

The GLSEN Jump-Start

A How-To Guide for New and Established GSAs



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How to Use the Table of Contents

- Section #** The "question" identifies what each section is about
a Sub-section identifies **Title of Activity**
 + *Identifies Additional Resources Available in Appendix*

From Merriam-Webster OnLine:

Main Entry: **jump-start**

Pronunciation: 'j&mp-'stärt

Function: transitive verb

Date: 1973

1 : to start (an engine or vehicle) by temporary connection to an external power source (as another vehicle's battery)

2 a : to get off to a speedy start

<advertising can jump-start a political campaign> **b** : to impart fresh or renewed energy to : **ENERGIZE** <a plan to jump-start the stagnant economy>

- **jump start** noun

Please note...

We have chosen to use gender-neutral pronouns and language in this resource, in order to show respect for our readers who may not identify as "he" or "she." The drawback to this choice is questionable grammar, but we hope that you will overlook it in support of everyone's right to gender self-identification.

The GLSEN Jump-Start

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Welcome to The Jump-Start! GLSEN has created this resource for new and already-established gay-straight alliances (GSAs) or similar groups, to assist you as you begin to organize and plan for the school year. We've been hearing from many student organizers that they need concrete ideas for building, shaping and activating their groups, and that's what The Jump-Start is all about. It takes you through the actual process of establishing or re-establishing your group, identifying your mission and goals, and assessing your school's climate. It also offers pointers and resources for further consideration and use.

This Jump-Start, the first in a series of installments, is divided into five sections, plus the introduction, conclusion, and appendix. Sections 1-5 contain activity plans that focus on specific themes and group issues, and follow the order in which these issues may arise for your group. Each section builds upon the work of the previous section, so we encourage you to try all of the activities; or, you can simply pick and choose activities that you consider most applicable to your group's needs. The activities outlined in this Jump-Start involve lots of brainstorming, discussing, and writing. It's important as you begin working in your GSA to have clear, honest conversations, and to document them. That way, you'll get everyone's input, learn how to make decisions as a group, and create a record of your ideas for future reference.

Over the next few months, we will be posting follow-up ideas, activities and resources in the "Students & GSAs/Student Resources" section of our website (www.glsen.org). We welcome feedback, suggestions and requests if you'd like to see particular topics addressed in the Jump-Start web resources and future Jump-Start guides. Just email us: jumpstart@gsen.org.

We wish you all the best as you continue your work towards creating safer schools for all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Why I'm Here Today and Where My Priorities Lie**Section 1a****● Ready...**

People join groups for a variety of reasons, and bring a variety of experiences to those groups. Perhaps some of the people attending today are here because they identify as LGBT; others, because they're questioning their sexual orientations, gender identities, or the ways in which they express their gender. Some may be perceived to be LGBT, whether or not they've chosen to identify as such. Some may have LGBT relatives, friends, or acquaintances. Some may be concerned about any kind of bias and discrimination in the school community. Some may be here out of curiosity, or for the snacks. Whatever the reasons, it's important for each person here to take some time to reflect on what brought them and what they bring to the group, and to learn about one another's motivations and aspirations. Beginning the year with this understanding will help the group to set common goals and work together in meeting them. It's always easier to collaborate when you know where everyone's coming from, and where everyone wants to go!

● Set...

People: entire group - working first as individuals, then in pairs, then as a whole

Tools: index cards (2 per person), pens (1 per person), large construction paper (lots), markers (just a few), tape

Time: 35-55 minutes

+ 10 *Awesome GSA Activities and Icebreakers*

○ Go!

Each person should take two index cards. At the top of the first card, write "Why I'm Here Today." At the top of the second card, write "Where My Priorities Lie."

Why I'm Here Today (10 minutes)

Step 1: You now have 5 minutes to reflect on your individual motivations for coming to this meeting. This is the time to focus on your motivations, not your aspirations; what's driving you, not your destination (that's later). Keep in mind that what you write on the "Why I'm Here Today" card will only be shared with one other person in the group. Maybe a particular experience or event prompted your new interest in the group, and you'd like to describe it on your card. Maybe you've been thinking about LGBT rights for as long as you can remember. Write anything that comes to mind on the card, but give it some thought first, and try to be as specific as possible.

Step 2: Once everyone's written something on their "Why I'm Here Today" card, get into pairs and take 5 minutes (about 2 minutes for each partner) to share your motivations with your partner. Try to pair with someone you don't know very well, or haven't spoken to lately; in other words, someone who doesn't know just as well as you do what you wrote on your card! Once you and your partner have discussed your respective reasons for attending the meeting, separate.

Why I'm Here Today... (continued)**Section 1a****Where My Priorities Lie** (15-25 minutes)

Step 3: Now take another 5 minutes alone to consider what you hope to accomplish in this group. Do you hope to educate your teachers and peers? Educate yourself? Change a school policy? Expand your social network? Get some emotional support? What you write on the "Where My Priorities Lie" card will be shared with the entire group, but don't second-guess yourself. Don't minimize your aspirations, and don't be afraid to think big if you want to – this is a brainstorm, not a binding commitment. Again, write anything that comes to mind on the card, but give it some thought first, and try to be as specific as possible.

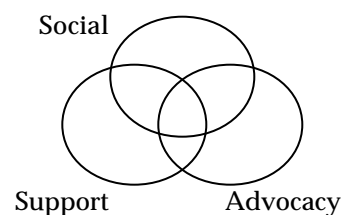
Step 4: Once everyone's written something on their "Where My Priorities Lie" card, come together as a whole group. Place a big sheet of paper on the floor, or tape it to the wall, and draw a big Venn diagram with three partially overlapping circles on it. Label one circle "Social," one circle "Support," and one circle "Advocacy." (You'll be taping your index cards inside the circles, so you should write the labels beside the circles.)

Step 5: One by one, each person should go to the diagram and attach their "Where My Priorities Lie" card to it. Those whose interest in the group is primarily social should attach their cards to the large part of the circle labeled "Social." Those who primarily seek support from the group should attach their cards to the large part of the circle labeled "Support." Those who primarily wish to organize actions to change their school's climate with regards to LGBT people and concerns should attach their cards to the large part of the "Advocacy" circle. Those whose priorities lie in more than one area should attach their cards to the overlapping parts of the diagram. Remember that everyone's priorities are important, and honesty should be explicitly encouraged and affirmed.

Step 6: Once all the cards have been placed, everyone should get a chance to return to the diagram and read all of the cards.

Group Aspirations (10-20 minutes)

Step 7: Now it's time to discuss your aspirations as a whole group. What commonalities and differences have appeared? Remember not to make judgments about anyone's priorities as you discuss them.

Where My Priorities Lie
Venn Diagram**Consider This...**

- o How might you use this information eventually to develop a mission statement, and to set group goals?
- o If you simply choose the priorities of the majority, you may alienate people who don't share those priorities.
- o If you try to accomplish every single priority of every single person, you may ultimately get nothing done!
- o What if nobody shares any priorities? (Hey, you never know.)
- o Don't worry about goal-setting just yet. The next activity, "Creating a Mission Statement," helps you to begin thinking more deeply about your group's identity and overall goals, and to draft your conclusions into a group mission statement.
- o Don't get frustrated by differences. Just absorb the information, listen to one another, and keep your diagram in a safe place so that you can use it, add to it, or laugh about it at future meetings.

Creating a Mission Statement

Section 2a

● Ready...

If you've ever looked at the print or online materials of organizations engaged in social action (such as GLSEN), you've probably noticed that such organizations usually have a mission statement. Often the mission statement appears at the front of the organization's publications, or on its website's main page, or even on every page of the site!

Mission statements serve several purposes: they identify the organization's reason for existence, the "problem" that the organization seeks to solve; they explain the actual work of the organization; they articulate the organization's general goals and driving beliefs; they establish a community with parameters. Mission statements are important both for those working within the organization, providing a framework for their activities, and for those outside the organization, providing an understanding of the organization's scope and a sense of its character. They should be simple, honest and direct, something members of the group could state as easily to a friend as they could to a school board member or the press.

● Set...

People: entire group, working first in several (2-5) small groups, then as a whole

Tools: large construction paper (10 sheets), markers, tape, *Where My Priorities Lie* diagram from Section 1

Time: 35-45 minutes, with some additional time for revisiting at future meetings

+ *GSA Mission Statements*

○ Go!

Round Robin: Group Identity and Mission (20 minutes)

This is another list-generating activity, so hang four sheets of paper side-by-side on the wall and place a marker beside each of them. Write "Who Are We?" at the top of the first sheet, "What Do We Stand For?" at the top of the second, "What Do We Do?" at the top of the third, and "How Do We Do It?" at the top of the fourth. Review what each of these questions means, using the ideas below.

? **"Who Are We?"** Who is in your group? You don't need to name or specifically describe each member, but you do want to indicate if the group is youth-only or inclusive of adult allies, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (LGBTQ)-only or inclusive of straight-identified allies, and any other important details about your group's organization.

? **"What Do We Stand For?"** What are the key elements of your group's philosophy? Safety? Respect? Diversity? Community Service? Direct Action? Education?

? **"What Do We Do?"** Even if you're still thinking about exactly what you plan to do as a group, you probably have an idea of your general goals, especially if you've done the "Where My Priorities Lie" activity. Some examples might be: raise awareness of anti-LGBT harassment in our school and in society; draw attention to gender role construction and gender inequity; confront the interconnected -isms (racism, sexism, classism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism) in the school community; provide a safe, supportive space for marginalized students, and so on.

