

Hi Students and Parents of Da Vinci Communications,

Everything we're seeing right now has generated a lot of difficult questions and intense feelings. It's important in these times that we be able to talk openly, honestly, and gently as best we can. The death of George Floyd has once again disclosed an enormous, unfathomably deep collective wound in our country and amongst our students, teachers, and families on a most personal level. The grief, anger, and sadness are too great.

(Andrew) This week we will hold spaces for students and staff to build community and ensure that our students are seen, heard, and valued. We will have "Affinity Groups" on Thursday as well as grade-level discussions on Friday.

First, we will explain what an affinity group is: it is a designated "brave space," where everyone in that group shares a particular identity. This identity can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, language, nationality, physical/mental ability, socio-economic class, family structure, religion, etc. Affinity groups can be a place for people in a community to come together to learn more about their identifiers and to feel more connected based on those identifiers. During affinity groups, participants might share and talk about their experiences or focus on working towards a particular mission or goal.

(Andrew) On Thursday, June 4th, we will open up three affinity groups for student participation: one for black students, one for white students, and one for all students of color. These groups will be led by DVC staff, and students can join the space that best represents their ethnic identity. All of our identities impact how we experience the world, and this is why we are choosing to provide the opportunity for students to share in these affinity groups.

(Andrew) The affinity groups will be meeting on Thursday at the following times:

9:45am - Black/ African American students

9:45 am- White Students

11:00am- Students of Color

Students, if you have a POL scheduled at the same time as an affinity group is scheduled, you have two options: (1) You can be exempted from your POL with no effect on your grade or (2) You can reschedule your POL without penalty. If you would like to participate in an affinity group, please sign up at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/affinitygroupsDV>

(Andrew) On Friday, June 5th, we will organize opportunities for grade level discussions led by DVC staff. Students will have a chance to further discuss these experiences and issues with their grade-level peers. This day will be changed from a day of POLs to a day of reflection for both staff and students, and all students who have a POL on Friday, June 5th will be excused from their POL with no requirement to reschedule and no penalty to their grade.

It is also important to note that any student may be exempted from completing their POL during this time, and that a student's grade on their POL will not negatively affect their grades in any of their classes, even if they do complete it.

(Erin) Students, we want you to know that we are here for you - whatever you need. If you have worked hard on your POL and you'd like an opportunity to share it, we welcome that. If you need relief from the stress of academics, we hear you and grant you that relief.

(Erin) To our black community, we want you to know that we see you and we hear you and we know that you are hurting now and have been hurting for a long time. We will work to make things better for you at DVC; you have our commitment to that work. Black students and Black lives matter.

(Andrew) To our entire DVC community, the combination of a global pandemic and a national emergency is unprecedented. Though our response to all of this has not been perfect, we want you to know that we care tremendously about the health and well-being of our students, staff, and families. We strive to always do better, and we want you to know that nothing - no project, no POL, no assignment, no deadline - is more important than your life.

With love,

Erin & Andrew