

PIEDMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Donald Evans, Interim Superintendent
Dr. Cheryl Wozniak, Assistant Superintendent

PRESENTERS: Jean Chen Takazawa, Affinity Mentorship Teacher
Tara Kothari, Cleopatra Tahawi, Elena Stevens

DATE: May 10, 2023

SUBJECT: AFFINITY MENTORSHIP COURSE

PURPOSE: To present the highlights of the work completed by high school student mentors who are enrolled in the Affinity Mentorship course

BACKGROUND:

The Affinity and Identity Mentor Program began in September, 2020 to serve a need identified by BIPOC students at the high school level. They told stories of their feelings of isolation, consistent and constant microaggressions, and the lack of support in navigating the culture and processes of the school district. These high school students decided that they did not want the younger generation to experience the same and the program was launched. With guidance from Jean Chen Takazawa and Ina Bendich, the students began to create lessons for their assigned mentees while adult leadership managed the recruitment and coordination of the times for the mentor/mentees to meet. Designed and implemented during Covid-19, mentors utilized time together to create their lessons, seek resources from adults, and problem-solve any issues that needed to be addressed.

Site and District leaders realized how much time the mentors were spending creating their lessons, gaining instruction from both advisors and the time they were mentoring. And yet, there was a need for a more formal structure to ensure that mentors were learning the skills necessary to mentor. They also believed that students deserved to earn credit for the time and efforts spent mentoring younger students. With Board support, the District worked to create an organizational structure to ensure that students earned credit for the leadership work that they were providing—a new high school elective course titled: Affinity Mentorship.

Affinity Mentorship Course

The PUSD Affinity Mentorship course was adopted by the Board of Education on June 8, 2022. The course aligns with expectations of the Racial Equity Board Policy BP/AR 0415.1 and the diversity, equity and inclusion work outlined in the District's 3-year Strategic Plan (LCAP). Establishing the Affinity Mentorship course was a vital action that demonstrates PUSD's commitment for the improved social/emotional and learning outcomes for BIPOC students.

Project Based Learning in a Flipped Classroom Model

Project Based Learning (PBL) is a process of learning that seeks to solve real-world problems to meet the needs of the mentee. This structure allows the mentors to meet each of their mentee's needs. Flipped Classroom Model allows for flexibility in delivery of the content through the use of facilitated videos. Videos are created to deliver the content of that particular unit. It is accompanied by a workbook to guide the student to demonstrate a clear understanding of that content. Mentors can apply that knowledge in the design of mentoring activities in collaboration with their peers. The Flipped Classroom Model also allows veteran mentors to focus on ideas and leadership issues in which they need to focus. The needs of the mentors and the needs of the mentees can both be embedded in the Flipped Classroom learning experience.

Furthermore, because there are students earning credit and other students volunteering, the flipped classroom model is the process of engagement for all students. The flipped classroom reframes the role of the instructor from "sage" to "guide" which was already demonstrated in the leadership of the program. It helps the students learn and construct their own knowledge and then apply it to the lessons with their mentees. This allows the leaders to help foster creativity and engagement with the mentors to help build upon their strengths, while helping them gain new skills in relationship building, lesson planning and delivery, and reflection on how the lesson was received.

Recognizing that students will need consistent instruction to be effective mentors, there will be six units of instruction on the following topics:

1. Effective communication and lesson planning
2. Community Engagement and Setting Up Mentor Sessions
3. Restorative Justice and Circle Keeping
4. Identity development
5. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
6. Social Justice

Affinity Mentorship Program

Students who come from racial, cultural, ability, gender, and religious backgrounds different from their peers may feel isolated and lonely. The PUSD Affinity Identity Mentorship Program provides elementary and middle school students with teen role models who can encourage, inspire, and build their academic and social confidence. Our Affinity Mentors are positive role models that meet regularly during the school year and engage in age-appropriate and fun lessons surrounding shared identities. They emphasize community building in a safe and nurturing environment so children really get to know their mentors and each other and center their shared experiences to normalize their differences without shame, fear, or rejection.

Affinity Mentorship Program Resources

- [Piedmont Affinity Identity Mentorship.pdf](#)
- [Affinity Mentorship Flyer2.png](#)
- [Creating a Culture of Belonging.pdf](#)

Affinity Groups

To create a district-wide climate of inclusion and belonging for BIPOC students, staff, and their families, the PUSD School Board adopted a [Racial Equity Board Policy and Administrative Regulation](#) on September 9, 2020. One of the action items in the AR is to “Adopt Restorative Practices district-wide as a strategy for improving school climate and to strengthen the social and emotional skills of and relationship among students, staff, and administrators.” Affinity identity groups are one of many action items that PUSD has embraced as part of its anti-racist education. Affinity groups provide students, especially those from historically marginalized identity groups, safe spaces to gather and speak honestly about issues related to identity, reactions to local and national events, and consider actions that will increase equity. These groups serve to promote a sense of belonging in institutions that don’t always recognize them. In Piedmont Unified School District, we have used affinity groups to strengthen the social and emotional skills of and relationships among students, staff, and administrators. For example, staff and student groups for those identifying as Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) were given a private and facilitated space to process their thoughts and emotions related to incidents of violence against members of AAPI communities. African-American students were given a facilitated space to process their emotions after the Derek Chauvin trial.

Affinity Group Resources

[Making Space: Affinity groups offer a platform for voices often relegated to the margins.](#)
[Why People of Color Need Spaces Without White People](#)
[Racial Equity Tools: Caucus and Affinity Groups](#)