Creating a Mission Statement (continued)

Section 2a

? **“How Do We Do It?”** Again, you may still be in the early stages of planning, or the early stages of thinking about planning, but you probably have a general sense of your **tactics**, or how you hope to accomplish your goals. (Look at your “Where My Priorities Lie” diagram!) Some groups have used tactics that include: circulating petitions requesting that their school board revise anti-harassment and anti-discrimination school policies in order to make them more inclusive; collaborating with teachers in developing lesson plans on LGBT history; organizing of a coalition of allies in the school community; holding fundraisers to support the purchase of LGBT library materials; holding weekly meetings where students can find support, voice their concerns, and/or plan educational events and social gatherings.

Think about the types of activities you might be interested in doing; when you get to planning specific goals and tactics later on in Section 5, you can revisit these ideas to determine whether or not they fulfill your mission.

Step 1: Divide into four groups and have each group begin in front of one of the sheets. Each group should briefly discuss the question posted, then formulate and write an answer on the sheet. Once each group has finished, the groups should simultaneously rotate to the next sheet. When each group gets to its next question, it should read what the previous group wrote in order to avoid repeating answers. Take about 5 minutes at each question sheet.

Crafting Your Mission Statement (15-25 minutes)

Step 2: Hang a fifth sheet of paper beside the other four sheets, and designate a person to document everyone’s ideas (the **“recorder”**). The recorder will write a final list of ideas from the group’s discussion of the answers on the four lists.

Step 3: Select two volunteers to serve as mission statement drafters. The two drafters will listen during Step 4 to everyone’s input and take notes, then work together before the next meeting to draft a mission statement for the group’s approval.

Step 4: Now it’s time to look at your four lists. How can you combine them into one clear, concise statement of 2-3 sentences? Is there anything on the lists that’s redundant, too vague, or too specific? An example of too vague would be “To improve our school”; an example of too specific would be “To hold a teach-in about anti-LGBT harassment on October 24th.” An effective mission statement uses language that’s active rather than passive. Lots of verbs, fewer adjectives. It should get at the idea of what your group **does**, rather than simply what your group **is**.

Consider This...

- o Mission Statements often include an infinitive that indicates a change in the status of a particular situation, or in your overall school climate; for example, *to increase, to decrease, to prevent, to eliminate*.
- o Even if your membership does not currently include individuals who identify as bisexual or transgender, it’s important that your mission statement convey the fact that your group is inclusive of LGBT issues and people.
- o How about designing a graphic or logo to print with your mission statement?
- o Once you’ve finalized your mission statement, consider: printing a copy of it for your group archives, submitting a copy to your school’s administration, posting copies around your school, having it printed in the school newspaper, printing it on all of your group’s published materials (flyers, posters, event programs, and so on).
- o Most importantly, make copies for everyone in your group! Your mission statement should lead your group’s efforts in planning its goals and projects.

Mapping Out a Meeting

Section 2b

● Ready...

You've heard it a gazillion times: "Youth Need Structure!" Well, that topic can be debated endlessly. You may have discovered an undeniable truth, however, by participating in other groups, or from previous experience in this one: **Meetings need structure!** Embrace this truth; it doesn't mean that your group is full of uptight, conformist, dull sticks in the mud. It just means that you want to get things done! Having a reliable meeting structure will make your space safer, your strategy more strategic, and will enable you to maximize your meeting time. Remember, you can renegotiate your structure, but you should have one that involves your entire group.

In order to make meetings more safe, respectful, focused and fun - and thus to work effectively as a group in supporting one another and planning activities - everyone should have the opportunity to contribute their voices to a discussion of what safety, respect, focus and fun actually look like, and how they can put them into practice. Remember, everyone brings many different perspectives, motivations and communication styles to this group, and nothing should be assumed or taken for granted! By negotiating Working Agreements (also known as "Ground Rules" and "Group Norms"), the group builds its own culture, a way of interacting and getting things done. The first part of this activity involves establishing Working Agreements. You may wish to take a break at some point between sections of this activity, as it is a long one overall.

● Set...

People: entire group, working first as individuals, then in smaller groups of two or three, then as a whole

Tools: loose-leaf paper (lots), pens (lots), large construction paper (lots), markers, tape, *Where My Priorities Lie* diagram from Section 1

Time: 40-65 minutes

+ *Working Agreements*

+ *Active Listening Model/Thorns and Roses Model*

+ *Running an Effective Meeting*

○ Go!

Snowball Fight (5 minutes)

Why not begin with an energizer that gets everyone out of their seats? Whether or not it's the season, you can have a snowball fight! The snowball fight is a game that helps you to begin your discussion of Working Agreements. Working Agreements are standards of behavior group members expect of one another so that a more safe, respectful and productive meeting space can exist.

? Keep the following questions in mind when thinking about Working Agreements: How do we want to speak to one another? How do we want to make decisions? How do we create an outlet for constructively acknowledging our differences rather than drowning in them? How do we enable everyone's full and equal participation? How do we balance the seriousness of our work with our need for a fun, relaxing space?

Mapping Out a Meeting (continued)**Section 2b**

Step 1: Designate a recorder, and hang one large sheet of paper on the wall.

Step 2: Each person should get a piece of paper and a pen, then take 2 minutes to reflect on the above questions and write down one Working Agreement that they believe is important for the group to adopt.

Step 3: Scrunch up the paper into snowballs, and have a snowball fight! Just throw your snowballs around randomly for a minute or so. Once the snowballs have stopped flying, each person should pick up a snowball. Take turns reading aloud the Working Agreements written in the snowballs. The recorder should make a list of them on the large paper.

Compiling a List of Working Agreements (10-15 minutes)

Step 4: Use the next 10 minutes to compile a central list of Working Agreements. Begin by comparing the items on the snowball list and identifying similar ones. Can any very similar items be combined or restated to express a slightly broader idea? Keep in mind that it's better to have a longer list with very specific items, than to have a shorter list with items so vague that their intention gets lost. Although Working Agreements are rooted in larger, more abstract themes of respect, integrity, diversity, and justice, they should be stated as concrete guidelines for individual and group conduct. For example, instead of saying, "Respect everyone's sexuality and gender identity" you could say "Respect everyone's right to self-identify their gender and sexual orientation by avoiding surface assumptions and using gender-neutral language."

Step 5: Once you've finished generating your central list, use the remaining 5 minutes to review it. Is anything missing? Does everyone feel that their ideas have been accurately represented? Does everyone consider themselves capable of abiding by the Working Agreements? Do you have what's known as "buy-in" from the entire group?

Step 6: The central list should be kept in a safe place, and hung in a visible spot during your group's meetings to remind everyone of their commitments. Remember that the Working Agreements can be supplemented or renegotiated as the group, its needs, and its dynamics change.

Small Group Brainstorm: Setting Your Meeting Logistics (5-10 minutes)

Step 7: Depending on the number of people in attendance, participants should get into groups of two or three. Each group should take a piece of construction paper and a marker. Each group should select a recorder and a reporter.

? "How often do we want the group to meet, where, and for how long?"

Step 8: This decision may or may not be entirely under the control of the group; perhaps there are restrictions on your use of the meeting space, or school rules about the meeting times of extracurricular groups. Remember to take everyone's schedule into account, including your advisor's. It's difficult to avoid scheduling conflicts, but people will be much more committed

Mapping Out a Meeting (continued)**Section 2b**

if they're treated as whole people whose time is valuable. Use a safe place for meetings, preferably away from high-traffic areas. You may be able to attract more hesitant students, and avoid distractions or noise during your meetings. Take 5-10 minutes to list your ideas. The recorder should write down everyone's input.

Small Group Brainstorm: Setting Your Meeting Agendas (10-15 minutes)

Step 9: Now, take a look at your "Where My Priorities Lie" diagram. Take the next 10-15 minutes to discuss the role of group meetings in achieving your potential goals. For example:

- o **Education:** Did lots of people prioritize educational goals, such as "learn about LGBT history"; "learn about global LGBT issues"; "learn about social justice organizing"; "learn about LGBT health concerns"; "learn about LGBT artists"; "learn about multiculturalism and anti-oppression work" or others? If so, you might want to have everyone in your group pick a topic that interests them and set aside time for people to lead discussions, presentations, video screenings, or other educational activities. If you want your group to play an educational role in your school, you'll need to educate one another first!
- o **Advocacy:** If educating your school community is a priority for your group, there are tons of activities and events that you could use your meeting time to design: The Day of Silence Project, LGBT History Month, and thematic teach-ins are just a few examples.
- o **Support:** If lots of people made a priority of getting support from the group, you'll probably want to set aside some time during every meeting when people can share their personal experiences. Or, you could make one meeting per month a "closed meeting" where only current members can attend, and people can discuss personal stuff.
- o **Planning:** When planning actions in your school, you'll need to set aside time at every meeting for assigning tasks, sharing updates, and determining your next steps.
- o **Policy:** If lots of people made a priority of changing school policy, you'll probably want to set aside some time during every meeting when you can educate one another about your school district's policy and policy work in other districts, and strategize how to approach members of your school board and how to mobilize community support for policy change. If only a few people made a priority of changing school policy, you might want to create a committee of those people that can meet outside of the regular meetings and report back to the larger group during the regular meetings.
- o **Concrete Action:** You may lose some members' interest if most of your meeting time is spent having discussions or planning, so make sure that you set aside time on a regular basis for doing some short, sweet, concrete actions. Some ideas could include: writing a complimentary (or critical) note to a news publication or journalist for covering (or ignoring) LGBT issues; visiting the GLSEN online Action Center and sending messages to your elected officials; or making posters with quotes from LGBT historical figures to hang in visible areas of your school.
- o **Fun/Social:** Isn't all of it fun? Well, either way, you should set aside time for doing something fun together, or just talking. The rest of your work can be intense and tiring.
- o **"Open Time":** Make sure that you leave a little time for whatever may arise at the last moment!

