

ISD Student Equity Council — June 2021 Monthly Report

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Students of Color

The Students of Color Affinity Group has officially met 5 times this month with 19 active members. We have dedicated work to three project groups: Racial Awareness Art, Student Interviews, and Teacher Development. The Affinity Leads agreed the project groups would be put on pause for a week or two this month due to end-of-year finals and last minute late work that many of our members were heavily involved in. Therefore, we did not accomplish as much this month and used June as a bit of breather before we welcomed our new Summer Term members and jumped back into projects with new vigor.

The Racial Awareness Art Project has been continuing to work on our goals of uplifting artists of color, from ISD students to all underappreciated artists of color in history. This month we took a brief hiatus for end-of-school finals before continuing into the zine-making process. We looked into the process of making physical zines as we hope to feature student art in a zine soon. We found zines made by people of color to use as inspiration and thought of possible prompt ideas and organization/formatting styles. This month we are going to be laying out our artistic vision for the zine as a group and making more concrete steps towards how we want to go about production and distribution.

The Student Interviews Project was created to share the stories of ISD students who have experienced racism in the school district to shed light on the urgency and reality of the racism prevalent here. After finishing the planning of the interviews, we have moved on to brainstorming how we can outreach to the community to find interviewees.

The Development for Teachers in Racist Situations Project aims to address the lack of standards and expectations of teacher response when something racist happens in their classroom. We are putting together a presentation or website that teachers can reference so they can appropriately address racist situations, like when the N-word comes up in literature or when someone says something racially insensitive in class. This month we have continued to put our completed research into the Google Slides. This summer will be planning on how to present this to the teachers in the district in the fall.

The BIPOC Vaccine Awareness Project sadly has been canceled due to the fact that nearly all of our members in that project group were seniors or had to leave the council for another reason. The City of Issaquah already has a wonderful initiative for expanding vaccine administration to the diverse Issaquah community that although we originally had plans to

collaborate and branch off of, we have decided it be best if we simply helped them with any necessary tasks in their own project because of how stretched thin our members already were.

LGBTQ+

The LGBTQ+ Affinity Group has officially met 4 times this month with 16 active members. We have dedicated work to four project groups, and two affinity projects: Amenities and Clothing, Curriculum, Books, Names and Pronouns, and the Organizational Project, and the LGBTQ+ Q&A Project.

The Amenities and Clothing group has been trying to revive itself. Due to the recent loss of members, the group has fallen short and plans to seriously pick up the pace over the Summer. There are a variety of important projects our group had to put on the back burner in the Fall/Winter term due to COVID and we plan on bringing them back this Summer in preparation for the Fall. We will continue to push for more accessible gender neutral bathrooms in schools, menstrual products in all bathrooms, and gender neutral bathroom passes. In the coming months we want to re-explore the idea of a gender neutral clothing drive and also begin compiling a list of areas where people can purchase gender neutral clothing, safe spaces for people transitioning, where to find contraceptives and free or low-cost menstrual products, etc. We will be adding these resources to our resources document as well as putting them on a separate document with more elaborated information.

The Books group has continued to solidify the initial project of finding and implementing books across the district which are LGBTQ+ inclusive. The books group is a sub-branch of the Council-wide book drive project, and continues to work under this group as well. Our group also presented to the SHS Equity team back at the end of May, and we hope this helps to make advancements in our project. There may be a possibility of looking to present to other school's equity teams but we will have to look into that. Similar to last month, we will be continuing our research on authors and books to solidify the compiled list of books we have.

The Curriculum group maintains its goal of implementing change within the ISD curriculum to become more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community. Since our group works under/in correlation to the Council-wide curriculum group, we are still waiting for advancements as a Council-wide group. About a month and a half ago we sent an email to curriculum auditors to request to meet to discuss next steps, but we have yet to receive a response. Due to

complications, we were not yet able to follow up but we will be doing so this week at our Council-wide curriculum meeting. In the meantime, we have compiled a list of specific and general questions for curriculum auditors to help better our plans for implementation.

The Names and Pronouns group has been at a halt for a few weeks to prepare for the Summer Term Onboarding and to help ease the transition of our new project lead. As mentioned in the May monthly report, we have many plans for this summer and we are very excited to get started with our new Summer Term members. To refresh, most of our planning and setting up will take place during the summer in preparation for the Fall. Projects include a physical version of the Pronouns Basics Guide, a Pronouns 2.0 Guide, pronouns stickers for ASB cards, preferred name option for yearbooks, and more encouragement of pronoun normalization within schools (this is the one which involves some heavy staff participation). A lot of our projects are funding based so we must wait a bit for the Council funding system to be solidified, but until then we will continue to move forward with non-funding based projects within the coming weeks.

