



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico
Program Title: Staff Retention
Program Category: Organizational Development

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Program Overview

As part of the 2021 NACo award-winning Culture of Dignity Responsive Professional Development Plan, the Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) Office of Equity, Diversity and Opportunity has used education resource groups (ERGs), formerly known as education resource groups, since the summer of 2020. These affinity groups have grown into a formidable force to support and retain teachers. Educators in these affinity groups, particularly our Black educators affinity group, have gained: Support during monthly meetings that fosters and promotes professional excellence; access to additional professional development opportunities to enhance their instructional growth; and greater opportunities to participate in workshops that promote belonging and identity.

HCPS is hopeful that through the continuation and expansion of these groups, we can more effectively support educators in their social and emotional well-being, strengthen their confidence and authenticity and enhance employee connection, satisfaction and retention.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

The Culture of Dignity Responsive Professional Development Plan included the formation of voluntary education resource groups. Along with the Henrico County Public Schools' Department of Human Resources, the Office of Equity, Diversity and Opportunity is tasked with improving the racial disproportionality of student to teacher. This is an issue not just in our school division but throughout the nation, and studies have suggested that schools need to not only focus on the identification and hiring of employees who are Black, Indigenous or people of color, but implement programming to support their retention. Research has shown that one way to attract more diverse candidates, increase employee morale and reduce staff turnover is to establish education resource groups. Affinity groups can be used for networking, mentorships and other opportunities

for professional and personal development. Historically, affinity groups have been centered on race or gender, but these groups can also be created for those sharing other characteristics, such as age, areas of interest, veteran status or sexual identity. Disproportionality data, as well as parent and student surveys and focus group feedback, revealed that our “majority minority” school community needed to address the recruitment and retention of teachers of color.

How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria

The education resource groups initiative provides a model for other localities to utilize as an organic response to employees’ needs for a sense of belonging and requests for support and guidance. Participation in these voluntary groups can increase job satisfaction and effectiveness and positively impact the retention of staff. The groups provide a safe space for educators to revisit their purposes in their school communities, reflect on their own cultural beliefs and values and reflect on how those attributes help support their identities as educators. The minimal costs associated with the program is also a positive for others interested in implementation.

How Program Was Carried Out

In response to the healing circles facilitated at the request of HCPS staff during the summer of unrest following the murder of George Floyd, participants asked for a safe space for allies and co-conspirators to share concerns and questions, while other participants asked for space and opportunity to delve deeper as a collective group of Black staff members and teachers of color. The Office of E.D.O. currently sponsors the following groups: Teachers of Color (including indigenous/Asian/Pacific Islander/Latine(x)/Hispanic) and Black Educators (B.E.C.) are allies and co-conspirators. Monthly meetings with participants (including guest speakers), professional development opportunities (like conferences, book clubs and co-facilitation), mindfulness excursions (like B.E.C. Unplugged and E.D.O Unplugged), and consultation for staff issues are

all part of this support. They set up monthly meetings, set agendas that include relevant information and topics based on what the group members say they want to hear, run meetings, and make sure everyone is safe to share in accordance with established group norms. In order to make sure that this work is done in a way that is both appropriate and timely, the affinity groups for staff have been set up in cycles. For now, we're only going to talk about two groups because they've been in effect for the last two years.

- The Allyship/CoConspirator Education Resource Group, Cycle One, *Understanding Your Role* is a place for staff to learn about their roles and responsibilities as allies and collaborators for social change, both personally and in the educational ecosystem. They also talk about ways to change the status quo of racial inequalities in education. During Cycle Two, *Changing Hearts* members work on improving their communication skills so that they can do things to fight educational inequality. During Cycle Three, *Navigating Pushback* providing viable best practices for responding to push back from stakeholders who do not believe in the work. During Cycle Four, *Elevation* believes in the advancement of this work by learning about other efforts inside and outside of the county around this work and elevating your own efforts with the wider educational community.
- The Black Educator Collective, is made up of four cycles. *Cycle One: Voice* is a place where staff can talk about their past and current feelings about being a Black staff member in HCPS, figure out how to talk about their concerns with their peers and leaders, and figure out how to solve problems for Black staff and students. For Cycle Two, the focus is *Agency*. The focus on agency allows educators to talk about how dynamic historical and current Black educators have made a difference in the field of education and how their efforts compare to current pedagogical practices. Cycle Three focuses on *Recognition*. The goal is to recognize educators for their positive contributions to the field of education both inside and outside of the classroom or school. *Cycle Four: Elevation* believes in the

