

Information About GSAs

WHAT IS A GSA?

A gay-straight alliance (GSA) is a school-based group organized to end anti-gay bias and homophobia in schools and create positive change, making schools a welcoming and safe place for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. GSAs help eliminate anti-gay bias, discrimination, harassment and violence by educating school communities about homophobia and the lives of youth.

What is Student Pride?

Student Pride, a project of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), is a network of over 700 GSAs and other school-based groups across the nation. Student Pride provides resources, materials, education, workshops and a range of other services supporting the work of student organizers and GSAs.

GLSEN & GSAs

GLSEN is the largest national organization bringing together students, teachers, parents and concerned citizens from all walks of life, working to end anti-LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) bias in schools across the nation.

GLSEN Chapters (over 90 across the nation) and Gay-Straight Alliances can share resources to make positive change in local school communities across the country.

Networking

Networking with other GSAs in your town, city, state or across the nation can provide you with other resources and information. Below are resources you may want to use towards networking with other GSAs in your area.

National

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Public School Edition

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10 Steps Towards Starting a GSA

- In a Public School

The steps listed below are intended for use in public, secondary schools where other non-curricular clubs already exist or are allowed.

Because situations and schools vary, there are no simple 10 steps that are applicable to every school. Please contact any of the networks listed on the back for individual help in starting a GSA in your school.

For a more detailed manual on how to start a GSA, please visit Student Pride Online @ www.studentprideUSA.org.

Steps

1

Follow Guidelines

Establish a GSA the same way you would any other group or club. Look in your Student Handbook for your school's rules regarding clubs. Some schools require students to go through a process for establishing a club, this could include writing a constitution or showing student interest.

2

Find a Faculty Advisor

Find teachers or staff members who you think would be supportive or who have already shown themselves to be an ally around sexual orientation and gender identity issues. See your school rules for more information about who can be a club advisor.

3

Find Other Students

Work with a diverse range of students who are interested in such a group. You may check with other existing clubs for students who might have an interest.

4

Inform Administration

Inform administrators of what you are doing right away. It can be very helpful to have them on your side. They can work as liaisons to teachers, parents, community members and the school board. If an administrator opposes the GSA, provide them information about the Federal Equal Access Act (EAA). You can find more information and copies of the EAA by calling Student Pride, or visiting our web.

5

Pick a Meeting Place

You may wish to find a meeting place within the school that offers some level of privacy, yet is still accessible.

6

Advertise

There are many ways to advertise – think about how you've seen other clubs advertise. This could be any combination of using your school bulletin, announcements, flyers, or word-of-mouth. If your flyers are defaced or torn down, do not be discouraged. Plan to have people check on them throughout the day and replace if necessary. Eventually, whoever is tearing them down will give up, or be reprimanded by the school. Besides, advertising your group and having words up such as “gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender” or “end homophobia” can be part of educating the school, and can actually

make other students feel safer – even if they never attend a single meeting.

7

Plan Your Meeting

Of course you want to have a good meeting, so plan ahead of time. There are tons of things you can do, from discussions to inviting speakers, workshops to games. Visit Student Pride online for ideas.

8

Hold Your Meeting!

You may want to start with a discussion about why people feel the group is needed or important. You can also brainstorm what things your club could do this year.

9

Establish Ground Rules

Many groups have ground rules in order to ensure that group discussions are safe, confidential and respectful. Many groups have a ground rule that no assumptions or labels are used about a group member's sexual orientation.

10

Plan for the Future

Develop an action plan. Brainstorm activities. Set goals for what you want to work towards. If you haven't already done so, contact Student Pride so that you may share ideas, resources and information. Also look into local GSA networks in your town or city (see back).

These 10 steps are based on a variety of actual experiences from GSAs. Not every school is the same, so share your experiences with others so they can learn what worked for your group!