

ISD Student Equity Council — July 2021 Monthly Report

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Students of Color

The Students of Color Affinity Group has officially met 4 times this month with 19 active members. We have dedicated work to three project groups: Racial Awareness Art, Student Interviews, and Teacher Development.

The Racial Awareness Art Project works to uplift artists of color from within our school district and from history. In July, we finalized some of the artistic aspects of the zine, more specifically, fonts and color scheme. We prepared for the new website by writing descriptions about our group's articles and zine. Lastly, we began drafting articles to spotlight significant yet underappreciated artists of color and art movements in history. This month we will finish writing short member introductions that we plan to have on the new website to provide a bit of background and explain the significance of this project to each member. We will also focus on researching artists and writing articles to be uploaded on the website.

The Student Interviews Project has continued its outreach efforts and search for more interviewees/interviewers. The goal of this project is to bring to light the experiences of students of color in our district through the form of anonymous interviews. With a solid outreach plan, the group has begun emailing multiple local organizations and clubs to inform them of this project and to request assistance with further outreach. In August, the Student Interviews Project will continue emailing clubs and will begin communicating with our schools' teacher allies. We hope to begin the interview process in August as well.

The Development for Teachers in Racist Situations Project aims to create an informational workshop type event to help educate teachers on how to best combat racism in their classrooms. We continued to create presentations using the research that had been done in previous months. Along with the presentations, we have been drafting scripts that include detailed research to ensure that the teachers have an in-depth and informing experience. This month we will continue transferring research to Google Slides. We will also be giving and receiving feedback within the group to create as high quality presentations as possible.

LGBTQ+

The LGBTQ+ Affinity Group has officially met 3 times this month with 15 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 LGBT-Q&A Project.

The Amenities and Clothing Project has been working primarily asynchronously to complete and gather any and all information for all of our projects. To refresh, we have three projects in process: gender neutral bathroom accessibility, gender neutral clothing drive, and LGBTQ+ resources. The gender neutral bathroom accessibility project is meant to provide students who would feel more comfortable using a gender neutral bathroom a more open option to do so. The current gender neutral bathrooms in schools across the ISD are difficult to access or sometimes only available to teachers, we are still working to implement our solution to this: the alteration of a common area bathroom to be gender neutral. We also have an outlined plan for a gender neutral clothing drive, which sort of goes hand in hand with the LGBTQ+ resources project. It can be difficult to find gender neutral clothing, let alone affordable clothing, so we want to find a way to put on a drive to collect gender neutral clothing so we can donate to LGBTQ+ organizations and places which collect specific clothing. This also has potential to be openly donated to students who would feel more comfortable in gender neutral clothing but cannot afford it. In addition to this, we are currently gathering resources to share with students in the ISD for affordable gender neutral clothing, LGBTQ+ safe spaces, where you can access affordable products such as menstrual products and contraceptives, and other helpful LGBTQ+ resources. Due to our group being smaller, these processes are chugging along, but we plan to really push in August to get these projects rolling on a more official and efficient level.

The Books Project works to implement books with healthy LGBTQ+ representation across the district. In July, we created an August reading challenge made up of weekly LGBTQ+ books, aimed at encouraging students in our community to read LGBTQ+ literature with a variety of identities. The list is potentially a resource which our group will reach out to high school staff about including in their classrooms in the future. Additionally, we decided on two new projects, the first being the LGBTQ+ Author Speaking Event Project, which has the goal of reaching out to queer authors willing to speak to our council and students of our district about their written works as well as their experiences as a LGBTQ+ person writing books for youth. Such will give an opportunity to give insight into dimensions of queer literature our group has yet to explore, as well as potentially build connections between our council and authors for the future. Our second project in progress is our LGBTQ+ Presentation for High and Middle

Schools, which aims to inform staff-- specifically those involved with literature in their classrooms and libraries--about the importance of including queer media in their lesson plans, and being accessible in their classrooms. The presentation has been previously presented at a Building Equity meeting at Skyline last spring, but our group plans to expand a modified version to the rest of the high schools as well as the middle schools.

