

ISD Student Equity Council -- February 2021 Monthly Report

isd.equity@gmail.com

isdequity.wixsite.com/website

Students of Color

The Students of Color Affinity Group has officially met four times this month with 15 active members. We have dedicated work to 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 recently sent out our mass email to all middle/high school art teachers in the district and have created a graphic flyer to share as well. With this we hope to get more student involvement in order to spread awareness of our project and gather more work to display on our Instagram. We are also working to create more educational content on our Instagram feed on art through a racial lense (racist themes in art, art movements by BIPOC groups, etc.) We have also begun brainstorming for a possible zine, hoping that we can tackle that project soon with increased involvement from the student body.

The Student Interviews Project had sent out the student engagement form to students via social media; however, only three students signed up, signaling a lapse in outreach efforts to accomplish student engagement. The group discussed why people may be hesitant, and agreed discussing personal experiences with racism puts one in a vulnerable position. To bridge this vulnerability, the group agreed on the following action items: reviving the idea of a trailer so students have an idea of what the interviews would entail, host an open session for students to meet the affinity group, and have interviews be very flexible to students who can have more options regarding how the interview will be conducted to them. Regardless, the group is firm in this project idea, noting the importance of speaking out, especially considering constant dismissable of racial justice in the community and schools.

The Development for Teachers in Racist Situations Project had sent out the Teacher Engagement Survey. Submissions to the survey are now closed and we are reviewing them to organize the information for our research groups. There were not as many submissions as we had hoped for, but there are enough to go forward. The teachers have provided a unique insight and

we are grateful for their collaboration. We are still on schedule to finish our presentation by Fall 2021.

LGBTQ+

The LGBTQ+ Affinity Group has officially met twice this month with 8 active members. We have dedicated work to four project groups, and one affinity project: Amenities and Clothing, Curriculum, Names and Pronouns, and Networking/Outreach.

The Amenities and Clothing Project has been put on hold until further notice. We are still working with the Women's Empowerment Affinity Group on the Sexual Reproductive Products Project and we will continue to brainstorm new ideas in the future.

The LGBTQ+ Curriculum Project has been brainstorming future ideas with the recent start of the Council-wide Curriculum Project Group. We will continue to cement our ideas within the next month before working towards creating a timeline for implementation.

The Names and Pronouns Projects are currently on hold due to the loss of the majority of its members. We are currently rebuilding the group and will begin a new session of brainstorming.

The Organizational Project is taking its next steps in research. We have completed the outline of research regarding the general organizations we are looking to reach out to and partner with. Our next steps include doing further research on narrowed down organizations and people to see how we would be able to partner with them. In our separate research groups we plan on choosing a couple key contacts and "presenting" it to the Affinity Group as a whole. After presenting we will discuss as a group and make a final decision on who we will be contacting, why we are contacting them, how we can help each other, and how to maintain that connection once it is made.

Low-Income & Homelessness

The Low-Income and Homelessness Affinity Group has officially met 10 times this month with 10 active members. We have dedicated work to 4 project groups: The Safe Space Project, the Outreach Project, the Resource Project, and the Survey Project.

The Safe Space Project has continued working on the Safe Space project, with exciting news to report! The Safe Space group presented to the Garage Board this month, and earned the

support and funding for the project after the Board approved. This ensures secure funding for the project will be accomplished in a formal budget, fundraising efforts, and partnership with external organizations. To prepare for this, the Safe Space group organized all the specific supplies needed for all safe spaces, and has coordinated a list of organizations that could possibly provide supplies through partnership as well. The Youth Home group has been a part of the Youth Home Committee, organized by Kaylee in which the group works with external organizations and influential community members regarding youth homelessness. The group is currently preparing to interview other youth shelter and youth home organizations as a part of the research process in formulating the Committee's mission and vision. Finally, the Safe Space group will be hearing from the Garage's Fundraising Committee which will determine next steps in finalizing budget efforts, and Kaylee is connected with brokers to find the final Renton and Sammamish locations.

The Outreach Project has encountered obstacles in outreach; some locations are not allowing flyers to be posted because either their bulletin boards are closed due to COVID or they are not allowed on buildings. As a result, the Outreach group will be concentrating efforts on neighborhoods (though they haven't heard back from some neighborhoods regarding permission to do so) and any public place that allows. The group must also contact principals to ensure permission to have flyers posted outside of school buildings and inside food distribution bags. The group is currently brainstorming other methods of outreach to optimize efforts; of the current applicants for the council, none identify as low-income or physically displaced.

