

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Steelcase Foundation Awards Affinity Mentoring Multi Year DEI Grant

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – Nov. 1, 2021 – Affinity Mentoring, a nonprofit that provides one-on-one mentoring relationships for students at specific K-8 schools in Grand Rapids Public Schools and Godfrey-Lee Public Schools, today announced that the Steelcase Foundation has awarded Affinity a three year grant totaling \$225,000 to support its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

“We are deeply grateful to the Steelcase Foundation staff and board for recognizing that true, long-term change requires us to engage in interventions on a systems and community level in addition to the individual level. We will continue to work incredibly hard to be open and transparent about the why behind any changes you see, and to always present to you the data that directly connects back to the impacts of mentoring,” says Cassandra Kiger, Executive Director.

This grant will support initiatives such as:

- Interpretation and translation services
- Recruiting diverse mentors
- DEI training for mentors, staff, and board members
- The [Middle School Mentoring Steering Committee](#)
- Internal staff and board DEI Committee
- Upgraded data collection and evaluation
- Increasing and sustaining our partnerships with diverse community partners
- Equity Based Barrier Reduction Work (includes staff time addressing student and family concerns that impede relationship building and social-emotional growth and learning)

“We’re excited to continue partnering with Affinity Mentoring as it works to amplify its already strong programming. Affinity’s commitment to transparency, data-informed decision making, and holistic support for the young people in its care through mutually beneficial mentoring relationships is a tremendous resource for children and families, especially as we come out of COVID. We know every child can benefit from another caring adult in their life, and we appreciate Affinity’s efforts to finetune its organization and infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion into every facet of its work to ensure those relationships are impactful as possible,” says Daniel Williams, Steelcase Foundation President.

Cassandra explains, “Not all students arrive at school with the same stressors and concerns. At Affinity, over 80%+ of our students identify as Hispanic and/or Latinx and whose first language in the home is Spanish, and 90%+ receive free and reduced lunches. Statistically, these students and families have taken the brunt of the effects of the pandemic, in addition to systemic racism and unequal effects of poverty and discrimination. Only in recognizing and addressing the individual, familial, and structural burdens placed on students can we offer comprehensive social-emotional support to help students re-engage in education and feel safe at school.”

As outlined in the recent [Grand Rapids City resolution](#), racism directly impacts education, as well as short and long term health. This work, supported by the Steelcase Foundation, will directly impact Affinity’s ultimate goal of providing individual, one hour per week mentoring with trained, safe, supportive adults to support the growth of leadership and social-emotional skills, as well as math and literacy skills, as we work towards the mutual liberation of all community members.

This is the second multi year grant Affinity has received from the Steelcase Foundation. Affinity is developing a robust fund development plan that includes grants, individual donations, corporate sponsorships, special events, and in-kind donations to ensure a diverse and sustainable growth plan.

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### **About Affinity Mentoring**

Affinity Mentoring is a 501c3 nonprofit organization whose mission is to facilitate equitable growth in academics, social emotional skills, and self-esteem through mutually beneficial mentoring relationships. We believe in cultivating a brave space that amplifies the voices of young agents of change in a diverse and inclusive community. Our vision is to be a leading nonprofit for fostering belonging alongside young people, families, and community. We partner with organizations, schools, corporations, and individuals to provide high quality, culturally responsive mentoring to school-age children. For more information, visit <https://affinitymentoring.org/>.