Mapping Out a Meeting (continued)**Section 2b****Large Group Discussion: Planning Your Meeting Structure** (10-20 minutes)

Step 10: Once everyone's had a chance to contribute their input to their group's list, reconvene as a whole group. Hang the lists side by side, where everyone can see them. Each group's reporter should take turns briefly reading and explaining their group's list, and fielding any questions from the other groups.

Step 11: Use the remaining time to create your plan for a meeting structure. Begin by comparing the lists and identifying similar ideas. If everyone in the small groups used the "Where My Priorities Lie" diagram to inform their suggestions, there should be lots of similar ideas on your lists! If the length of your meeting is negotiable, forget time for a moment and focus on how people want to use it – if you go a little overboard and plan a three-hour meeting, you can always scale it down. If the length of your meeting is not negotiable, prioritize people's ideas for meeting activities, and come up with a committee system or assign individual responsibilities so that you can devote your meeting time to issues and projects that concern the entire group.

Consider This...

- o Built into the Working Agreements should be a strategy for handling individual breaches of the Working Agreements. How do you want to call attention to them? How do you want to fix them?
- o Generally, having some sort of check-in at the beginning of every meeting is important, no matter how many people have expressed a need for emotional support. Everyone still needs support for their work and participation in the group!
- o Similarly, having a few minutes to debrief, or review what's happened during the course of the meeting, can help to bring everyone together and restabilize the group if any conflicts have arisen.
- o A quick game or physical activity helps to energize and focus the group, and to acquaint everyone. Plus it's **fun**, although there always seem to be a few people in every group who don't enjoy games. Instead of giving them a hard time or proceeding without them, have them suggest an activity they'd like to do.
- o Remember, it's important to remain conscious of people's participation during meetings, to confront problems with honesty and flexibility, and to reevaluate how meetings are going on a regular basis, perhaps every month or two.
- o If you're having trouble coming to a consensus about your meeting structure, come up with 2-3 different options, and experiment with them over the next few meetings.
- o Be sure that your faculty advisor attends all meetings. Negotiate your faculty advisor's role during the meetings. Your advisor should participate as an equal, rather than controlling or dominating the space.
- o Document meeting discussion topics, activities and attendance.
- o Start and end meetings on time.
- o Provide snacks, if possible!

Organizing Our Leadership

Section 3a

● Ready...

Leaders come in all varieties, yet we are taught to recognize and value certain varieties over others. When reflecting on what makes a good leader, it's important to remember that leaders don't exist in isolation. As with all relationship dynamics, people exhibit good leadership in response to the needs and expectations of the people they're leading. The worst kinds of leaders are those who refuse to adjust their approach as conditions may require them to do so.

Your group may have already chosen your leader(s), or they might be self-appointed because they founded the group. In either case, this activity will help them to learn what the rest of the group needs and expects. If you're still in the process of choosing your leaders, this activity will help those considering a leadership role to understand what would be expected of them.

● Set...

People: entire group, working first as individuals, then as a whole

Tools: loose-leaf paper (enough for everyone), pens (enough for everyone), large construction paper (10 sheets), markers, tape, *Where My Priorities Lie* diagram from Section 1, mission statement from Section 2, Working Agreements from Section 2

Time: 30-55 minutes

✦ *The Five Practices and Ten Commitments of Leadership Described in The Leadership Challenge*

○ Go!

Reflections on Leadership (5 minutes)

Step 1: Everyone should get some loose-leaf paper and a pen, then take 5 minutes to consider and briefly answer the following questions:

- ? Do you consider yourself a leader? Why or why not? This question is purely for your own reflection, and you won't be expected to share your answers unless you choose to do so.
- ? Think about a time when you led some activity or effort. It can be one brief occasion, such as an in-class group assignment, or a position you held for a longer period of time, such as captain of a team or chair of an event. What actions did you take as a leader? What attributes or qualities do you possess that helped or hindered your ability to lead?
- ? Think about an experience you've had with someone whom you considered to be a good leader. What actions did that person take as a leader? What attributes contributed to the person's good leadership? What did you learn from the person? When you were working with the person, how did you feel?

Group Brainstorm (5-10 minutes)

Step 2: Designate a recorder. The recorder should hang up your *Where My Priorities Lie* diagram, your Mission Statement, and your Working Agreements side-by-side, and hang two sheets of blank construction paper next to them.

Step 3: The recorder then should write "Actions" at the top of the first blank sheet, and "Attributes" at the top of the second.

Organizing Our Leadership (continued)

Section 3a

Step 4: Take 5-10 minutes to discuss your answers to the last two questions from Step 1. On the “Actions” sheet, the recorder should write down everyone’s responses to the questions about the actions of leaders. On the “Attributes” sheet, the recorder should write down everyone’s responses to the questions about the attributes of leaders. **If anyone feels uncomfortable talking about their own experiences as a leader, they should understand that when they offer their answers to the recorder, they don’t need to specify which actions and attributes are self-referential and which refer to leaders they’ve known.**

Organizing the Group’s Leadership (10-20 mins)

Step 5: Once everyone’s had a chance to share their answers, it’s time to talk about your needs as a group. The recorder should hang one more sheet of blank paper alongside the others, and write “Our Leadership” at the top.

Step 6: Using your *Where My Priorities Lie* diagram, your mission statement, your Working Agreements, and the information you gathered in your “Actions” and “Attributes” lists, take the next 5-10 minutes to discuss your group’s leadership needs. The recorder should list everyone’s suggestions on the “Our Leadership” sheet.

Step 7: Once everyone’s had the chance to provide input, prioritize your group’s needs. Which ones are crucial, which ones are desirable, and which ones are questionable?

Step 8: Now, give your leader(s) or potential leader(s) 5 minutes to “talk back” to the group. Do they consider themselves capable of meeting those needs? Do they have any concerns about any of your group needs? Is there anything they need from the group, in order to meet the group’s needs? (Lots and lots and lots of patience, perhaps?) Be open and direct with one another now, it will save you from guessing, mind reading, and misunderstanding later!

Step 9: Take the remaining time to discuss how **everyone** views their own role in and responsibility to the group.

This activity and the supplementary resource on leadership draw their ideas from *The Leadership Challenge*, written by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. The book, which explores different notions of leadership and looks at the practices of good leaders, was published in 1995.

Consider This...

- o Exceptional leaders accomplish the four “I”s: They **INVITE**: they ask people to volunteer or donate; they ask decision-makers to implement change; They **INFORM**: they educate people about the issues and train people on skills; They **INSPIRE**: they motivate people well and are creative about how they motivate; They **INVOLVE**: they involve large numbers of people in action.
- o Given your overall preferences and goals, how does your group want to structure its leadership? Would your group benefit most from having a single leader or a group of leaders? “Fixed leadership” or “rotating leadership”?
- o If you haven’t yet chosen a leader, how do you plan to go about it? Holding an election? Building consensus? Picking out of a hat?
- o It’s likely that in the group brainstorm, communication skills (for example, good listening and clear direction) came up. Given your overall goals, how important are **public speaking** and **good writing skills** specifically? Will your leader(s) be meeting with administrators and school board members? Will your leader(s) be writing school policy recommendations, project proposals, or articles for the school paper? Remember, those are skills that can be improved if people are open to learning. If there are other members of the group with strengths in those areas, the leader(s) shouldn’t necessarily have to have those skills; they should be able to delegate tasks that require those skills, however.

Finding New Members

Section 3b

● Ready...

One of the biggest challenges LGBT student groups face is finding and keeping committed members. Prospective members may misunderstand the purpose of the group, or fear its visibility. Current members develop schedule conflicts, their interest grows during times of crisis or high activity and wanes in the slower periods, their personal loyalties shift, and they often feel overburdened or underutilized. It's important to establish a concrete strategy for finding and keeping members, in order to ensure that groups remain diverse, inventive and alive after current members graduate!

● Set...

People: entire group, working first in three smaller groups, then as a whole

Tools: large construction paper (10 sheets), markers (6-8), tape

Time: 20-35 minutes

+ 10 Cool Tips for Finding New Members

○ Go!

Small Group Brainstorms (10-15 minutes)

Step 1: Begin by dividing as evenly as possible into three smaller groups. Each group should take a piece of construction paper and a marker, and designate a recorder and a reporter. The first group will brainstorm tactics for **publicity**, the second group will brainstorm a list of groups for potential **collaboration**, and the third group will brainstorm tactics for **action**.

□ **Planning Publicity**

The **publicity** group should make a list of at least five tactics that your group could use to publicize its mission and activities in your school. Begin by identifying "official" media and information sources, then get creative! For each of the tactics on your list, identify the specific person your group would need to contact, if applicable, for submission and permission criteria.

□ **Planning Collaboration**

The **collaboration** group should make a list of at least five other school and/or community groups that your group could approach with proposals for collaborative projects. Begin by identifying the other groups to which you belong, as you already have an "in" with those groups: yourselves! For each of the items on your list, identify the specific person your group would need to contact in order to set up a meeting.

□ **Planning Action**

The **action** group should make a list of at least five simple, visible actions your group could take immediately in order to make your presence felt in your school. The actions could include posting your mission statement throughout the building, running an ad in your school paper, holding a short, simple event such as a film screening or discussion forum, and other such activities that would introduce your school community to your group and give potential members a clear idea of your purpose, structure and work. If any of your actions would require the permission of your school administration, be sure to identify the specific person you would need to contact in order to set up a meeting.

Finding New Members (continued)**Section 3b****Large Group Discussion** (5-10 minutes)

Step 2: Once each small group has brainstormed its list, reconvene as a whole group. Each small group should take a couple of minutes to present the items on its list, and to field any questions from the other small groups.

Step 3: Designate a recorder. Each person in the large group should select two items from each list that they consider to be the best **immediate** use of the group's time and resources, and should write their initials next to the two items they've selected. Keep in mind that some items may be good ideas, but not especially feasible **right now**. That doesn't mean that you have to scrap them; just come back to them in the future.

