

ISD Student Equity Council -- January 2021 Monthly Report

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Students of Color

The Students of Color Affinity Group has officially met three times this month with 17 active members. We are continuing work on our three project groups: Racial Awareness Art, Student Interviews, and Teacher Development.

The Racial Awareness Art Project has been continuing to work on their goals of uplifting artists of color, from ISD students to all underappreciated artists of color in history. We are featuring them on our @isd.equity instagram account. We are also working on finalizing the contact information of middle and high school arts teachers in the district (visual arts, ceramics, theater, creative writing, etc.) to spotlight student artists of color and are currently working on the next steps in regards to networking. In addition, we are beginning to work on an educational series on our Instagram (mentioned above) to discuss prominent artists of color, art movements, and art history through a more intersectional lens.

The Student Interviews Project is currently working on finding students who want to share their stories and voice their opinions with the ISD and discussing the most logical way to interview these students; this includes formulating a detailed plan for recruitment and compiling a “trailer” for students to watch. We are striving to create a safe and open environment in which students can share their experiences in the ISD and be listened to and heard by all staff in the ISD. The goal of this project is to give students of color the opportunity to be honest about occurrences without simply being dismissed, while also spreading awareness to staff and administrators to understand the issues students of color encounter under their leadership. With the support of the Council, more specifically the Students of Color Affinity Group, we find this project will amplify student voices long ignored.

The Development for Teachers in Racist Situations Project recently sent out a Teacher Engagement Form/Survey to staff in the ISD in order to gauge and take into consideration staff perspective. Teacher voices and the observations of teachers are an important aspect of creating a well-rounded presentation. It is imperative to understand what our district staff understand or need to understand regarding racism in the classroom; this survey has and will continue to provide insightful, varying perspectives on this awareness or lack thereof. Staff have given

profound insight on the issues they are encountering in the classroom--concerns similar to ours, further emphasizing the importance of this project. Using this newfound information, we will soon begin phase two of our research and begin creating our presentation which ideally is set for Fall 2021.

LGBTQ+

The LGBTQ+ Affinity Group has officially met three times this month with 9 active members. We have dedicated work to three project groups, and one affinity project:

The Amenities and Clothing Projects are still on hold as of now, given the projects regarding our group are to be taken on when students and staff are back in school. In the meantime, we are continuing to focus on how to implement changes regarding school buildings and clothing that would prove to be the most equitable solutions to issues regarding LGBTQ+ youth in order to make a school's environment more inclusive for all identities. Alongside this, our group is also continuing to work together with the Women's Empowerment Affinity Group to find ways to equitably distribute menstrual products in school.

The LGBTQ+ Curriculum Project is currently continuing its research and creation of an optional lesson on the Stonewall Riots of 1969 to provide to history teachers and is also constructing ways to make the gender and sexuality lessons taught in psychology classes more inclusive. Our group is also advancing in more research in different areas of the ISD curriculum that may have lessons or topics that are in regards to the LGBTQ+ community and will be finding more ways to improve and adjust the curriculum as needed. We also noticed that the curriculum in the ISD suffers in more areas than when it comes to LGBTQ+, but there are also issues regarding topics that lack representation from people of color, or religious beliefs, or mental illnesses, and more. Due to the severity of everything the ISD curriculum is missing, there will be a new project, the Council-Wide Curriculum Project, which will work on tackling all of the problematic areas of the curriculum within the district.

The Names and Pronouns Projects are mostly on hold as of now, except for the SEL lesson projects. We are currently working on and emphasizing the importance of the normalization of pronouns. In August 2020, some members of the LGBTQ+ Affinity Group presented to the high school staff across the ISD regarding the importance of the respect of preferred names and pronouns, and one project we are working on takes a step towards making

changes within the student body. It is not only important that staff are aware of this, but it is also up to students to help normalize something as simple as pronouns and preferred names. Our first step is to create and present an SEL lesson regarding these issues, highlighting how imperative it is that we as students participate in this process of normalization, and having it be presented across the ISD high schools. This presentation is currently in the makings and we plan to have it be put to use this semester. We are also continuing to brainstorm other projects we can implement once we return to in-person.

The Resources and Networking/Outreach Project is a new Affinity-Wide project that plans to research, contact, and pair up with local organizations in order to discover community resources and build partnerships. Our goal in terms of partnering with organizations is to connect with people and groups that we can work with to provide each other with assets to benefit the LGBTQ+ youth in our community. As students and youth members of the community, we have a more direct insight on the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth, and we know this perspective can prove to be beneficial in helping other organizations with similar goals to our groups. We are currently in the research phase, and with the approval of our Outreach group, we will soon begin contacting the organizations we see fit.

Low-Income & Homelessness

The Low-Income and Homelessness Affinity Group has officially met twelve times this month with 10 active members. We have dedicated work to 5 project groups: The Safe Space Project, the Outreach Project, the Resource Project, and the Survey Project.

