

# What you need to know:

## Affinity Groups

### What are affinity groups?

Affinity groups are programs that separate people—in the case of schools, that means students or employees—based on characteristics like race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Often, affinity groups discuss matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### What's the issue?

Affinity groups may sound benign, and teachers or students may self-select to spend time with groups of their peers. Government-funded schools separating students or teachers based on race, however, is discriminatory. Providing separate opportunities for teachers or students based on race is wrong and immoral.

When they say...	You can say...
<b>What's the problem with providing spaces for people who share similar backgrounds?</b>	People can self-select to be members of any group they wish—that is freedom of association and it is protected in the First Amendment. Separating students or teachers based on race and providing them with separate opportunities and programming, however, is discriminatory.
<b>Isn't diversity, equity, and inclusion a good thing?</b>	It's certainly good to ensure that teachers and students treat one another with dignity and respect, regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. Unfortunately, "equity" is where this goes awry. Equity requires separating and assessing an individual's needs based on race.
<b>Affinity groups are safe spaces for students who have a shared identity. What's so wrong with that?</b>	Students can spend time with whomever they want to, both in and out of school. But schools should not separate children based on immutable characteristics like race, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Schools should not assume needs and assign assistance to students based on race.
<b>We need to support teachers who represent the diversity of our students.</b>	People of all backgrounds can be great teachers and create positive learning environments for students. We do not need exclusive affinity groups to make anyone feel more included. Rather, we need to ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
<b>What if minority students feel left out?</b>	This emphasizes the need to focus on character over skin color. Creating truly inclusive and welcoming environments for students means cultivating positive character traits and encouraging students to bond with their peers regardless of race, sex, or other immutable characteristics.

For more information, check out Parents Defending Education's [map](#).

