Building Your Case for Affinity Space

SAIS February 2024 Conference

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Goals for this Session

- Understand the impact of affinity spaces.

- Build your case for affinity spaces to increase community-wide support.

- Learn strategies that increase engagement AND support organizational goals.

- Define actionable items to implement your affinity groups.

Community Norms

- Speak from the "I" perspective.

- Embrace discomfort.

- Take care of yourself.

- Listen vs. assume (use compassionate listening skills).

- Pay attention to patterns of participation.

- Go to the source.

- Expect and accept non-closure.

- Acknowledge you are learning vs. you are sorry.

Reflection Question

When thinking about affinity groups at my school:

- I want…

- I wish…

- I wonder…

Affinity Spaces are Essential

Spaces that empower student voices and celebrate the joys and gifts they bring and to provide a greater sense of connection and belonging in the larger school community.

Affinity Group Foundation Building

Here are some questions you should ask yourself:

- What identity group is the space **specifically** being created for?
- What is your **connection** to this group?
- Why do I care about this space?
- Who would benefit from this space?
- How often will your group meet?
- What are your **expectations** of this group?
- What are the expectations of group members?
- How is this group **aligned** with the vision and needs of the organization?

Build Your Case Worksheet

- **What is the space that you are creating?**
    - I'm creating a space for…
    - I'm creating a space to…
    - I'm creating a space because…

- **How does it connect to the rest of your school community?**
    - The information that will come out of these spaces is…
    - The resources that can be used in these spaces are…

- **How does the space connect to the vision of your school?**
    - This space will support…

- **How will it connect others to the school's vision?**
    - Students will be able to…
    - Faculty will be able to…
    - Parents will be able to…
    - Other…

What Affinity Groups Are and Are Not

Affinity Groups are to…	Affinity groups are NOT to…
Protect those who might be harmed	**Harm** others by exclusion
Connect others to build community where community may not exist	**Isolate** others from the rest of the community
Increase trust in **people** where systems have caused trust to be broken	Increase the trust in **systems** that need to be changed
Improve methods that address specific group needs and to increase belonging at large	**Deflect** from the issues and systems that need to be improved
Strengthen and build skills for learning, listening and support the development of leadership qualities	**Condemn** those who have made mistakes and need support in learning or listening

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Affinity Spaces to HEAL

H **Help** restore (faith) in the community.

E **Establish** trust in systems, leaders, sense of belonging that stimulates engagement.

A **Assess** who you can and should cultivate lifelong relationships with (allies and advocates).

L **Listen** to one another. People feel heard, validated and connected to others.

I'M HEALING

VS

REMAINING UNSAFE

Affinity Spaces to LEARN

L **Lean** into being more intentional.

E **Explore** your own identity and experiences.

A **Accountability** and assess how you can cultivate lifelong relationships (allies and advocates).

R **Roles** and responsibilities to this work and to others outside of the group.

N **Nurturing** each group at their own pace, specific to their own needs.

I'M LEARNING

VS

CONTINUING TO TRANSFER HARM

Discussion Question

If you are creating a space for those who are (marginalized/not marginalized):

- What areas in your organization/community need to be restored?

- What areas in your organization have you identified that would benefit from the development of an affinity group?

- How can your group support the healing/learning process that nurtures belonging for the entire community?

Levels of Safe and Brave Spaces

- **<u>Level 1:</u>** You are creating a space where people feel safe enough to show up

- **<u>Level 2:</u>** You are creating a space where people feel safe enough to show up and are willing to share of themselves

- **<u>Level 3:</u>** You are creating a space where people feel safe and brave enough to share their opinions about certain topics and more of themselves

- **<u>Level 4:</u>** You are creating a space where people feel safe and brave enough to be challenged to learn and to give feedback to others

Culture of Consciousness vs. Consequences

CONSCIOUSNESS	CONSEQUENCE
Awareness	Fear
Perspectives	Assumptions
Proactive	Reactive
Community	Division
Learning/Empowerment	Sorry/Shame/Resentment
Transformation	Transferring

Thank You!

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