



National Association  
of Independent Schools

## Affinity Groups as Self-managed Conversations

Affinity groups are an integral part of the experience at the NAIS People of Color Conference. We encourage all conference-goers to attend these sessions to connect and build community and camaraderie with others who share a racial and ethnic identity and heritage.

PoCC offers a team of trained facilitators, or hosts, charged with welcoming, orienting, and helping attendees organize during the conference's Affinity Group Sessions. During the sessions, each larger affinity community breaks down into smaller conversation groups of six to 10 within their designated locations.

In most all affinity group communities, the small conversation groups are self-managed. In other words: Rather than having an assigned "leader," members take collective responsibility for ensuring that their group interacts respectfully and meets their own and others' needs for authenticity, personal growth, and development. At PoCC, we rely on the natural capacities of groups for healthy self-management and use our Principles of Conversational Leadership and Shared Work to support agreed-upon additional guidance when needed. Small-group members may also elect to structure their conversations by seeking volunteers for the following roles:

- Time keeper: Ensures that participants are aware of the time available to complete their task(s).
- Conversation steward: Helps the group stay on topic and mindful of the value of giving everyone the opportunity to speak and listen.
- Scribe: Records group work, as needed or desired.
- Participants: Actively engage with the questions while managing their contributions and their willingness to create opportunity for others to participate as well.
- Other roles: As needed.

At PoCC, we affirm that people are capable of having and hosting the conversations that matter. We look to human history for evidence of this capacity, as all of our ancestors have gathered around campfires and in circles, councils, and other contemplative interactions to illuminate, share, harvest, and celebrate collective wisdom. We hope that you will join in this tradition and conference mainstay by participating in the Affinity Group Sessions.