The Curriculum Project has been on hold for quite a long time due to the setbacks to curriculum on a Council-wide level. We plan to take a branch-out route to our project if our plan with curriculum auditors does not go as smoothly as we hope. Currently we are planning out optional LGBTQ+ lessons, implementations, and topics to provide to teachers across the ISD. We are also branching out to find ways students can initiate LGBTQ+ education within their classes. To point out an example of a specific we are working on, we are creating a guide to provide for health teachers to understand and teach a more accurate representation of LGBTQ+ health, sexual health, healthcare, medical transition, gender vs. sex, etc. The goal of this is to make the required health course accurate and helpful to LGBTQ+ youth just as much it is to cisnet youth.

The Names and Pronouns Project works to create and spread educational resources about different pronouns and names for students, teachers, and any other group in our district. This month, we have dedicated most of our time to planning how to move forward on different project ideas. Additionally, we have mainly worked asynchronously on a list describing the purpose and statutes of project ideas and which projects we could clearly advance on. The projects we are hopeful we can make progress on are the Yearbook Preferred Names & Pronouns project and the Normalization via Teachers project, along with expanding distribution of our Pronouns Guide that we finished earlier this year. The Yearbook Preferred Names & Pronouns project works to create a safe space for students by including their preferred name and pronouns in the yearbook. The option to include a student's preferred name in the yearbook was implemented at Issaquah High School last year and we are working on how to spread this option into other schools in our district. The second project, our Normalization via Teachers project, works to normalize the use of pronouns in a classroom setting. Some ideas we've thrown together on implementing this project is creating a presentation for teachers to use and look through at staff training and working on encouraging teachers to include pronouns in introductions during "get to know you" activities. Although the progress on projects specifically has been slow this month, as we get

closer to the beginning of the next school year, we are optimistic that we will once again begin making headway with these projects.

The LGBT-Q&A Project works to give parents, students, and teachers a resource to ask any LGBTQ+ related questions anonymously through a Google Form and have them answered through research and experience. This month, we have completed the Google Form and announced the resource on the ISD Equity Instagram page. Despite the form being posted on the page and linked on the account, we have not received any questions in the form. Due to this, our next steps will be outreach related to brainstorming how we can reach people to allow this project to reach its full potential. Once we make progress on receiving questions in the form, we hope to find a way to organize the questions on some sort of master document.

The Organizational Project aims to build connections between LGBTQ+ organizations for future projects and collaborations between our affinity group. We have been working on researching and creating a list of organizations to outreach to, as well as preparing email drafts to send out in the next month. The group is currently eyeing the possibility of attending the UW's Q-Center meetings in order to build connections with local LGBTQ+ college groups and programs. Additionally, we are beginning to create a plan for a new collaborative project with Low-Income & Homelessness' Safe Space Project, which will aim to provide safe spaces for low-income and physically displaced LGBTQ+ youth.

Low-Income & Homelessness

The Low-Income and Homelessness Affinity Group has officially met 4 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 has been focusing efforts on the Youth Home Project this month. We sent out our response form to youth and adults who have experienced homelessness and received 15 answers total. We are working to use these responses to shape the way our project will look going forward, and sharing these thoughts with the rest of our Youth Home Council.

The Resources Project centers around research where we have compiled a list of low-cost or free resources to make accessible to youth. We have been distributing pamphlets with these resources around the community. The group is also working on bringing the lack of resources on

the ISD website to attention, as well as offering our own research as a possible starting point to bring more accessible resources for economically marginalized students.

The Outreach Project concentrates 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. This group has been working on presentations to other Council members to encourage more people to join, especially as low income and homelessness intersects with many other affinity groups.

Mental Health & Illness

The Mental Health & Illness Affinity Group has officially met 4 times this month with 13 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 email template alternative suggested at our follow-up meeting with Mrs. Yuen and Ms. King has been mostly finalized and ready to propose as part of the project! Our focus shifted to outreach to allies in the district and ways to garner support for the check-in form before we vouch for this from high school administrations. We finalized emails to counseling department staff, teachers who have been vocal about equity to some lengths, and a follow-up to Building Equity Leads from Skyline and Issaquah High, who have not responded to our initial emails. We have been waiting until August, when we believe most teachers will be checking their inboxes again, to execute these outreach efforts.

