



# Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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Date: September 24, 2019

To: Board of Education  
Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent

From: Ebony Lofton  
Chief Academic and Accountability Officer

Re: YEMBA Affinity Group Implementation: S.T.A.R.S. Program

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In an effort to address community feedback and in alignment with the district's newly adopted equity policy, the Teaching and Learning Department is seeking to partner with YEMBA to support student affinity groups at both Brooks Middle School and Julian Middle School. Qualitative student data gleaned from student narratives as well as district sponsored community conversations suggest that African American and Latinx students are disproportionately impacted by racial inequity which can result in a number of different stressors that can impact a sense of belonging – one of the hallmarks of the district's vision.

The district's equity policy reveals that there are nine areas that are crucial to overall policy implementation. A key area that affinity group implementation will assist in addressing is the commitment to stakeholder and community engagement. The policy states, "District 97 will include other partners who have demonstrated culturally-specific expertise in meeting its educational outcomes. District 97 will work with community partners and families to provide intentional, targeted outreach that ensures families and students feel welcome and understand the services available to them and how to access information as well as provide opportunities for engagement with teachers and staff at times and places that are consistent with needs of all families." By developing and supporting student affinity groups with the department seeks to provide said intentional and targeted outreach to ensure that students feel welcome and that the district supports students in exploring identity, advocacy and leadership.

The STARS program supports students by leveraging a 20-hour curriculum over weekly sessions that take place after school at each middle school. Session titles include (but are not limited to):

- Defining identity, race and culture
- My values and my community
- Exploring race, racism, bias and discrimination
- Identity, power and privilege
- Exploring race and education
- Media influences on identity
- Youth social movements throughout history
- Civic dialogue

The program culminates with a community action project. The sessions would take place from October 2019 through May 2020. Each session would be supported by one facilitator, two adult mentors and three to five junior mentors (high school students). Each session would last approximately ninety minutes.

The total program cost is estimated at \$45,000. The estimated cost would cover the delivery of 55 student workshops, supplies, equipment, etc.