

ELAD PSEL 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

The demographics of the Heritage Middle School has changed drastically in the past several years. The presence of diversity is exciting and provides so many organic opportunities for students and staff to become more educated on various races, cultures, and religions. However, there is much work to be done in order to fully embrace these possibilities. Oftentimes, students in marginalized groups remain in the outskirts and struggle to find their way in. During my internship I was able to collaborate with our high school Black Student Union to create our first ever BSU at Heritage! While this began as part of my action plan, it quickly became a passion project as well. After collecting data and performing a needs assessment, it was clear to me that this was something that my students wanted. I reached out to the teacher leaders of the BSU at the high school to find out how we might make this accessible to the students at the middle school level. The two teachers were extremely helpful and offered to be co-advisors of this club with me. As a White teacher, I was not the face that could head this so I was able to delegate some of this responsibility. We met several times to plan out how our club would run. We established our “why” and had very candid conversations about the rise in racism in our schools. I decided that I wanted to have student ambassadors at the middle school level and opened applications to our students. Four students were chosen, two male, two female, two seventh graders, and two eighth graders. Together we met with the teacher advisors and high school BSU student volunteers to discuss some ideas, find out how their club works, and make future plans for our own. My students, with the help of their high school buddies, created a list of topics for discussion at future meetings. We decided that the first meeting would be a short discussion of two topics followed by games and food. We want kids to come! The two topics that the students chose were: What does it mean to be Black? And Code switching: Why it is necessary for their survival. The students created posters and hung them all over the school. They also made a video announcement that has been playing on our morning announcements. Students stop by my room all day asking how they can join the club. This is something that I am so incredibly proud of. Our first meeting is Tuesday, April 9. I can’t wait to see how it goes!