The Teacher Presentation Project is waiting for the district to send in the video waiver form for the group to sign; otherwise, the project is completed. However, the group is always willing to do a retake now that they have had more background with presenting and public speaking.

The Resources Project has finalized research and gathering resources for students to utilize. As a final step of this phase of the project, the group has created a rough draft for a pamphlet that has organized each resource via categories. The group will also be releasing a series of social media posts, detailing each resource for the student body online to access. Finally, the group will also be compiling a more detailed summary of the resources on the Council website, to ensure any student in need of a resource has more guidance in the search. In preparation for a more long-term alliance with other resource outreach groups in the district, the

group also met with the ISD PTSA Council as a formal introduction to each other. The group introduced the Low-Income affinity group and why the issue of socioeconomic inequities is of importance to education, and the PTSA Council answered questions regarding the work they have done. However, both groups noticed lapses in efforts and the importance of student voice and effort in these efforts. The group will continue working with the PTSA Council to bridge the holes in resource efforts, particularly with the perspective of student voices.

The Survey Project hasn't met due to waiting for district response on next steps for the survey. However, the group agreed the Outreach project and the Resource project will continue to finalize efforts in the Survey project.

Mental Health & Illness

The Mental Health & Illness Affinity Group has officially met three times this month with 17 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. To account for this, we are starting up a new project group, Teacher Presentations, this month that will focus on assisting teachers with online learning and minimizing any additional stress for students.

The 504 Plan Accessibility Project is temporarily completed and will no longer be included in future monthly reports.

The Mental Health Check-in Form Project is 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 are weak 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. Therefore, we have not met in a while.

The Destigmatizing Mental Illness Project is currently working in tandem with the council-wide Curriculum project and brainstorming exactly what we want to be incorporated into

ISD mental health curriculum. After completing a successful SEL Lesson at Issaquah High school, they are currently working toward focusing on Instagram-focused activism and researching topics like how mental health and illnesses are treated in different cultures, a post series on specific highly stigmatized disorders (BPD, Schizophrenia, etc.), and a post on body neutrality. By utilizing social media, we hope to spread awareness and discuss issues that are commonly not talked about.

Immigrants & Culture

The Immigrants and Culture Affinity Group has officially met 3 times this month with 8 active members. With our current projects already well established, we are working on expanding our affinity group's impact through the Mentorship Project and Counselors Project. These will be incorporated into the councilwide Mentorship and Curriculum Projects, but our group has been in talks for the immigrant perspective of brainstorming. Additionally, we have continued work on the three project groups: the Crayons Project, the Cultural Decorations Project, and the Cultural Foods Project.

The Crayons Project has sent our project proposal with the aforementioned calculations to the district, so we will be continuing work under their guidance. With COVID restrictions this year preventing the sharing of crayons between students, the projected implementation of our project will be postponed to the 2021-2022 school year. However, we will continue to work with the district to ensure that this happens as quickly and efficiently as possible, in order to make steps towards our goal of fostering an inclusive environment for students of all races and ethnicities.

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. And while we are maintaining the ideas of the "Cultural Corner" for when schools return to in-person learning, we continue to be focus on education through social media until then. Our group is currently researching and posting about potential decorations we may bring about schools one day.

The social media food series, endearingly nicknamed "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. This virtual project is 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 5 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 Lunar New Year, Purim, and Lantern Festival. The lead for this project is also the affinity group lead, so the affinity group lead is currently discussing handing over this responsibility to a member.

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. After receiving limited responses to emails, we also sent out a survey asking more specific questions regarding the current systems in place. A common pattern we saw in the results of the survey is that many teachers and staff wanted more student perspectives and advice on what accommodations to provide in addition to the calendar provided to the district. In addition to the current district calendar, we will 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. This project needs to refocus and redefine our goals based on the results of the survey.

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 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 has been put on hold as Project Groups have not been meeting for this Affinity Group. With the start of the Council-wide Curriculum Project Group, we will continue brainstorming new ideas and work towards creating a timeline for implementation.

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.

This month, though, we have been focusing more on women's history. As a group, we are working on making posts for Instagram about influential women. Our project groups have been slowed down a bit because of this. We are also waiting for a response from the IHS Feminism Club to really start anything big.