

Fostering Ethnic and Ethical Relationships (FREE) program
Spanish: Fomento de relaciones étnicas y éticas programa

Participating University: Middlebury Institute for International Studies
Prepared By: Femi Higgins
Proposed Dates: April 2022 – July 2022
Proposed Location: Minneapolis, MN

Justification:

Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), among the most segregated school districts in the country, is a symbol of America's racial divide—a place where members of the *BIPOC*¹ community feel excluded, disrespected, and cut off from opportunities. As a former teacher in MPS, I witnessed how schooling both causes and perpetuates social inequity and violence through the unequal distribution of power and resources. MPS decision to rezone local schools is one example of these heightened injustices. In 2020, MPS rolled out a new school plan to overhaul and integrate its schools. This new school policy mandated students to stay at their local schools instead of attending schools outside their zone. As a result, the plan did two things: it required white students to integrate into predominately black schools within their zone and asked BIPOC students to stay in their zone schools deprived of resources.

This rezoning policy exacerbated intergroup hostility under conditions of ethnic tension. For example, the racialized perception white families have of North Minneapolis, a historically Black neighborhood, as being poor, drug-ridden, and a community with violent crime influences the interactions they are having with Black residents in the community and the schools. Moreover, the reintegration plan led to new program cuts and shifts in resources that caused students and teachers to protest the proposal, deepening racial conflicts. The reintegration policy and practices enforce marginalization and geographical isolation between schools and communities, which destabilizes education and contribute to a history of conflict between ethnic groups. It is necessary to invest in an interdisciplinary, intercultural education program that helps people develop skills for effective and ethical intercultural exchange that contribute substantially to peaceful outcomes where divisive conflict and numbing indifference often prevail.

Partnership:

MPS structural and cultural violence undermines the spectrum of human rights, including the right to a safe and equitable school. The [Education for Liberation MN \(EdLib\)](#) works to combat this problem. EdLib MN is the Minnesota chapter based in Minneapolis and part of the EdLib non-profit organization. They provide advocacy, teacher training, and action-research to protect the fundamental rights of minorities. Over the past two years, EdLib MN has played a pivotal role in advancing Minnesota ethnic studies coalition, launching an ethnic studies summer camp for teachers and youth leaders, and co-creating the [MPD150](#) report to highlight police brutality in the community. In preparing for the project for peace proposal, EdLib MN and I entered a partnership in December 2021 to create a summer camp to train teachers and youth leaders on intercultural learning, human rights education, and peacebuilding.

The Project:

My project—Fostering Ethnic and Ethical Relationships will enhance the work of EdLib MN to reach a wider audience and expand their ethnic studies camp for teachers and youth leaders. Humanization and democratization are core principles of EdLib MN; therefore, EdLib MN members and I will share responsibilities in the design and facilitation of the FREE camp. If we implement the FREE summer camp to improve the culture and climate of MPS schools, including the following specific components of the FREE curriculum for teachers and youth leaders who work at MPS, then participants will create intercultural learning experiences and an effective peacebuilding and human rights model that will foster peace and coexistence in their schools.

¹ The acronym BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This term is specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color.

Part 1: Community Outreach/Resources

1. Plan an outreach event that will contain the following:
 - a. Live webinar that will provide information about the FREE Summer camp.
 - b. Promotional materials to advertise the summer camp and promote the live podcast event.
 - c. Recruit 40 participants comprised of teachers and youth workers.

Part 2: FREE Curriculum Design (Framework below) / Resources

1. Form two committees: planning and curriculum committee.
2. Curriculum committee will co-design the JEDI labs and intercultural workshops
 - a. Planning committee will create the dates and times for the summer camp.
 - b. Recruit AmeriCorps volunteers via [Minnesota Alliance with Youth](#) to engage stakeholders and support with workshop facilitations.
 - c. EdLib will provide additional resources such as flipchart, markers, volunteers, etc.

Fostering Ethnic and Ethical Relationships Framework		
Interculturality	Human Rights Education	Peacebuilding
<i>Contextually Relevant Curricula/Pedagogy</i>	<i>Deep Analyses of Social Inequalities</i>	<i>Cultivation of Transformative agency</i>
Develop the knowledge, skills, and understanding needed to further our own intercultural development, design intercultural curricula, and facilitate intercultural learning.	Creating a school community where we recognize the dignity of learners and teachers, as well as supporting the capacity of teachers to act in the face of structural constraints.	Developing skills for peaceful relations, good governance (school system), and the prevention of conflict and peace building.

Part 3: Intercultural Development inventory (IDI)

1. Administer the IDI to gain in-depth insight into individuals’ and groups’ intercultural competence.
 - a. Launch debriefing sessions with participants to support their intercultural development growth and offer resources to contribute to their professional development.

Part 4: JEDI Workshops

1. Session workshops to design an intercultural learning curriculum that promotes peace, intergroup dialogue, and cultural understanding.
2. Use Human Rights Education & Peacebuilding framework to design action items for advocacy and social change in schools.
3. Partnership with the [The Eastside Freedom Library](#) to host JEDI workshops.

Part 5: Organize live Podcast Event

1. A live podcast panel discussion will talk about how education can moderate peace and human rights and good practices of cultural diversity and integrity to create awareness for people about cultural misconceptions and social mindsets.

Future Impact & Measuring Outcomes

At the end of the program, participants will gain new knowledge and skills that contribute to future equity workshops, curricula development planning sessions, and leadership discussions about school climate and culture at their sites. Every year, EdLib MN has hosted summer camps annually to support teacher’s development, so after the end of our project they will continue to host the summer camp with the FREE curriculum. In addition, we will create an alumni network of designated peace leaders who will mentor and recruit new educators for the annual FREE summer camp. To ensure sustainability, we will create pre- and post-surveys to use before and after each week to capture reactions and gauge effectiveness and quality of the FREE curriculum. We intended the process and product to reflect liberating principles, both consciously made for building peace, which will produce a tested model with engaged community leaders and educators who will move the idea forward to sustain peace. At the end, I hope to build a sound foundation for the FREE program to facilitate a more efficient and effective engagement and mitigate identity-based violence in schools and the larger community, fostering peace and unity.

Projects for Peace Budget Template

Name: Femi Higgins
Project Name: Fostering Ethnic and Ethical Relationships program
School: Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey

TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING:
0

Total Additional Funding:				
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TOTAL EXPENDITURES:
10000

Student Expenses					Project Expenses				
Travel (Including Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food (Biweekly)	Miscellaneous	Non-Student Travel and Lodging	Direct Equipment and Supplies	Marketing and Event Support	Staffing Costs	Miscellaneous
\$150.00	\$800	\$0	\$1,050	\$0	\$0	\$149.00	\$431	\$5,500	\$1,920
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
150	800	0	1050	0	0	149	431	5500	1920

Total Student Expenses:
2000

Total Project Expenses:
8000

This form should be used to prepare your final budget and submitted with your project's final report.