The Destigmatizing Mental Illness Project is working on destigmatizing and creating awareness for mental illness by creating shareable content on the @isd.equity Instagram as well as contributing journalistic articles to our upcoming public relations initiative, which will be published on the Council's website. This group also focuses on curriculum reform, focusing on destigmatizing mental illness by improving the learning approach to and representation of these illnesses in the health curriculum. We have finalized our Health Teaching Presentation, to be delivered to various health teachers throughout ISD schools, about the significance of verbally

executing the health education in a way that preserves a safe, inclusive environment in classrooms. The group will begin outreach efforts next month to schedule this presentation!

The Calming Room Project aims to create a physical space in schools for students to go to when they experience mental health-related conflicts that interfere with their engagement in the classroom. In July the group completed research about other schools' experiences with calming rooms. We created a [form](#) to receive student input about their thoughts on the calming room and how they envision the calming room functioning. This includes the logistics such as location, staff involvement, and time limits. In August we will write a proposal to be sent to teacher allies throughout our district to inform them of our project and to request feedback and support. Once student feedback has been received, we'll finalize certain aspects of the calming room and brainstorm possible ways to bring this idea to district & school administrators.

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 working on brainstorming, planning, and executing new ideas regarding 504 plans with the new information provided by Pam Ridenour. In our meeting with Ms. Ridenour, we learned about the ISD's involvement with 504 plans, in-depth information, and the ISD's shortcomings in delegating and supporting students with 504 plans. We have just finished the brainstorming, and planning phases, and we are soon going to begin selecting and executing the ideas that hold the most value and importance. This summer's goal is to provide the resources and base to fully accomplish our plans during the fall formed by the meeting with Ms. Ridenour.

Immigrants & Culture

The Immigrants and Culture Affinity Group has officially met 3 times this month with 11 active members. We are continuing work on our five project groups: Immigrant History, the Immigrant Guidebook, Cultural Decorations Project, Food Awareness, and the Counselor project.

The Immigrant History Project 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. We believe that a lack of understanding around the immigration process and reasons for immigration is what turns into a lack of compassion and xenophobia. So, to address this, the project group does research, hosts discussions, and writes articles for the council website. A colonialism article is currently being developed, and will be released on our website within the next month as the council undergoes its rehaul.

The Immigrant Guidebook Project seeks 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 are 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. We are currently writing about 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. We are hoping to continue work on our “Cultural Corner” for the 2021-2022 school year as we continue to work on education through social media. The group is starting to meet again to discuss funding and pitching this throughout the district.

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 have been on hold while waiting for this feedback.

Religious Awareness

The Religious Awareness Affinity Group has officially met 4 times this month with 7 active members. We have dedicated work to five project groups: Holiday Social Media, Destigmatization, Curriculum, Fasting Space, and the Activities Accommodations Project.

The Holiday Social Media Project has continued working towards its mission to spread awareness about minority religious holidays through the @isd.equity Instagram account, and make students within ISD who practice minority religions feel heard, accepted, and welcome. We posted about 4 religious holidays this month-Martyrdom of the Báb (Bahá'í faith), Tisha B'Av (Judaism), Eid Al Adha (Islam), and Asalha Pruja (Buddhism). These holiday posts were researched and designed by members of the religious awareness affinity group, and council members from other groups as well. We were successful in talking to people who practiced the religions in which these holidays are celebrated (specifically Eid Al Adha and Tisha B'Av), and were able to get first hand perspectives on how these holidays are celebrated.

The Destigmatization Project has proceeded in research and planning for articles debunking stereotypes, which will be released in the course of the next few weeks. Examples of these topics include misconceptions about hijabs, appropriation of Hindu symbols, and modern spirituality. We are also currently working with other affinity groups (Mental Health and Illness, Immigrants and Culture, LGBTQ+, Students of Color) to tackle problematic topics within the Harry Potter book series, and things JK Rowling has said herself. We will be doing this by utilizing our instagram account to post stories addressing specific problems in the wizarding world to engage our audience.