Step 4: Once everyone's selected two items from each list, the group should look at the lists to see which items have received the most support. The recorder should list these items on a fresh sheet of paper, leaving some space between each one.

Membership Strategy (5-10 minutes)

Step 5: Take the last 5-10 minutes to discuss, as a whole group, how you can use each of the final list items as an outreach tactic to potential group members. The recorder should write down everyone's ideas below the appropriate item, as well as the names of anyone interested in helping to plan that tactic.

Step 6: Encourage people to plan tactics that maximize their **interest** and their **talents**, as they will be more personally invested and thus more inclined to tell others! Plus, they will be more likely to commit to the group for the long term if early on they're given specific responsibilities that help them to feel affirmed in their strengths and essential to the work of the group.

Step 7: Keep all of your lists, not just the final one, as you may want to revisit your first round of ideas later.

Consider This...

- o Designate some leadership positions for new and younger members, so that they have a chance to learn as they take on responsibilities.
- o Find out immediately what new members are interested in and how they'd like to contribute to the group.
- o Include new members in all aspects of your group meetings, including leadership roles during activities and project planning.
- o Send your members to trainings and conferences.
- o Remember that each current member of your group is a potential future leader of your group.

Assessing Our School's Climate

Section 4a

A Note About Section 4

This section focuses on school climate assessment. There are two activities, each built around a particular assessment tool. The first activity helps you to develop a plan for conducting GLSEN's "Local School Climate Survey (School-based Version)," and the second activity introduces you to *The GLSEN Workbook*, both of which were mailed to GSAs and Individuals registered with GLSEN's Student Organizing Department in October, 2001. If you downloaded The Jump-Start from online, there is a link to the Local School Climate Survey (School-based Version), which is also downloadable. The *GLSEN Workbook* may be purchased from GLSEN's Bookstore.

The Local School Climate Survey (School-based Version) is a tool that enables you to "take the temperature" of your school's student body. It is meant to be distributed to students only, and asks them about their experiences with anti-LGBT, racist and sexist discrimination at school. Your group can use the survey results in many different specific ways, but in general they can help you to shape your goals and tactics for maximum effectiveness in your school community.

The GLSEN Workbook is a much more detailed survey concentrating on anti-LGBT bias, and it is meant to be done by a small committee of students, teachers, parents and administrators, rather than the entire student body or school community. The committee should represent a variety of constituencies and perspectives. The Workbook can help you to measure in a systematic, objective way the specific school policies and practices that contribute to your school's climate regarding LGBT people and issues, and thus to identify

● Ready...

In 1999, GLSEN completed its first National School Climate Survey, which looked at bias against LGBT students in school. In 2001, GLSEN completed a second survey that also sought information from LGBT students regarding their experience of bias and harassment around race/ethnicity, gender and gender expression in addition to sexual orientation. Advocates for LGBT students at the national and local levels have used results from the national survey in their work.

Since the first national survey, students in GSAs have told GLSEN that they want to conduct the GLSEN survey in their local communities or their schools. In response, GLSEN created the Local School Climate Survey (School-based Version). It is similar to the national survey except that it is meant to be given to all students, not just LGBT students. The survey will tell you how frequently students are hearing anti-LGBT, racist, and sexist remarks in your school, and where these remarks are most often heard. It will also tell you whether students feel safe or unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, and race. The results of the survey will supply you with evidence of bias in your school, and help you to advocate for more inclusive school policies and practices. In this activity, you will develop a strategy for using the Local School Climate Survey (School-based Version) in your school.

● Set...

People: entire group

Tools: large construction paper (just a few sheets), markers (a few), tape

Time: 20-30 minutes

✦ *GLSEN Local School Climate Survey (School-based Version)*

○ Go!

Large Group Brainstorm: Survey Logistics Wish List (15-20 minutes)

Step 1: Designate a recorder. The recorder should hang a sheet of paper on the wall and write the following four row headings down the side of it, leaving some space between each one: “Who/Participants”; “Where/When”; “How/Permission”; “Results.” Keep in mind: you’re making a wish list. Many schools have rules about surveys, and you may have to compromise when you meet with your administrator to obtain permission. See the “Consider This...” box for more specific information about survey rules.

? “Who Should Take the Survey?”

Step 2: The ideal is to have the entire student body take it, but if that’s not feasible for your group, how else might you assemble a pool of participants that would represent the broadest possible range of students? One option is to distribute the survey to all of the student clubs, teams and organizations, but then you won’t get the perspective of students who aren’t really involved in school life outside of the classroom. One option is to distribute the survey to a cross-section of students, such as all of the math classes (maybe your math teachers would give you extra credit, since surveys are a statistical tool). Since you know your school best, brainstorm a few ways you could reach a range of students in case you ultimately can’t reach all students. The recorder should write down everyone’s ideas in the “Who/Participants” section of the sheet.

? “Where and When Should The Participants Take the Survey?”

Step 3: If you decided to distribute the survey during classes, you’ll need to determine exactly where and when those classes meet, and which teachers you need to approach for their permission to distribute the survey. If you’ve decided to distribute the survey outside of class, you’ll need to figure out where and when, and how to let people know about it. You’ll also need to decide how long you’ll give participants to fill out the survey, whether you will collect the surveys or have them turned in

Consider This...

- Depending on your school and school district, you may need additional permission to do a school-wide survey, if that’s the route you’ve chosen. Your administrator will be able to tell you if you need permission from a district representative or your school’s parent organization.
- Your school administration may decide that you need parental permission from all participants. There are two types of parental permission that may be required: “active consent” and “passive consent.” “Active consent” is when the parent must submit signed permission before their child can participate in the activity (an example of this is a field trip permission slip). “Passive consent” is when the parent is notified that the activity is going to happen, and it is up to the parent to notify the school if they don’t want their child to participate. Make sure that you tell the administrator, parents and participants that the survey will be completely anonymous.
- The survey begins with a sample letter that thanks participants for their responses, briefly explains the survey, and directs participants who have questions, want to learn more, or want to talk about their own experiences to the proper resources. It is up to your group to insert the names of the appropriate adult allies in your school. You also should provide the contact information of a community resource for LGBT youth, if one exists in your area, for students who may not feel comfortable talking to someone at school.

The activity in Section 5 will help you to begin thinking about how you can use your tallied survey results in planning your goals.

Assessing Our School’s Climate (continued)

Section 4a

to your group, and, if you plan to have participants turn them in, where that safe location will be. The recorder should write these logistics in the “Where/When” section of the sheet.

Step 4: Once you have a wish list of logistics, you’ll need to obtain permission from your school administration. Your group and/or your advisor should meet with an administrator to discuss the purpose of the survey and your ideas about survey logistics. Decide as a group which administrator you plan to approach, how and when you plan to contact that person, and what you plan to say. The recorder should write your plan in the “How/Permission” section.

Large Group Brainstorm: Survey Results (5-10 minutes)

? “Who Will Be Responsible for Tallying the Survey Results, and When Will They Do It?”

Step 5: The number of people tallying will depend upon the number of surveys you receive, but make sure that you assemble enough people to do it so that no one feels overwhelmed. Work together during one block of time, so that you can check each other’s work, and keep each other focused, as tallying is likely to become repetitive.

Tips for Those Tallying the Survey

Tallying the results is a straightforward process. For each question, count the number of students who responded to each answer option, and divide it by the total number of students who answered the question: now you have the percentage of participants who chose each answer option. It may be easier for you to put the information in a table, or use a spreadsheet program such as Excel. If you’re having trouble, ask your advisor or a math teacher to help you! For example, let’s say you get back 100 surveys. For the question “How often do you hear other homophobic remarks in our school?” 53 students check “Frequently,” 27 students check “Often,” 10 check “Sometimes,” 7 check “Rarely,” and 3 check “Never.”

Question: How often do you hear other homophobic remarks in our school?			
Answer	Number of Students	Total Students Who Answered the Question	Number of Students divided by Total Students
Frequently	53	100	53%
Often	27	100	27%
Sometimes	10	100	10%
Rarely	7	100	7%
Never	3	100	3%

Identifying Specific Anti-LGBT Biases in Our School

Section 4b

● Ready...

The packet of materials you've received from GLSEN's Student Organizing Department includes a copy of *The GLSEN Workbook*. *The GLSEN Workbook* is a tool for measuring, describing, and improving an individual school's climate with regard to LGBT people and issues. It is built upon a detailed assessment survey that presupposes the user has a comprehensive understanding of the school's policies, programming and practices. Ideally, the survey should be completed by a small group of students, staff, family members and/or others who are part of the school community.

In developing the *Workbook*, GLSEN created four school climate "categories": Hostile, Resistant, Open and Inclusive. The four categories are not rigid, absolute definitions; rather, they represent a continuum, or spectrum, of LGBT awareness and inclusion along which all schools can be found. GLSEN identified nine common "practices" in schools that show their climate with regards to LGBT issues, and outlined a picture of how each of those nine practices often appears in a "hostile" school, in a "resistant" school, in an "open" school, and in an "inclusive" school. In this activity, you will share your ideas about where your own school falls along the continuum, and begin to consider how you can use the *Workbook* to identify in **specific, objective terms** the anti- or pro-LGBT practices in your school. Imagine how much more effective your work will be if you can sit down eventually with your school administrators and tell them **exactly** where your school needs improvement, rather than simply saying "Our school is unsafe for LGBT people."

● Set...

People: entire group

Tools: large construction paper (4 sheets), loose-leaf paper (a sheet or two), a pen, tape, 1 copy of each of the four School Climate Outlines

Time: 20-35 minutes

✦ School Climate Outlines, adapted from *The GLSEN Workbook's "Developmental Continuum"* (The Hostile School, The Resistant School, The Open School, The Inclusive School)

○ Go!