The Safe Space Project has been working diligently with the Garage to set up our pop-up spaces in Renton and Sammamish. We have spent the month of January doing research on how to utilize a space, finalizing our vision and mission, researching spaces, and looking at budgets to execute the projects. We have also been planning presentations scheduled throughout the month of February, including a meeting with the Garage Board, for approval of the project and its budget; the Youth Home Committee, to rally community members and leaders to partner with each other; and a meeting with the Teens4Teens group, to gather more students interested in our project. Our current timeline for the project sets us up to open by May. Based on a need we have seen for stability for unhoused students, we are currently on track for three projects: the physical Safe Space Pop-up, a Youth Shelter, and a Youth Home.

The Outreach Project is focusing on our Flyer distribution, targeting Low Income students and neighborhoods. We have announced our distribution plan to the rest of the council, and are asking their help in distributing flyers in order to reach the most people possible. Currently, we have created a list of low income areas that are our priority to reach, but we also are encouraging people to go around their own neighborhoods, local establishments, and add any locations we may have missed. Our goal is to continue distribution through the next couple weeks.

The Teacher Presentation Project had become part of a larger Curriculum project within the council. We finalized the video, have an email drafted, and are ready to reach out to teachers. As of now, we are waiting for a district video waiver to ensure permission to distribute the presentation to all staff to watch at their own time and consideration.

The Resources Project is an expansion of the printing project, combined with the desire for a plan to address any needs that may be highlighted by our Survey project. Our group has been discussing and brainstorming areas that we notice needs, then we created a table/list based on what we've noticed--all backed by diligent research in documentaries, articles, and discussions. We are currently working to research organizations that provide and assist with those resources, such as local community members or district programs.

The Survey Project has focused intensively on finalizing the survey and creating a concrete system for distributing the survey to all high school district students. This system additionally entails compiling both community and school resources in case if any student is in need of immediate aid on a resource such as mental health assistance, clothing, food, rental assistance, and more. This survey has been intentionally created in a written format to effectively express a student voice behind numbers of urgency in socioeconomic inequities. While the district has previously understood the number of students in need of resources, student stories put a person behind these numbers--further expressing the urgency of the issue.

Mental Health & Illness

The Mental Health & Illness Affinity Group has officially met two times this month with 16 active members. We are continuing work on our three project groups: 504 Plan Accessibility, Mental Health Check-In Form, and Destigmatizing Mental Illness. There has been little forward

movement with this affinity group, simply because the majority of these projects are waiting on responses for administration. It is predicted that new projects will start in February.

The 504 Plan Accessibility Project intends to make all students aware of the 504 Plan resources that are available to them if applicable, with new importance due to the online learning environment. Currently, this group is working on getting the information put out via a Canvas announcement to all high schools. Additionally, an Instagram post request was put in to get this information out on our social media. Once these two announcements are put out, this project will be wrapped up.

Our members working on the Mental Health Check-in Form Project are pushing a simple yet impactful Google form that would be accessible on every high-school teacher's virtual instruction webpage (most likely Canvas) and provide a more comfortable medium for students to request accommodations from their more vigorous classes in the case of mental health/equity-related issues; at times, mental health inequities may inhibit students from achieving their greatest potential in class, and there little systems to aid students in these cases. Teachers will be able to collect this information regarding students' needs and struggles from the form in a specific, convenient location at any point during the school year. This project is currently waiting on support and approval from district equity officials before it is implemented.

The Destigmatizing Mental Illness Project is currently utilizing school's SEL lessons to spread greater awareness of mental health struggles students could be dealing with, which we have been brainstorming involving the following: student voice and experiences, teaching helpful coping mechanisms, ensuring accurate and punctual mental health content, and acknowledging stigmas and inequities in simply speaking about mental health such as stigmas or visual aids. We recently created Issaquah High School's SEL lesson on Fentanyl usage and trauma, and plan to use this presentation as a way to add validity to our requests to help with SEL at the other high schools.

Immigrants & Culture

The Immigrants and Culture Affinity Group has officially met three times this month with nine active members. We have continued work on our three project groups: the Crayons Project, the Cultural Decorations Project, and the Cultural Foods Project.

In this last month, the Crayons Project has revisited the logistical aspects of our project and taken steps to implementation with the district. These new calculations indicate a new total of 1,750 crayons required to reach every elementary classroom in the Issaquah School District, rather than the projected 1,000 crayons, but the goal remains the same: to create a more inclusive environment for our ISD students of color from a young age. As many immigrants are of color and are isolated in many different ways, this is a project that reflects on our personal concerns as immigrant students within the district. Ultimately, the goal is that with more diverse and inclusive crayon usage, the acceptance of different skin tones will create a more welcoming environment for our younger immigrants and students of color. With calculations done and the project proposal communicated to the district, we look forward to our next steps of purchasing the crayons and beginning distribution.

As for 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. While our ISD schools traditionally focus on westernized decorations such as having Christmas trees up during the winter season, we are aiming to be more inclusive, as we believe that decorations should be representative of the student body. While we are considering the ideas of the “Cultural Corner” for when schools return to in-person learning, we continue to be intently focused on education through social media until then. Our group is currently researching and posting about potential decorations we may bring about schools one day.