The Curriculum Project is working on identifying problems within the current curriculum regarding religious awareness at ISD, and different solutions we as students can create to solve them. Through this project, we aim to provide feedback to ISD about how we can make these necessary changes and implementations into the curriculum. This month, we continued brainstorming questions related to religious awareness equity issues to ask curriculum auditors, and are waiting to hear back from the auditors and meet as a council-wide project group before moving forwards with the project.

The Fasting Space Project is a new project that is working towards helping students who fast due to religious reasons feel more comfortable by providing them a separate place to go during lunch. Some places that have been suggested are a section in the lunchroom, the library, or a separate classroom. This project has not officially started and will have their first meeting in the beginning of August and hopes to draft and send out surveys to students to gain their preferences on whether this space would benefit them or not.

The Activities Accommodations Project is a new project that is working towards making accommodations within the school activities that may go against a student's religious beliefs. Examples that have been discussed include, but are not limited to: square dancing in middle school PE classes, taping in sports med classes, and more. This project has not officially met but will begin in August and hopes to create videos/infographics to advocate for the abolition or addition of accommodating alternative activities.

Women's Empowerment

The Women's Empowerment Affinity group has officially met 2 times this month with 4 active members. We have dedicated work to two project groups: the Social Media Project and the Sexual Assault Form Project.

The Social Media Project has started work on multiple new posts, including one on intersectional feminism and one on the hijab ban in France. They will be out in the next few weeks.

The Sexual Assault Form Project has a rough draft of the form that is being edited currently. Next steps are to reach out to district officials and see how we can start incorporating it in schools.

Physical and Cognitive Disabilities

The Physical and Cognitive Disabilities Affinity group has officially met 2 times this month with 5 active members. We are currently working on two projects: Staff Empathy and Guide/SEL Lesson.

The Staff Empathy Project has completed a presentation for disability education in the ISD staff, and is currently completing the script. This project group is also currently discussing

the logistics of distributing this presentation to staff.

The Guide/SEL Lesson Project completed the disability sensitivity & etiquette presentation as well as researching who to contact to implement this presentation next year. This project group is currently completing a pamphlet version of the presentation to distribute throughout ISD schools.

The Outreach Project began this month, and is currently in the brainstorming phase. This project group is currently researching points of contact that would be most beneficial for disability outreach.

First-Generation Students

The First-Generation Students Affinity group has officially met 3 times this month with 5 active members. We have just begun work on one new project: College Guidebook.

The College Guidebook Project is a recently developed project that started this month, working towards providing quality information and guidance on the college application process in order to help First- Generation Students navigate their way. The project has so far chosen the sections to be included, completed research, and is now working on formatting it into a guide. The comprehensive guide will cover essential topics from standardized testing to financial aid, to choosing safety, target, and reach schools. The goal is to have the Guidebook easily accessible and distributed to inform and assist students, and the group is working on brainstorming ways to ensure the project is known about and implemented in high schools.

Curriculum

The Curriculum council-wide project group met on the first Thursday of the month to draft a follow up email to the Curriculum Auditors, as they have not responded to the initial email.

Mentorship

The Mentorship council-wide project group has officially met 4 times this month with 8 active members. We discussed further how to implement the club structure that we came up with in June. We want to combine the ISD equity clubs with our mentorship clubs, which we will be discussing on August 2nd during the second council-wide council-club structure meeting. 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 received resources from MENTOR National and we will meet with their team to discuss further on August 10th. We also worked on looking over responses from the Mentoring Needs Evaluation form and taking notes on methods or resources we can implement into our mentorship program to best serve the student respondents. We are in the beginning stages of outreaching to ISD high school clubs to help inform students about our mentoring program and to distribute the Mentoring Needs Evaluation form. We hope to establish and define our relationship with these school clubs in August.