The LGBTQ+ Q&A Project has completed the form for members of the ISD community to fill out. We have covered the basics of this project, our goal being an open resource for helping people, whether they be students, staff, parents, or community members, better understand things about the LGBTQ+ community and ask any questions that we can answer. The basis of this project was to give an anonymous source for asking questions that may be difficult to ask and to provide helpful answers. We have our purpose and our form, but our next steps involve further discussion on the mode of answering these questions (social media, website, etc?) and how to outreach beyond social media. We want as many ISD community members as possible to have access to this form to ask any questions. Also, there is discussion around broader questions which may not have a simple answer being responded to with an article under our Council's newly formed Public Relations group. As one can see, this project has good basics and purpose; we just have a lot of finer details to work out in order for the project to succeed.

The Organizational Project has been at a halt for a couple months now but has been recently picked up again by the project co-leads. As a refresher, the purpose of this project was to find and reach out to outside LGBTQ+ groups, organizations, and people to partner with for projects and/or funding. Currently we have a list of seven likely partnership points, and plan on discussing the finer details within the coming weeks. Since this project has not been discussed with new Summer Term members on a deeper basis yet, we will be doing so and going over any

other additional ideas. The co-leads also discussed how another purpose of this project was to help find and provide aid and more safe spaces to LGBTQ+ youth in the ISD. Due to this, we are also pondering the possibility of loosely partnering with the LI/H Safe Space Project, but this is a very vaguely outlined idea which must have further discussion with the group.

Low-Income & Homelessness

The Low-Income and Homelessness Affinity Group has officially met 3 times this month with 7 active members. We have dedicated work to three project groups: The Safe Space Project, the Resource Project, and the Outreach Project.

The Safe Space Project is working to create two physical day-centers and safe havens for youth, as well as initiating a Youth Home and a local Youth Shelter to best serve the demographic we are advocating for, in addition to bridging the equitable barriers that low-income and physically displaced youth experience. In the past month, we have begun working on a case statement for our safe place, to express to the community why this is a necessity. In addition to that, we have worked on creating a response form to create safe space testimonials on why a space like this would benefit students. For our youth home, we have done outreach for our youth interview form, and are now reviewing the responses and setting up interviews, in order to truly get an insight on what our community needs.

The Resources Project is working on distributing printed pamphlets to schools and the surrounding community, containing low-cost or free resources for mental health, physical health, housing stability, etc. that are otherwise difficult for low-income and physically displaced students to gain access to. We are currently in communication with our district advisors to get these pamphlets approved for distribution in schools. In the meantime, we have been delivering them to other places in the community like the Garage, and we plan to continue distributing to places such as Friends of Youth, Town and Country Market, Issaquah Food Bank, etc. in the near future.

The Outreach Project focuses on reaching out to our target demographic of low-income and physically displaced students to ensure that we have students in this affinity group who identify as the group we are advocating for. To start off, we have been working on updating our website to show more accurate descriptions of our project groups, which would better equip students who want to join our affinity group. We have also been working on reaching out to our

district advisors to learn about laptop availability during the summer and how that would impact low income and physically displaced students. To ensure that these students can apply to the Council without having access to the internet or a laptop, we have created paper versions of the application. We are currently outreaching to places around the community for approval to set these up.

Mental Health & Illness

The Mental Health & Illness Affinity Group has officially met 4 times this month with 16 active members. We are continuing work on our five project groups: Mental Health Check-In Form, Destigmatizing Mental Illness, 504 Plan Resources, Calming Room, and Teacher Guide.

The Mental Health Check-in Form Project is working on implementing a Google form check-in accessible on every teacher's Canvas page where students can request accommodations like extensions, extra meetings, alternatives, etc. from their teachers if mental-health-related issues are interfering with the students' work. The group completed a follow-up meeting with the Building Equity Leads from Liberty High School, and after discussion we settled on a "compromise", considering the teacher perspective; many staff are resistant to the idea of a separate check-in form for mental health and maintaining it and since the form cannot be mandated, it is difficult to hold staff accountable when they're unwilling to implement the check-in. Email responses, however, are required by the CBA, so we will open an option to teachers to provide their students with an email template on their teaching pages instead. This alternative will still alleviate some stress around communicating about mental health with sentence stems and prompts to guide students through their email, and by providing the template at all, teachers are acknowledging students may need accommodations for their mental health and are open to that event.