Finally, the affinity group recognizes that food is a vital part of any culture, and until schools return to in-person learning to further a broader effort in normalizing cultural foods, the social media food series, endearingly nicknamed “Cultural Food Fridays.” has been an ongoing project to aid in this. 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. Launched this month, we hope that this virtual project will be the first step of many in the normalization of cultural foods.

Religious Awareness

The Religious Awareness Affinity Group has officially met 3 times this month with 4 active members. We have dedicated work to two project groups: Holiday Social Media and Minority Holiday Awareness.

The Holiday Social Media Project was generated to ensure everyone, no matter their faith, is celebrated and recognized. By utilizing social media to access as many students in the ISD as possible, we are able to get student input on their religious celebrations. With that knowledge we have researchers who gather information about the holiday and pass it off to the social media team who creates the post and distributes it to the student body. We have streamlined our collaboration with the immigrants and culture affinity group, merging our research signup sheets and clarifying what researchers are expected to gather information about. This system will be effective for the duration of the year and will continue to be open for holiday requests. In the past month, we have posted about Laba Festival, Bodhi Day, and Tu BiShvat.

Members in the Minority Holiday Awareness Project reached out to the ISD Equity Department to inquire about current systems that are in place to inform teachers about how religious practices could impact students in the classroom. So far, we have only received feedback from a few staff members. In order to gather more effective feedback, we have decided to create a survey asking more specific questions regarding the current systems in place. This survey, which will be sent out to equity leads, will hopefully clarify the specific information which we are asking for. In addition to the current district calendar, we desire to add information regarding suggested accommodations for students who celebrate this holiday. We will propose a system where students can directly inform their teachers about a certain holiday and with that knowledge, teachers will be able to proactively excuse some students from homework for the duration of the holiday.

Women's Empowerment

The Women's Empowerment Affinity group has officially met 4 times this month with 8 active members. We have dedicated work to 5 project groups: the Health Curriculum Project, the Social Media Project, the Sexual Reproductive Products Project, the Sexual Harassment Form, and the Dress Code Project.

The Health Curriculum Project was created to implement topics relating to periods, harassment, and other topics that tend to be avoided in the general curriculum. Young women and men should be educated on these serious topics in order for them to be better prepared and informed when these situations occur. This awareness includes advocating for younger students who may not get taught such imperative topics at home and thus depend on school educators. Though we do understand that incorporating these subjects into the curriculum will be a long and difficult process, we believe in the importance of health education as it greatly benefits students of all genders going forward in life.

The Social Media Project was created to spread awareness about various topics regarding women's empowerment through social media. The goal of this project is to allow students to share things that are helpful, informational, interesting, and engaging about topics regarding women's empowerment. In a society with many underlying tones of misogyny, it is important to honor and recognize women that work diligently to make a difference. Instagram is a large social media platform with a large audience, thus reaching many audiences to be educated on information regarding women's empowerment. Every week, we will choose a topic on women's empowerment--like women artists, strong female leaders, important movements--and create an Instagram post about it. We will also take recommendations and suggestions from other people outside this project group on which topics to cover.

The Sexual Reproductive Products Project is working on compiling resources such as birth control access, tampons, pads, diva cups, bras. Access to menstrual products in school restrooms has been an interest expressed by the student body. While some schools already have select products available in women's restrooms, all of the high schools must have this in restrooms for any gender. This is especially important to students whose gender identity does not align with their assigned sex at birth, as it can potentially relieve some of the gender dysphoria related to having menstrual cycles. Although this project cannot take place immediately due to the remote environment, we hope that throughout the next year, we will be able to make these products accessible. At the schools which do not have this resource system in place at all, a 'trial run' to evaluate student demand for these products could be beneficial. For all schools, we will push for administration to understand the importance this holds and aid us in implementing this for all restrooms on the high school campuses.

The Sexual Harassment Support Form Project was created to allow a person to report sexual assault or other uncomfortable situations. The goal of this project is to provide students a way to share their stories or encounters with sexual harassment in a way that is comfortable for everyone. Sexual harassment encounters happen too often, and not enough people speak up because of fear. By creating a form, students are given the opportunity to express themselves while not having to talk in-person, for that is something that a lot of people aim to avoid. We want people's stories to be heard, no matter the way it's communicated. Though this form can't be released until we are back to in-person learning, this remote learning environment is a great time to start it. By the time schools go back to in-person, we want to have this form fully assembled and finalized so it can be accessible right away. This applies to both high schools and middle schools.

The Dress Code Project is targeted at the misogynistic policies that are implemented in both middle and high schools in regards to what young women are wearing. We hope to dismantle this system district wide by following the lead of IHS principal McCormick. By emulating how she navigated the system and eliminated the dress code at Issaquah, we hope to demonstrate how dress codes hinder young women. Working with IHS, we will understand how the dress code itself was changed and how it positively uplifts the female students in our schools.