Social Barometer (5-10 minutes)

Step 1: In this activity you need a recorder, but there is much less writing to do than in the other activities. The recorder should begin by hanging four sheets of paper alongside one another, leaving about a foot of space in between if possible. (If your wall space is limited, hang them however closely you need to, as long as they're hung in a row.) The recorder then should write "The Hostile School" on the first sheet, "The Resistant School" on the second sheet, "The Open School" on the third sheet, and "The Inclusive School" on the fourth sheet.

Step 2: Everyone should get up and stand at the sign that they feel best describes your school. Remember, the four categories aren't separate boxes, but rather locations on a continuum, so some people may want to stand somewhere between two signs.

Step 3: Once everyone's decided on a spot, each person should explain why they chose to stand where they did.

Identifying Specific Anti-LGBT Biases... (continued)**Section 4b****Large Group Discussion: Defining School Climates** (10-15 minutes)

Step 4: Now the recorder should post the four School Climate Outlines next to their corresponding signs, so that everyone can see how GLSEN has outlined the practices of The Hostile School, The Resistant School, The Open School, and The Inclusive School. You may want to have someone(s) read the outline points aloud, or simply have everyone read them silently.

Step 5: Once everyone's read the School Climate Outlines, take a minute to reposition yourselves, if anyone feels that they'd like to move to a different spot along the continuum.

Step 6: If anyone changed their position, have them explain why they did. Discuss how your group's initial ideas of what each of the school climates looks like compare or contrast to GLSEN's picture. Is there anything in the outlines that you didn't consider in choosing your first position on the social barometer? Are there aspects of your school's climate that aren't reflected in GLSEN's picture? If so, make a note of it, and let us know! The goal here is twofold: to understand that specific aspects of your school climate can be measured, described and improved by using an objective assessment tool such as the *Workbook*; and, to get a sense of your group's perspective on your school climate.

Proposing a Formal Assessment (5-10 minutes)

Step 7: Take the remaining time to think about how you might approach members of your school's student body, faculty, administration and parent organization in order to assemble a committee that could undertake the process of assessing your school climate with regards to LGBT people and issues.

Step 8: The recorder should write down the names of students, teachers, administrators and parents you'd like to contact.

Consider This...

- o Keep in mind that the members of your group are especially attuned to LGBT issues in your school, and may recognize subtle and even not-so-subtle aspects of your school climate that other members of your school community just don't see.
- o In thinking about how to assemble a school climate assessment committee, remember to use your allies! If you feel that you need more support before approaching your administration, with which students, teachers and/or parents should you begin? What role could your advisor play in helping you to pursue this action?
- o Once you've completed the *Workbook's* assessment process, make sure you read the "Improving Your School" section of the *Workbook* for instructions on how to use the information you've gathered to develop an organizing strategy for changing your school climate.

Using Our Mission Statement and Climate Survey to Strategize Section 5a

● Ready...

In creating your mission statement, your group identified its purpose and priorities, which grew from the concerns of your group's members and their perception of your school community's concerns regarding LGBT people and issues. In conducting your School Climate Survey, your group received some specific data, which (hopefully) clarified your school community's concerns. Now it's time to begin thinking about the ways in which your group can help to effect change more broadly in your school.

This activity is meant to give you just a taste of what is known as Direct Action Organizing. Professional organizers go through extensive training, and organizing theory can seem confusing because it requires a shift in the way many of us are taught to look at social justice issues and relations of power between individuals and groups. If you'd like to learn more, look at your copy of *The GLSEN Workbook*, visit the GLSEN website, or contact your local GLSEN chapter. (We encourage you to do all of those anyway!)

● Set...

People: entire group, working first in smaller groups of two or three, then as a whole

Tools: large construction paper (lots), markers (lots), tape, photocopies of your mission statement (enough for everyone), photocopies of your survey results (enough for everyone), *The GLSEN Workbook*

Time: 40-60 minutes

✦ *For New (and Not So New) Groups: Creating Your First Action Plan*

○ Go!

Small Group Brainstorm: Choosing An Issue (10-15 minutes)

The first part of this activity involves choosing an issue around which your group can organize concrete actions. One of the most helpful things to remember when discussing your group's and school's concerns is the difference between a **problem** and an **issue**. A "problem" statement is negative and not oriented toward a specific change or result. An example of a "problem" statement would be: "Teachers don't intervene when anti-LGBT slurs are used in the classroom." An "issue" statement, on the other hand, is framed positively and proactively so that a solution is included in the statement. An example of an "issue" statement would be: "Mandatory staff training on addressing name-calling would lead to safer classrooms for students."

Remember...

An issue is a solution to a problem.

Step 1: Begin by dividing into small groups of two or three people. Each group should get a piece of construction paper and a marker, and enough copies of your mission statement and survey results for everyone. Each group should designate a recorder.

Step 2: Each small group's task is to 1) use your mission statement and your survey results to identify three problems in your school; 2) discuss different ways to address those problems; and then 3) develop three **issue** statements that state those problems while at the same time proposing solutions to them. Take 3-5 minutes for each issue. The recorder should write your small group's three issue statements on the construction paper.

Using Our Mission Statement... (continued)**Section 5a****Large Group Discussion: Choosing An Issue** (10-15 minutes)

Step 3: Reconvene as a whole group. Hang your issue statements side-by-side where everyone can see them. Take a minute to read each group's list.

The task of the whole group is to select three issues around which you can organize. Depending on the size and resources of your group, you may need to work on one issue at a time once you begin organizing. If you can choose three now, however, you won't find yourself wondering "What next?" once you've finished working on the first issue.

Consider This...

It may be that there are a couple of pressing issues that need immediate attention, and everyone agrees about their priority status. This is often the case when a specific event or crisis has occurred, for example. If you have a larger pool of issues that seem equally worthwhile, however, you should consider the following ideals when narrowing them down to a short list. The issues you choose to focus on should:

1. **Result in a Real Improvement in People's Lives.** If you can see and feel the improvement, then you can be sure that it has actually been won.
2. **Give People a Sense of Their Own Power.** Your group and its allies should feel that the victory was won directly by them, and that they have the power to effect change, and to be heard and taken seriously by the rest of your school community, especially those in authority.
3. **Be Winnable.** The problem should not be so large or the solution so remote that your group gets overwhelmed. Your group's members should be able to see from the start that there is a good chance of winning, or at least that there is a good strategy for winning.
4. **Be Widely Felt.** Many people in your school community should feel that this is a real problem and should agree with the solution. If just a few people feel strongly about it, it's unlikely that you'll get the support you need to make a concrete, lasting change.
5. **Be Deeply Felt.** People should not only agree, but also feel strongly enough to do something about it. If many people agree about the issue but don't feel strongly, it will be difficult for you to generate the enthusiasm needed to fuel your work.
6. **Be Understandable.** It is preferable that you don't have to convince people that the problem exists, that your solution is good, and that they want to help solve it. A good issue should not require a lengthy and difficult explanation.
7. **Be Non-Divisive.** Avoid issues that divide your allies/supporters. Don't pit friend against friend, teacher against student, race/ethnicity/class/religion against race/ethnicity/class/religion.
8. **Build Leadership and Membership.** People should be able to contribute to your work at various levels of involvement and leadership. In addition, your issue should lead your group forward in its work, rather than leading you into a rut, which could cause you to lose members.

Step 4: Designate a recorder. The recorder, as always, should hang a blank sheet for the final list beside the other sheets. Begin by identifying common issues and having the recorder mark them. If all of the small groups included a particular issue, clearly your group should tackle that issue right away!

Step 5: Once your group has decided on three issues, the recorder should write them on the blank sheet, leaving some space between them. Identify your **specific goals** for each issue, and have the recorder write the goals in the space near the corresponding issue. See *The GLSEN Workbook's* "Improving Your School" section for help in distinguishing between short-term and long-term goals.

Small Group Brainstorm: Planning Tactics (10-15 minutes)

Now that you have three issues your group plans to pursue, you should think about how you can begin to involve your school community in these issues.

Step 6: Divide into three groups, one for each of the issues you've selected. Everyone should choose the issue they'd like to focus on, and go with that group. This doesn't have to mean that each person will work on that issue only, it simply can mean that each person has a priority issue.

Step 7: Each group should get another piece of construction paper and a marker, and designate a recorder and reporter.

Step 8: Each group should formulate at least three tactics for advancing its issue. Continuing with the previous example, let's say the issue is: "Mandatory staff training on addressing name-calling would lead to safer classrooms for students." What three tactics could you plan that would begin to generate interest around and responses to this issue? A great place to begin is awareness-raising, and for that you need some sort of publicity tactic. So, could someone in your group interview a few students and teachers and submit the interview to the school paper? Or, could your group produce a series of posters that depict appropriate responses to name-calling? A second tactic could be talking individually with teachers and administrators, setting up a meeting with a group of teacher allies, or speaking at a staff meeting. A third tactic could be researching LGBT advocacy groups in your community (don't forget your local GLSEN chapter!) in order to find someone who'd be available to lead a training workshop at your school.

Step 9: Make sure that for each of your three tactics, your recorder writes down the names of people you'd need to contact, and any contact information you have for them. The recorder also should make a note of any gaps in your information, and someone should volunteer to find that information for your next meeting.

Large Group Discussion: Planning Tactics (10-15 minutes)

Step 10: Reconvene again as a whole group. Hang your tactics lists side-by-side where everyone can see them. Each group's reporter should take a few minutes to explain their group's tactics, and obtain feedback and pertinent information from the other groups.

Step 11: If any of your tactics involve work that can be or needs to be done outside of your meeting time, make sure that you delegate responsibilities clearly and specifically, so that everyone knows what they need to accomplish for your next meeting.

