**Below is an excerpt from the DRAFT document being developed in the Office of Human Capital. CIT has been asked to participate in a Steering Committee to guide the work of developing Affinity Groups for our educators. If interested in participating, please contact CIT Director** [**Stefan Cohen**](mailto:stefan.cohen@rcsdk12.org)**.**

**Definition & Purpose**

RCSD Affinity Groups are safe spaces for educators of historically marginalized groups to come together in order to:

* make connections to those with similar lived experiences, mutual concerns, and a common purpose.
* build a sense of camaraderie and a system of support through fellowship and networking.
* provide RCSD leadership with ideas and recommendations for changes in practices, procedures, and policies that negatively impact diversity and inclusion efforts.
* support RCSD efforts to recruit, develop, support, and retain the most effective and diverse staff.

RCSD Affinity Groups, also know as Employee Resource Groups, are voluntary, employee-led, and do not exclude on the basis of sex, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, mental illness or ability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity/expression, sex characteristics, religious, creed, or individual political opinions. RCSD Affinity Groups do not represent employees regarding the terms and conditions of employment, including but not limited to, wages, rates of pay, or hours of employment. They also do not promote non-District-related purposes or goals (e.g., sports, hobbies, religion, politics). They are intended to be a forum for social and emotional connection and peer support.

**Board of Education Policy Alignment**

0100: [District Policy Prohibiting Discrimination or Harassment of Students or Employees](https://www.rcsdk12.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=2&PageModuleInstanceID=59666&ViewID=838b13a1-2ccb-4c74-83cb-0b9f098d6937&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=66313&SearchKeywords)

0201: [Equity and Educational Excellence Policy](https://www.rcsdk12.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=2&PageModuleInstanceID=59666&ViewID=838b13a1-2ccb-4c74-83cb-0b9f098d6937&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=66319&SearchKeywords)

2160: [Code of Ethics](https://www.rcsdk12.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=2&PageModuleInstanceID=59666&ViewID=838b13a1-2ccb-4c74-83cb-0b9f098d6937&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=66910&SearchKeywords)

9110: [Equal Employment Opportunity](https://www.rcsdk12.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=2&PageModuleInstanceID=59666&ViewID=838b13a1-2ccb-4c74-83cb-0b9f098d6937&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=67495&SearchKeywords)

9240: [Recruitment, Hiring and Residence Initiative Policy](https://www.rcsdk12.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=2&PageModuleInstanceID=59666&ViewID=838b13a1-2ccb-4c74-83cb-0b9f098d6937&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=67498&SearchKeywords)

9240-R: [Recruitment, Hiring and Residence Initiative Policy; Regulation](https://www.rcsdk12.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=2&PageModuleInstanceID=59666&ViewID=838b13a1-2ccb-4c74-83cb-0b9f098d6937&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=67499&SearchKeywords)

**RCSD Strategic Plan Alignment**

Core Beliefs:

* Students are our first priority and will drive each decision.
* Each student has recognizable and untapped potential that we strive to discover and fulfill.
* **We embrace diversity and commit to the eradication of racism and all forms of discrimination and oppression.**
* We provide students, families and staff with equitable access to resources for learning.
* We respect and honor the dignity of all individuals.
* Educating the whole child requires high-quality learning that is safe, loving and rigorous.
* Our work is centered in respect, trust, integrity and accountability.
* Education is a partnership of families, school, and the community.
* We make each fiscal and resource allocation decision equitably, transparently and in the best interest of our students.

2020-23 Priorities:

* **Lift Up: Ensure an inclusive, caring and safe learning environment**
* Collaborate: Build strong community
* Lead: Foster dynamic leadership

**Background**

Affinity Groups are also known as Identity Networks, Diversity Networks, or Employee Resource Groups. According to the Black Teacher Project (2021), such groups in public education date as far back as the mid-1800s. Due to segregation laws, African American teachers were not allowed to join White teacher organizations. As a result, Black educators united in an effort to receive equal pay as well as in order to advocate for better materials and facilities for students. Since 2000, there has been a steady increase in the number of Affinity Groups across the United States in not only education, but in other industries as well.

**Benefits**

* Opportunities to share knowledge and expertise and develop and refine skills beneficial to daily practice
* Great way to meet new colleagues outside of one’s home school/department
* Helps attract, recruit, support, and retain employees
* Promotes diversity, cultural awareness, and an inclusive work environment
* Increases employee job satisfaction, morale, and productivity
* Encourages diversity and community involvement
* Enhances the employer’s public image in its marketing, recruiting, organizational development, and other external efforts

**Challenges**

* Potential discrimination and segregation concerns (Title VII; ADA; ADEA).
* Employee resistance or confusion regarding the purpose and participation guidelines.
* Potential to strengthen inequalities.
* Social media misinformation and meeting oversight.
* Establishing trust and ensuring a true safe space.

*Note: This handbook includes guidelines and procedures to address these challenges.*

**Full draft includes Guidelines, Roles & Responsibilities, Procedures, FAQs**