advancement of Black educators and the promotion of their professional expertise in HCPS and the wider educational community. Educators are challenged with promoting their professional capacities to the next level by exploring: professional affiliations and organizations, conference attendance, conference proposals and presentations, publications and submissions, professional development opportunities, leadership opportunities. Elevation aims to equip BEC participants with a voice to highlight the educational experiences of students, communities and themselves.

All of our Education Resource Groups/Staff Affinity Groups have utilized partnerships with outside organizations as it relates to guest speakers and excursion opportunities, specifically in support of *Unplugged* events. *The Unplugged* events provide experiences for the education resource groups participants to explore enriching opportunities that support staff's mental and emotional well-being. In May 2021, B.E.C. hosted its first Healing Hike with *The Valentine Museum's* Figures of Freedom Shockoe Bottom Tour. It was designed to help B.E.C. participants learn and utilize self-care techniques for navigating life. In August 2021, the Office of E.D.O. sponsored its first *E.D.O., Unplugged* event. All of the ERGs visited the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts' *The Dirty South* exhibit. To date, we have serviced over 120 participants in our voluntary Education Resource Groups.

To further expand its capacity to meet the requests of educators in the division, the Office of EDO has established co-facilitators, volunteers to assist in facilitating meetings for new, incoming cycle groups. This opportunity creates mentorship relationships between staff in a safe, positive manner.

Financing and Staffing

The education resource groups program has a limited budgetary impact. We serviced all four programs for less than \$3,000 in budgeted funds. Our expenses include paying staff to facilitate meetings and serve as a coach to present concerns, as well as paying for one outing per affinity group each year. These workshops and outings are designed to empower participants and correspond with the groups' areas of interest. A significant portion of costs were covered by in-kind gifts.

We were fortunate to have been allocated Title II funds to build a professional library. We purchased a significant number of books that support our culturally responsive education model and had additional funds from this project. This additional allocation coincided with the staff's request for book discussion groups centered around anti-racism and social justice. Book group members interacted virtually on Microsoft Teams for two discussions in the spring of 2021.

Program Results

Since the 2020 development of education resource groups, staff have expressed an appreciation to the Office of Equity, Diversity and Opportunity for the establishment of the groups via virtual and face-to-face conversations and email correspondences. One of our 120-plus participants wrote:

"The timing of each session could not have been more perfect. If I needed to feel like a part of a community, we were one. If I needed validation that what I was doing was right, I was affirmed...My only question is, why did it take so long for us to have a safe space like this. I am beyond honored to be a member of this collective. I am amazed by our ability to fellowship, grow and learn with one another."

Brief Summary

The HCPS Office of Equity, Diversity and Opportunity has established and utilized education resource groups to support and retain teachers. Educators in these affinity groups receive support during monthly meetings that fosters and promotes professional excellence, access to additional professional development opportunities to enhance their instructional growth and greater opportunities to participate in workshops that promote belonging and identity.

The Office of E.D.O. currently sponsors the following groups: Teachers of Color (including indigenous/Asian/Pacific Islander/Latine(x)/Hispanic) and Black Educators (B.E.C.). Groups set up monthly meetings, set agendas that include relevant information and topics based on what the members say they want to hear, run meetings, and make sure everyone is safe to share in accordance with established group norms.

The essence of the education resource groups is centered around the importance of inclusion and belonging as a way to connect staff with others in the professional community with a shared affinity/likeness. The overarching goal of the education resource groups is that staff members, having an established sense of self, confidence and camaraderie, will extend a confident sense of belonging to their students, colleagues and school communities. HCPS is hopeful that through the continuation and expansion of these groups, we can more effectively support educators in their social and emotional well-being, strengthen their confidence and authenticity and enhance employee connection, satisfaction and retention.