Step 12: While you can't always read people's minds, you can anticipate certain responses to your tactics and prepare for them. For example, if you plan to hang posters around your school, what will you do if they're vandalized or torn down? One idea is to hang another poster beneath your main poster, with a message declaring that your group and its allies will not be silenced by intolerance and hate.

Student Pride Resources and Registration

Conclusion - a

Getting Informed and Inspired

One of the most frequent comments we've heard from students working in GSAs is that they consider their most valuable resource to be other people, especially students engaged in similar work. The following two pages provide information on resources available through Student Pride and numerous other organizations around the country. They're full of ideas, stories, and materials -- all kinds of information, inspiration and insight.

Student Pride Resources

- o 10 Steps Towards Starting a GSA
- o 20 Ways Your GSA Can Rock The World!
- o Coalition Building: Starting a Coalition
- o Common Questions and Answers About Gay-Straight Alliances
- o Creating Newsletters
- o Creating an Inclusive School Prom
- o Day of Silence Project
- o Discrimination and Harassment Policies in School
- o Equal Access Act: What Does It Mean?
- o GSA Mission Statements
- o Gay-Straight Alliances and Other Gay-Related Student Groups
- o LGBT-Related Educational Scholarships
- o Letter Encouraging School Officials to Allow Gay-Straight Alliances
- o Maintaining and Strengthening GSAs
- o Model Harassment and Discrimination Policies
- o Text of Equal Access Act
- o The GSA Handbook
- o Warren Blumenfeld: About Gay-Straight Alliances
- o Who Are You Taking to the Prom This Year?
- o Why School Officials Need to Treat Gay-Straight Clubs Formed by Public School Students Equally

Student Pride National Directory

Student Pride's National Directory lists GSAs, college groups and community groups across the country.

Check it out online @ www.glsen.org !

Register w/ Student Pride!

Registered Groups (GSAs and similar groups) and Individuals (student leaders, advisors, students trying to start GSAs, etc.) receive numerous free and discounted information and resources.

FREE Registration provides Individuals with:

- o Updates, information and free resources towards community and school organizing around LGBT issues across the country.
- o Networking opportunities with other youth leaders and teacher advisors, just like yourself!
- o Free subscriptions to Student Pride's Email Listservs, providing student leaders and teacher advisors with a discussion forum for asking questions, sharing ideas and providing feedback.

FREE Registration provides student-led GSAs with:

- o Free periodic opportunities to receive educational books, videos and trainings.
- o Proven resources and ideas from other GSAs around the country.
- o Organizing resources, information and updates to help your efforts in your local community.
- o Networking opportunities with other youth leaders and teacher advisors, just like yourself!
- o Free subscriptions to Student Pride's Email Listservs, providing student leaders and teacher advisors with a discussion forum for asking questions, sharing ideas and providing feedback.

Find all of this, and much more, online at www.glsen.org, under Students/GSAs!

Or, if you don't have web access, contact us by mail, phone or email:

GLSEN - Student Pride

121 West 27th Street, Suite 804 - New York, NY 10001

212.727.0135 / 212.727.0254 (fax)

studentpride@glsen.org / www.glsen.org

Additional Resources**Conclusion - b****Organizations****ACLU Freedom Network – Safe Schools**125 Broad St., 18th Floor

New York NY 10004

212-549-2627

lgbthiv@aclu.orgwww.aclu.org/issues/gay/safe_schools.html**Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE)**

3543 18th St., #1

San Francisco, CA 94110

415-861-KIDS (5437)/415-255-8345 (fax)

colage@colage.orgwww.colage.org**GSA Network**

160 14th Street

San Francisco, CA 94103

415-552-4229/415-552-4729 (fax)

www.gsanetwork.org**International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO)**

Stockholm Office

Box 350

SE-10126 Stockholm

Sweden

iglyo@wxs.nlwww.iglyo.org**SIGNS – The Center**

208 West 13th Street

New York, NY 10011

212-620-7310

www.centeryes.org/SIGNS**Online Resources****Bi Youth Resources**www.biyouth.org**Deaf Queer Youth**www.youthresource.com/feat/deaf**DykeWeb Directory**www.sappho.com/directory/youthrights.html**Jewish Queer Youth**www.hometown.aol.com/JQYouth**LGBT Youth of Color**www.youthresource.com/feat/poc**QueerAmerica Database – OutProud**www.queeramerica.com**Trans*topia**www.youthresource.com/feat/trans**Youth Guardian Services**www.youth.org**Youth Resource**www.youthresource.com**National Emergency Hotlines**

National Runaway Switchboard	1.800.621.4000
Open: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	
Trevor Helpline Crisis Intervention	1.800.850.8078
Open: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	
IYG National Hotline	1.800.347.TEEN
Open: Friday & Saturday, 7-10 PM EST	
Gay & Lesbian National Resource Hotline	1.888.THE.GLNH
Open: M-F, 6-11 PM EST	

Check out more local and national resources in the Student Pride Directory, online @

www.glsen.org!

Or contact us at: GLSEN – Student Pride

121 West 27th Street, Suite 804

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We hope that this first installment of The Jump-Start has provoked reflection, conversation, inspiration, and action in your group. Collaboration can be as exhausting as it is exciting, and it's important always to remember what unites the members of your group, even as you remain conscious of your distinct perspectives. Your commitment to working as a group to improve your school community is phenomenal, and as you know, victories are much sweeter when shared, so do your best to support one another in fulfilling your goals! Remember that GLSEN's Student Organizing Department is here to help you, too.

The next printed installment of The Jump-Start will focus on themes that may include **coalition-building, planning educational events, and communicating with decision-makers**. In the meantime, keep an eye on the "Students and GSAs/Student Resources" section of our website (www.glsen.org) for additional ideas, activity plans, and resources.

As we mentioned in the introduction, feedback and suggestions for future Jump-Start resources are always welcome, and we encourage you to email us at jumpstart@glsen.org.

See you soon...and good luck!

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Awesome GSA Activities and Icebreakers

Appendix

Need something fun or energizing to start your meeting? Check out these popular activities and icebreakers!
Activities are from various sources, all listed if known.

1) Common Ground - Source: Kerry Ashforth

Students and faculty advisors stand in a circle. One person begins by saying, "I've got a younger sister," or some other statement that is true for them. Everyone for whom this is also true steps into the center of the circle. Everyone who doesn't have a younger sister stays on the outside. You can always choose not to step into the circle. The game often brings up personal and important issues that students may not want to discuss in a more formal setting. This also allows everyone to recognize their differences and similarities.

2) Gender Stereotypes - Source: Various

Trace a male and a female body on butcher paper, then have a free-for-all where everyone writes as many gender stereotypes as they can think of on the bodies where they would apply (i.e. "boys are smart at math" would be placed on the head of the male body). From here, you can talk about how gender stereotypes and traits relate to perceptions about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people - as well as how these stereotypes limit our possibilities, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. These exercises can also be done using stereotypes of gay men and lesbians, helping us to recognize that everyone has different traits that don't define our sexual orientation or gender.

3) Heterosexism in the Media - Source: Various

Bring in popular, mainstream magazines, newspaper, or web documents, and cut out images you perceive to be heterosexist. Explain what you think heterosexism is and how it affects people. This can be an eye-opening experience for those who have never looked at how media plays a part in the formation of our identities. With all the images you collect, your GSA can make a collage or exhibit that examines heterosexism. To go a step further, bring in LGBT publications, and make posters of images that are not heterosexist. Show lots of different sexual orientations, genders and gender identities exhibiting the spectrum of diversity in society. You can compare the posters you make, and even display them somewhere in your school, such as the library or a display case. You might include some statements about what heterosexism is and how it affects all of us, especially LGBT youth.

4) Three Chair Listening Exercise - Source: Various

Three Chairs are set up in a row, the end two turned towards the middle one. The chair on the left holds the position of the "specialist," the middle chair, the "listener," and the right chair the "real story." The "specialist" person and the "real story" person talk to the listener simultaneously, while the listener tries to listen and respond to both, as best they can. The two talkers are competing for the listener's attention, and the goal is for the listener to see which talker holds their attention more. The "specialist" talks as if they're a doctor or clergyman or professional in some field related to LGBT youth and issues in the schools. They may cite statistics, give medical information, and so on. The "real story" person is the one who speaks as if they're someone you might meet on the street. They can tell a true story from their life or make up a story related to the experiences of LGBT youth in the schools. The story should be "personal." When playing with more than three people, let each trio act for two minutes and then call time. The "real story" person then leaves the trio, and the other two players move into the seats to their left (the "listener" to the "real story" chair and the "specialist" to the "listener" chair). The next player in line takes the chair of the "specialist." After the game has been played for a while, your group can discuss which "chair" they found themselves listening and responding to more attentively. You can then discuss how different techniques are used to portray LGBT people in different lights. You can discuss how your own listening style might make you more apt to internalize information presented according to one approach or the other.

Awesome GSA Activities and Icebreakers (continued)**Appendix****5) Concentric Circles, Inner/Outer Circles** - Source: Jason Fleetwood-Boldt

This exercise works great to open dialogue. It requires an even number of people, with a minimum of 6 or 8. It works best with 20 or more. Have people count off by twos (1, 2, 1, 2...). Tell the ones to make an inner circle and the twos to make an outer circle. The inner circle should face outward and the outer circle should face inward, each person having a partner in the other circle. The facilitator instructs that they will ask a question and the outer circle is to talk for one minute as the inner circle listens. If it is a group that doesn't know one another, you can have them introduce themselves to their partners before they begin answering the question asked. After the minute is up, the inner circle answers the same question. Then the outer circle moves clockwise two people over, so everyone has a new partner. A new question is asked of the outer, then inner, circles.

When finished, the participants should discuss their conversations as a large group.