The Destigmatizing Mental Illness Project is working on destigmatizing and creating awareness for mental illness through social media, creating infographics and shareable content in order to achieve our goal of improving outreach on the @isd.equity Instagram on mental illness in particular. The group is shifting to article writing, reserving only select topics like self-diagnosis and mental illness romanticization for Instagram posts. This is also the curriculum subgroup of the Mental Health & Illness Affinity group, focusing on destigmatizing mental illness by improving the learning approach and representation of these illnesses in the health

curriculum as well. The group started a Health Teaching Presentation for health teachers in the district about language use and other details about verbally executing the health curriculum to preserve a safe, inclusive environment in classrooms where learnings about sensitive, potentially triggering topics take place.

The Calming Room Project is working to create a physical space in high schools within our district for students to go to when they're experiencing mental health anxiety & panic attacks or need to deal with the effects of a depressive episode. The past month's work mostly consisted of asynchronous research about calming rooms implemented in other schools, criteria for implementation in ISD schools, and logistics.

The Teacher Guide Project is working to create a guide accessible for teachers to use in regards to mental health; more specifically the transition to hybrid learning. We work to improve online learning equity and provide a smoother transition into hybrid learning while taking into consideration the equitable issues that it poses and offering solutions to help alleviate them. The teacher guide was finalized and sent to Equity Department staff for approval, however we ran into conflicts with the language governed by the teacher contract. The project will temporarily be on hold while we discuss reaching out to the teacher union about its implementation.

The 504 Plan Resources Project is currently working towards destigmatizing 504 Plans, expanding awareness and accessibility of them, as well as holding teachers accountable for providing accommodations. Following an informative meeting with the Director of Student Interventions (Pam Ridenour) and her assistant Melanie Bonnano, the group is establishing clear, reachable goals and guidelines surrounding 504s in the district. Once established, the group will work on the implementation of specific systems which could work for the district to address the needs of students with 504 accommodations.

Immigrants & Culture

The Immigrants and Culture Affinity Group has officially met 4 times this month with 11 active members. This month has allowed us to further develop our newest projects, which were formulated early in the month: Immigrant History, and the Immigrant Guidebook. We have also continued to work on three project groups: the Cultural Decorations Project, the Cultural Foods Project, and the Counselor project.

The Immigrant History Project was recently formed and is working to educate council members, other ISD students, and the general community about the history of immigration and

how relevant topics impact immigrants in contemporary times. Members have observed that people do not understand the immigration process and why immigrants go through it in the first place; this lack of understanding turns into a lack of compassion and sometimes subtle/uns subtle xenophobia. So, to address this, the group does research, hosts discussions, and writes articles for the council website. This month's topic was Colonialism, and the article is currently being developed.

The Immigrant Guidebook Project was also recently created to address the lack of support immigrants have in their transition--whether it be hard logistics or hidden curricula. The responsibility to assimilate and navigate the school system--as well as help their parents throughout the process--often falls on immigrant children, whether they're first or second generation. To aid in this process, the project group is currently researching relevant resources and compiling a step-by-step navigation of the school district for a guidebook that all new immigrants can review upon arrival into the district. This addresses key topics such as important sites/navigation, course selection, extracurriculars, and cultural differences.

In Cultural Decorations, we continue to anticipate implementation at the return of in-person school by doing online research and posting about cultural holidays through our Equity Council Instagram. The goal in this project is to help students feel more welcome through representation and educate other students on the various cultures of their peers. And while we are maintaining the ideas of the "Cultural Corner" for when schools return to in-person learning, we continue to be focused on education through social media until then. The group is currently doing decorations research and will work on physical implementation soon.

The social media food series, "Cultural Food Fridays," continues as an ongoing project in recognition of food's role in culture. Issaquah School District students are encouraged to send in submissions for recipe features on @isd.equity's Instagram account, anonymous or otherwise, that are then turned into stories and compiled for other students to take inspiration from and bring into their own kitchens.

The Counselor Project, an extension of the Curriculum Project, hopes to elaborate on the vague anti-bullying campaigns at elementary schools with a focus on cultural sensitivity and the immigrant experience, to combat xenophobia from a young age. In this, we are aiming to address the lack of education regarding xenophobia within elementary schools, so obtaining feedback

from auditors and counselors is a part of that. We are anticipating collaboration and feedback soon.

