the syllabus as required by administration

### Pedagogical Effectiveness and School Environment

- Strengths:
  - The fact that students can resubmit work is great and helpful for all kids
  - Assignments and class info at the middle school and high school is in Google Classroom and that is very helpful to students and caregivers
- Areas for Growth:
  - It feels like teachers in both schools do not understand ADHD and how to support students with ADHD
  - Students who are expected to work on assignment in class often fall behind due to pacing or lack of support and then have to do or redo their whole assignment at home
  - More support is needed for students going to alternative education programs or for students who are interested in options such as community college or associate college programs
  - More normalizing of alternative paths post high school - perhaps a college night for neurodiverse students
  - The pull-out model at the grade school has been shown to be ineffective and is not best practice
  - There is an expectation that students in this very high performing district have skills to ask for help or say what they need but many are not able to - we need more executive functioning support overall
  - More training needed about Universally Designed Instruction, very traditional teaching at the middle school - teachers lecture and students sit alone in desk - this is not effective teaching
  - There is a need for ELA curriculum at grade school beyond just the new adoption - the current curriculum is not state approved
  - For neurodiverse students, the grade school makes you work really hard to get support for your students
  - Culture around grades and teaching is not differentiated at the grade school, parents have to be a big advocate for student needs in order to have their accommodations met

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- Special Education instruction at the grade school is not up to contemporary best practices
- At the high school, grades and grading seem inconsistent across classes and teachers