Sample Questions:

- ? Growing up, what were all of the names (positive, negative, neutral) that you heard related to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people?
- ? Growing up, what were some of the stereotypes you heard about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people? What were some of the things you heard about these groups that you have found to be inaccurate?

6) Culture Walk - Source: Kerry Ashforth

There are one or two mediators, and they begin by asking a group of people, for example, women, to move to one side of the room. The people who then haven't identified as women ask questions, and the women give them answers. Then the women get to say what they'd like other people to know about them. You don't have to "talk" or "walk."

7) Cultural/Identity Linking - Source: BiGLTYNY Leadership

Everyone closes their eyes and looks into their "inner mirror." Examine what culture means to you and what you think of as your own cultural identity. Look for the cultural identities you claim and, when you are ready, open your eyes and look around the room. Without talking, find someone whom you think shares a cultural identity with you. Approach that person and link hands. If the person you approach does not think that you share a cultural identity, they may refuse to link hands. If someone offers their hand to you, *try* to find a cultural commonality. Link hands only if you think you have found one. There should be no talking. Once everyone is linked, stand the group in one large circle, and take turns answering the questions "Why did you offer your hand to someone?" and "Why did you accept/refuse someone's hand?"

Other questions:

- ? How did it feel to assume someone's cultural identity?
- ? Were you always correct?
- ? Was it easy to find a cultural commonality?
- ? How did it feel not to make a link?

Note: The word culture is used to keep this activity open-ended. People often interpret "culture" as race, ethnicity, religion, color, nationality, class, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, ability, profession, and so on.

Additional Note: You can expand on this game if everyone ends in a large pretzel or knot - see the next game.

8) Pretzel, Knots - Source: Various

Everyone stands in a circle. Everyone puts their right hand forward into the middle and grabs the right hand of someone. Then, take your left hand and grab the left hand of someone else in the circle. Thus, with your right hand you are attached to one person's right hand, and your left hand is attached to another person's left hand. You are now in a tangled ring of bodies. Without letting go, untangle yourselves. You may switch the positions of your hands, but do not break the ring. Sometimes the group is tangled in one big loop, but sometimes it is tangled in several smaller ones.

Tip: When starting the game, ensure that no one is holding on to the same person's left and right hands.

A mission statement is a short and precise declaration, which serves as the foundation of your group's identity, purpose and work. It describes who you are, what you stand for, what you do, and how you do it. The following tips have been compiled and/or adapted from a variety of resources, including students who've gone through the process of developing a mission statement in their own school groups.

Tips for Writing an Organizational Mission Statement

1. A mission statement should say who you are, what you stand for, what you do, and how you do it.
2. Most mission statements tend to be 2 or 3 precisely written sentences.
3. Effective mission statements usually take a little time to develop. Revisiting your mission statement drafts during a couple of meetings allows for additional input and final editing.
4. It is a good idea to examine other mission statements to get ideas for your own; copying other groups' mission statements, however, probably won't accurately reflect what your group is about.
5. Clarity, honesty and frankness are the ideal characteristics of a mission statement.
6. Make certain everyone in your group gets a copy of the statement.
7. Your mission statement should lead your group's efforts in planning its goals and projects.
8. Statements often include an infinitive that indicates a change in the status of a situation, or in your overall school climate; for example, *to increase*, *to decrease*, *to prevent*, *to eliminate*.
9. An effective mission statement is best developed with input from **all** members of your group.

Sample Mission Statements

GSA, Nutley High School (Nutley, NJ)

The purpose of the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is to encourage acceptance and tolerance within the diverse population of our school, promote pride in our community, create a safe environment for all students of Nutley High School, and educate the school community. It will seek to empower the students and address the isolation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, as well as to address the concerns of students who are questioning their sexuality or straight students.

GLSEN encourages all groups to address the experiences of all students, and to include issues related to gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation in your work. Your GSA's commitment to these issues should be clearly expressed in your mission statement.

GSA, Okemos High School (Okemos, MI)

The Okemos High School Gay-Straight Alliance (OHSGSA) has been formed and operates with the intent to promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity in sexual orientation, and to break down gender stereotypes. The OHSGSA seeks to create a school environment where all can feel welcomed and accepted for their unique talents and contributions, and enjoy the full benefits of the public education system free from fear of harassment or persecution. The above objectives will be accomplished through educating the student and faculty body in matters of and pertaining to sexuality, and by increasing awareness of the hardships faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and highlighting what can be done to alleviate these hardships.

GSA, The Friends' Central School (Wynnewood, PA)

The Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is a group meant to foster awareness, promote education, and provide a forum for discussion about issues of sexuality; we intend to break down the silence surrounding these questions in order to create a place of support, respect, pride, and safety for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender members of the Friends' Central community.

Working Agreements**Appendix**

Working Agreements, Ground Rules or Group Norms are standards of behavior group participants expect of one another so that a respectful and productive environment exists. They set a clear and positive tone that allows group members to interact comfortably and safely. It is best to allow participants to come up with their own Working Agreements. Below are some examples that you may wish to offer:

- *Respect Others:* You will hear ideas today that may be new or different for you, and opinions that might run counter to your own. As you participate and interact, try to take in new information without judgment and to keep an open mind. Make sure that your words and body language reflect a respectful attitude toward others. Learn by listening to others and be supportive of the “place” at which they currently are.
- *Speak From the “I”:* Speak from your own personal experiences and do not judge or moralize the thoughts or experiences of others. Use I-statements such as “I feel...” or “In my experience...” Avoid “You should” statements and generalizations or globalizations of any kind.
- *Be Open to New Ideas:* New ideas and techniques may be utilized or suggested today. Be open to considering new information and incorporating new practices.
- *Ask Questions:* Please feel free to ask any question that comes up for you without fear that it is too “silly,” “stupid,” or explicit. Make sure to phrase all questions in respectful and value-neutral ways.
- *Respect Confidentiality:* Please make sure that everything said in the room stays in the room. When sharing personal anecdotes, make sure to avoid using the real names of other people.
- *Share “Air Time”:* While we encourage you to express your ideas and opinions, we ask that you not monopolize the group’s time, and that you help to create a safe space in which everyone can speak. No one, however, is obligated to speak. “Passing” is okay.
- *Respect Commitments:* While you are encouraged to take care of your personal needs throughout the meeting, please honor your commitment to being here by observing time guidelines during breaks, turning off beepers and phones, and limiting unnecessary interruptions.

Active Listening Model/Thorns and Roses Model

Appendix

Active listening is a two-part process:

1. Listen to the content of what is being said.
2. Acknowledge the feelings of what is being said.

Active listening is a process of decoding a message:

- You must be **empathic**.
- You must show acceptance.
- You must be responsible and truthful.

Active listening is not:

- Ordering, Commanding: "What I say goes."
- Praising, Agreeing: "Well, I think you're right."
- Warning, Threatening: "You won't be allowed back if you do that!"
- Moralizing, Preaching: "You shouldn't act like that!"
- Advising, Giving Suggestions: "Why don't you try telling her how you feel?"
- Lecturing, Reasoning: "Look at the facts about students in schools."
- Criticizing, Blaming: "That's an immature point of view."
- Ridiculing, Shaming: "You're just stupid!"
- Reassuring, Sympathizing: "Don't worry, you'll be fine tomorrow."
- Questioning, Interrogating: "Why weren't you at the GSA meeting?"
- Distracting, Humoring: "Don't worry about it."

Tips:

Being **empathic** means being sensitive to another person's feelings and able to communicate your understanding in a language and tone that is in tune with the other's feelings.

To be **empathic** is also to acknowledge what the other person is saying without value judgments and without putting conditions or limits on what the person experiences.

Six Steps towards Active Listening:

1. Clarifying: When did this happen?
2. Restating: So, you would like _____. Is that right?
3. Reflecting: You seem very _____. (feelings/emotions)
4. Encouraging: Can you tell me more...
5. Validating: I appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts/to resolve this matter.
6. Summarizing: These seem to be the key ideas you have expressed...

Thorns & Roses Model

Have a go-around in which everyone in the group says a **thorn**, or something that could be improved about the activity/meeting/event, and a **rose**, or something that was good about the activity/meeting/event. Discuss how you could turn your "thorns" into "roses" for your next activity/meeting/event.

Models like this ensure that the group has an instituted way to give itself feedback and help create a space where all members of the group are valued and respected.

Information above adapted from resources provided by www.helpforfamilies.org & Jason Fleetwood-Bolt

Running an Effective Meeting

Appendix

How to Facilitate a Meeting

- Be prepared
- Set an agenda based on the purpose of the meeting
- Set guidelines/working agreements as to how the meeting will operate
- Be specific about outcomes/expectations
- Assign tasks (i.e., recorder, timekeeper, etc.)
- Take minutes
- Summarize without introducing new ideas
- Schedule next meeting
- Mail/Email minutes
- Follow-up to proposals made during the meeting

Points to Consider Before Scheduling a Meeting

- Is the meeting necessary?
- Is the space/time appropriate?
- Who should attend this meeting?
- Who should facilitate this meeting?
- What are the expected outcomes?
- How can I make sure all the attendees participate?

How to Run a Meeting

- Icebreaker
- Introductions
- Review agenda
- State the working agreements
- Let the discussion flow, but do not lose control
- Take minutes
- Refer to committees, when appropriate, for assigned tasks
- Always do follow-up
- Start and end on time
- Don't take issues that arise personally
- Hear to listen, not to respond; listen to what participants are saying
- Be prepared with plans A, B, C
- Make decisions, recommendations and/or assign tasks to move forward

Tip:

Maintain neutrality - this is sometimes a challenge for meeting facilitators, especially when the discussion topics are ones which evoke passion. In these situations, it is important to question one's effectiveness in this role and sometimes appropriate to relinquish the facilitator's position.

