

ALLY ACTION

Who can help us the most to end anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in your school? ALLIES! GLSEN is proud to be encouraging students to end anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in K-12 schools with our second annual action, Ally Week! What better way to kick-off the school year than to have your student club identify and support allies in your school?

Ally Week can be simple, passing out stickers to allies who sign the pledge, or more advanced with an event or series of events planned throughout the week. Check out the sidebar for ideas for Ally Week activities in your school. Remember, Ally Week is about identifying and supporting allies in your school and asking them to sign the Ally Pledge to intervene in bullying and harassment throughout the school year. Your Ally Week activities will be most successful if they help support allies to know how to intervene but also make them feel good and proud to be allies!

Ideas for Ally Week Activities

- Tabling in school cafeteria
- Student and/or Teacher Training
- Lunchtime ZAPs
- Ask allies to attend GSA meeting
- Ally Bagel Breakfast or Ally Lunch/Pizza Party
- Bulletin boards
- After-school activities like LGBT Jeopardy or LGBT bingo
- Bring the local LGBT center theatre group or other speaker to school
- GSA - Student Club Exchange

1. Get Permission

Doing any activity in your school usually requires the approval of the principal or other administrator. Whether it's to post fliers, use space or make announcements about the activity. Especially with a day of action to identify and train allies, students and teachers in your school, having your principal's support or "okay" will help make your activity more successful. Just like the Day of Silence, working with your school's administration at the beginning will also avoid conflicts like finding out the day before that you cannot host the teacher training. Rebecca from Houston asked her principal to have herself and other students present to the board of her private school. It is important to prepare a presentation with the reasons you want to do the activity and how it will impact the school in a positive way. A presentation to your school administration also helps to show how the action fits into the school's mission to build community and/or educate students. Refer to the Day of Silence manual and sample letter to the administration as resources, both are available at www.dayofsilence.org.

2. Build a Core Group & Action Plan

Doing it alone isn't the best option! Working with others adds more perspective and ideas, as well as people power to get everything done. If you have a student club commonly known as a gay-straight alliance (GSA) in your school, have them sponsor it. Other clubs may also be willing to sponsor Ally Week or to be part of a coalition. Don't be afraid to ask other student clubs who you may not think will be supportive; all they can do is say "no". Additionally, having a clear sense of what you want to accomplish will make your work more effective and your Ally Week more successful. How many allies do you want to sign pledge cards? How many events do you want to plan? How many other student clubs do you want to join your Ally Week Coalition? Having SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reaching & Timely) goals will also help you evaluate your Day of Action at the end of the Ally Week.

There's an endless list of events you could do to identify and support allies in your school; determine what you think will work best. You could even partner with other schools in your district or community to host community-wide Ally Week activities. The great thing about Days of Action like Ally Week is that the activities can be adaptable, from asking students and teachers to sign the pledge and giving them a sticker, to trainings for students and teachers or a whole week of activities in your school.

Another way to build allies in larger numbers is to have a GSA - Student Club Exchange, wherein your GSA (or similar group) visits a meeting of another student group, and exchanges information about the mission of each of your groups and how you can collaborate in the future. A great way to start collaborating is to co-organize a party or picnic. There are several ways to build your ally base, but it's important to remember that with the Day of Action being at the beginning of the year it may be good to have smaller goals and build on your success throughout the year. Refer to the resource from Advocates for Youth and Girl's Best Friend at:

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/safespace/index.htm#resources>

3. It's Almost Always About the Numbers & Being Visible

You've got your principal willing to back you up and a team with a plan, now it's time to get others involved. Outreach is another key to any successful Day of Action. While even a small group of allies may change the climate in your school, the more allies you can identify, the larger an impact you'll make in your school. One of the best ways to develop ideas for outreach is to have a brainstorming meeting with your core group. It's also important to determine how your Ally Week will create visibility for ending anti-LGBT bias and harassment throughout the school year. Will you buy the Ally Week buttons? Print stickers for participants of the Ally Week Student & Teacher Training or make t-shirts to sell at the Ally Week party? Don't forget, it's not just about one day or one week but changing the climate in your school for the entire school year and for future years. Check out the Ally Week website for more information about buttons and stickers or for ideas for outreach, also don't forget to register your student club's participation, at www.dayofsilence.org/ally.

4. Be Safe

Are you the only one in your school who wants to work on this issue? Is your administration hostile to doing any activity that addresses LGBT issues? It's important to determine which actions are safe for you, the student club, and/or others involved in Ally Week. GLSEN's work is about ensuring the safety of all students in K-12 schools, and we don't want you to put yourself and others in any harm. Therefore, it's always important to know how and whom to report any bullying or harassment to. Know your rights in your school and/or district or check out a legal resource for more information at www.nclrights.org, www.aclu.org or www.lambda.org.

5. Make an "Ask"

Days of Action are about using advocacy in your student club and schools, to improve the climate of your school by ending and/or reducing bullying and harassment. An "ask" is making a specific request to a decision-maker, or someone who can give you what you want, by asking for help with your issue, and offering solutions to the problem. With Ally Week, you can ask allies in your school to intervene in bullying and harassment as well empower themselves to do other activities as allies. Also, you can have a school-wide ask with Ally Week like having the GSA be approved as an official student club, getting books and other resources in the library about being an LGBT ally, or having a teacher training supported by the principal. For more ideas about making an ask, check out the More than Silence resource on the Day of Silence website, www.dayofsilence.org.

So, are you feeling ready to plan your school's Ally Week? Some other important steps are to document and evaluate your Day of Action. Did you achieve your goals? What could you do differently next year? What worked well that you should do again? Also, what should you do to prepare for other Days of Action: Transgender Day of Remembrance, Dr. MLK, Jr. Organizing Weekend and the Day of Silence?

For more information on this resource, contact:
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