Religious Awareness

The Religious Awareness Affinity Group has officially met 2 times this month with 8 active members. We have dedicated work to three project groups: Social Media, Minority Holiday Awareness, and the Curriculum Project.

The Social Media Project currently has 2 subgroups. The holiday social media project has been able to post about 4 holidays this month: Litha, World Humanist Day, Martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev Sahib, and Fast of Tammuz. Additionally, we have finished adding the majority of summer holidays to the signup sheet (July-September), notified both the social media team & decor lead, and are currently making sure that there is a researcher responsible for each holiday. We have also included a new addition to our research guidelines: having the researcher ask people in the council, or others that they know who might celebrate a certain holiday, about how they celebrate it/how it is usually celebrated. If none of these options are available to the researcher, we have also recommended looking up interview videos from reliable sources. The Destigmatizing subgroup is working on article writing and research, with the intent to debunk common stereotypes in religion. This project has recently transferred project leads, and is currently working on getting back up and running. With our previously brainstormed ideas, we will assign researchers and start working on the articles. We will continue proceeding in an effort to make this information available to all, and to help reduce prejudice towards minorities.

The Minority Holiday Awareness has presented its current suggestions to the equity newsletter. Due to the nature of this project, it will be on pause for the duration of the summer. We will continue this project and look out for our changes to be implemented in the next school year.

The Curriculum Project is still attempting to make changes to the ISD curriculum in order to be more inclusive of minority religions and accurately represent religious history. This project is still waiting for the council wide curriculum group to get a response from curriculum auditors. Once the auditors respond, this project has a list of questions to ask the auditors that was compiled in the council wide group. As soon as action is taken, this project will move forward with its next steps.

Women's Empowerment

The Women's Empowerment Affinity group has officially met 2 times this month with 9 active members. We have dedicated work to two project groups: the Social Media Project and the Sexual Assault Form Project.

The Social Media Project is a branch of the council's social media and branding team that focuses on women's empowerment. This month we have focused on research so that next month we can continue putting out content on the council's instagram as well as a few articles on the website.

The Sexual Assault Form Project focuses on creating a way for students to reach out to staff about sexual assault they've witnessed or experienced. We started on this project just this month, and currently we are in the process of brainstorming what to ask on this form as well as how to make sure that students feel safe using it since sexual assault is an incredibly difficult thing to speak about or report.

Physical and Cognitive Disabilities

The Physical and Cognitive Disabilities Affinity group has officially met 5 times this month with 6 active members. We are currently working on two projects: Staff Empathy and Guide/SEL Lesson.

The Staff Empathy Project is a researched presentation targeted at teachers in the district in general, and it strives to increase empathy and understanding about physical and cognitive disabilities in students while suggesting various simple changes teachers can make in their classrooms to better accommodate students with certain disabilities. The research phase is coming to a close and a presentation staff will be started soon.

The Guide/SEL Lesson Project takes the form of an SEL lesson or a physical/electronic pamphlet with basics about etiquette and language use while interacting with or referring to individuals with disabilities. This project also seeks to increase awareness, understanding, and empathy not only between teachers and students with disabilities but among nondisabled students as well. Research was completed and the presentation is being finalized; last additions need to be made and graphic designing to make it an engaging SEL lesson. The affinity group will begin work on a pamphlet version.

First-Generation Students

The First-Generation Students Affinity group has officially met 4 times this month with 5 active members. We currently don't have any projects up and running yet, but have been doing detailed research and brainstorming regarding intersectional inequities first-generation students face with the college admissions process, as well as while in college. We hope to piece together our research and begin new projects in the first week of July.

Curriculum

The Curriculum council-wide project group did not meet this month.

Mentorship

The Mentorship council-wide project group has officially met 4 times this month with 7 active members. Since VOICE mentorship does not have adequate funds to work with us as of right now, we are shifting our focus towards creating our own mentorship program. We are looking at creating a club structure that will pair highschool age mentors and mentees within ISD. We have continued to maintain our partnerships with UCI Counseling Center Mentoring Program and MENTOR National, and have asked them for help in developing a training program for our mentors. We have also sent out follow up emails to organizations we did not hear back from, and ended up receiving replies from Success Mentoring and Seattle CARES Mentoring. We are in the process of scheduling interviews for both programs and would like to define our relationships with them in July. We also developed a Mentoring Needs Evaluation form that will be distributed to ISD students via social media. This will hopefully give us a better idea of the ways in which ISD students are underserved and under-supported so that we can fine-tune our program to focus on the specific needs of our student body.