Challenging the Process

Kouzes and Posner's research clearly shows that leaders search for opportunities to change the status quo. They look for innovative ways to improve the organization. In doing so, they experiment and take risks. And because leaders know that risk taking involves mistakes and failures, they accept the inevitable disappointments as learning opportunities.

1. **Search out** challenging opportunities to change, grow, innovate, and improve.
2. **Experiment**, take risks, and learn from the accompanying mistakes.

Inspiring a Shared Vision

Leaders passionately believe that they can make a difference. They envision the future, creating an ideal and unique image of what the organization can become. Through their magnetism and quiet persuasion, leaders enlist others in their dreams. They breathe life into their visions and get people to see exciting possibilities for the future.

3. **Envision** an uplifting and ennobling future.
4. **Enlist** others in a common vision by appealing to their values, interests, hopes, and dreams.

Enabling Others to Act

Leaders foster collaboration and build spirited teams. They actively involve others. Leaders understand that mutual respect is what sustains extraordinary efforts; they strive to create an atmosphere of trust and human dignity. They strengthen others, making each person feel capable and powerful.

5. **Foster** collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust.
6. **Strengthen** people by giving power away, providing choice, developing competence, assigning critical tasks, and offering visible support.

Modeling the Way

Leaders establish principles concerning the way people (constituents, peers, colleagues, and customers alike) should be treated and the way goals should be pursued. They create standards of excellence and then set an example for others to follow. Because the prospect of complex change can overwhelm people and stifle action, they set interim goals so that people can achieve small wins as they work toward larger objectives. They unravel bureaucracy when it impedes action; they put up signposts when people are unsure of where to go or how to get there; and they create opportunities for victory.

7. **Set** the example by behaving in ways that are consistent with shared values.
8. **Achieve** small wins that promote consistent progress and build commitment.

Encouraging the Heart

Accomplishing extraordinary things in organizations is hard work. To keep hope and determination alive, leaders *recognize contributions* that individuals make. In every winning team, the members need to share in the rewards of their efforts, so leaders *celebrate accomplishments*. They make people feel like heroes.

9. **Recognize** individual contributions to the success of every project.
10. **Celebrate** team accomplishments regularly.

Information above provided by *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner, 1995

10 Cool Tips for Finding New Members

Appendix

1. **Advertise, Advertise, Advertise!**

Plan a meeting for making posters. Come up with catchy slogans, cool art, and colorful graphics. Bring in your favorite quotes. Posters not only can advertise meetings, but also educate your school and prompt interesting conversations. Never underestimate the importance of visibility! Many students have noted that their posters have been torn down repeatedly. While most students find that if you continually put up the posters again the people tearing them down will usually stop, some GSAs have put statements on the back of posters educating those who tear them down, such as "We will not be silenced by intolerance and hate." You also can advertise using a club bulletin board. There you can share information about LGBT issues, current events and upcoming meetings.

2. **Bring-A-Friend Day**

Every member of the GSA brings a friend to the meeting. This can help to get new people involved in the group while changing people's perceptions about what the group is and destroying stereotypes about sexual orientation and gender identity.

3. **Open Meeting w/ Guest Speaker**

Many groups invite speakers or guests from local LGBT or diversity groups to discuss different issues. Speakers may be invited for an open meeting, or an administration-approved, school-wide event. Community groups that have been invited to schools include GLSEN chapters, PFLAG (Parents, Friends and Families of Lesbians and Gays) chapters, the local ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union), local LGBT community centers, and local bisexual and transgender groups.

4. **School Newspaper**

An editorial, letter to the editor or notice in the school newspaper can be a great way to let other students know about what's going on in your club and what your club is about.

5. **Sign-In Sheets**

Having sign-in sheets enables students to give information about who they are and how you can contact them (i.e. email, phone) about upcoming meetings. **Be sure that you ask on your sheets only for "safe" places to contact them.**

6. **Club Share**

Work with other school clubs to plan shared events. Each club can take turns holding a special open event, and other clubs can go as a group to support it and learn more about that club. This is a great way to build connections with other clubs, while reaching students with your information.

7. **Movie Time**

Lots of people like movies. Screening a movie with an LGBT-related theme can be a great way to attract potential members. After the screening, hold an open discussion about the movie that ties into the issues concerning the GSA. This enables visitors to see what your group is about, and to join in your discussion. Need help finding LGBT movies, books or curriculum? Visit GLSEN's Bookstore through the link at the top of this page.

8. **Tabling**

Setting up a table about your GSA can be a great way to give out information on your club, its issues and current events. Some schools have a Club Fair where you can table, and others allow school clubs to set up during school lunch in the cafeteria.

9. **Provide Snacks**

It's always nice to have some snacks available, and this is a great way to encourage people to come by your meeting - especially if you meet after school or during a lunch period.

10. **You're Invited!**

The most effective and easiest way to get new people at your meetings is simply to ask! Asking someone in person, 1-on-1, provides you the opportunity to tell the person why they should come, what's happening in your GSA, and how important their contribution would be. A great invitation strategy is to make a piece of paper with multiple sections on it that says something like "You're Invited! GSA, Meeting Time & Place! Take 1 and Pass It On!" As you pass the paper to your friend, tear off one of the sections and ask them to "Take 1 and Pass It On!" This can help break the ice and start a conversation about your GSA.

- 1. School policies do not protect the rights of LGBT people**
- 2. Curricula are devoid of LGBT themes**
- 3. Books/materials with LGBT content are nonexistent**
- 4. Organized and vocal opposition to any LGBT inclusion exists; homosexuality is characterized as “sickness and sin”**
- 5. LGBT-themed clubs are non-existent and strongly discouraged**
- 6. Athletic programs are unwelcome spaces for LGBT or gender-nonconforming students**
- 7. Health and guidance support for LGBT students/families is non-existent**
- 8. Anti-LGBT language/harassment is rampant**
- 9. LGBT people are invisible and feel unsafe being open about their sexual orientation/gender identity**

- 1. Non-discrimination policies may include sexual orientation**
- 2. Curricular inclusion of LGBT issues is limited to clinical references in health/sex ed classes**
- 3. Access to books/materials with LGBT content is limited**
- 4. Adults feel discomfort -- may feel there is “danger” in exposure to LGBT people/issues**
- 5. LGBT-themed clubs appear infrequently; students feel unsafe attending**
- 6. Athletic programs are moving toward gender equity, but anti-gay attitudes remain an issue**
- 7. Health/guidance staff show compassion, but information/support is not generally accessible**
- 8. Anti-LGBT language is common in hallways, locker rooms, school yard, etc., though not in classrooms**
- 9. A “don’t ask, don’t tell” atmosphere exists for LGBT people**

- 1. Non-discrimination policies are inclusive of sexual orientation and students are made aware of this**
- 2. LGBT themes are occasionally included in English, history and health classes**
- 3. A variety of books/materials with LGBT content are available**
- 4. Adult community is open to LGBT inclusion, but may not be sure how to achieve it**
- 5. LGBT-themed clubs are tolerated and attended by a core group of people**
- 6. Coaches interrupt anti-gay behavior; LGBT athletes are relatively safe, though not very visible**
- 7. Health/guidance staff have had training on LGBT issues and offer information/capable support**
- 8. There are few instances of intentional harassment against LGBT students**
- 9. LGBT people are moderately visible; they may be seen as “different,” but a safe and respectful atmosphere exists**

- 1. School policy both protects and affirms LGBT people; proactive education about such policies exists**
- 2. LGBT themes are fully integrated into curricula across a variety of subject areas and grade levels**
- 3. Books/materials with LGBT content are visible and available to all students/staff**
- 4. Adult community has prioritized LGBT inclusion as a part of a larger commitment to social justice**
- 5. LGBT-themed clubs are visible, regularly attended, and considered as valid as other clubs**
- 6. Education around anti-gay bias is a part of athletic programming; LGBT athletes are treated as equals on the playing field**
- 7. Health/guidance staff work with outside agencies to provide outreach, support and education to LGBT people**
- 8. Anti-LGBT language/behavior is rare and is dealt with swiftly and decisively; anti-bias education that embraces respectful, inclusive language is common in classrooms**
- 9. LGBT people are visible and fully integrated into school life; there is a high degree of comfort and acceptance regarding LGBT people**

For New (And Not So New) Groups: Creating an Action Plan Appendix

Getting Started: Establishing key short-term goals

The first step to putting together your first action plan is to think carefully about what your key short-term goals should be. Try to make these expressions of desired outcomes, as opposed to statements of various worthy activities. In most groups, there is rarely a shortage of ideas about good things to do. It is easy to make a list of them; it is much harder to get even a few of them done with the time, money and people you have. Agreeing first on your desired outcomes will help you choose the best actions to take -- and, just as importantly, focus your group's thinking on what worthy ideas must be left out and why.

Keep the number of key goals manageable. These will represent your organization's priorities. For a new group's first action plan, 3-5 key goals is usually plenty, and more than 7-8 is usually too many. In fact, even the largest organizations are usually well advised to limit their key organizational—as opposed to departmental or individual—goals to fewer than ten. Restraint in priority setting is always important, and is never more so than in a group's first year, or first year together.

Remember...
When everything is a priority,
nothing is a priority.

The important work of determining key goals should involve as many of your members as possible. (Later work should probably be assigned to smaller groups, as discussed further below.) The discussion of key goals should be moderated by someone who can remain neutral, rather than the person(s) who founded your group and may have done so with very specific goals already in mind. It is good to begin this discussion within the first few meetings of your group, but it is usually best not to try to settle on a final list of key short-term goals until your membership has stabilized, and people have settled into their schedules and commitments. Rushing it more than this usually fails to allow adequate time for enough people to become involved enough for the best ideas to emerge. It also fails to allow ample time for enough people to become invested enough in the process for it to produce the "buy-in" you need. On the other hand, dragging the goal-setting process on longer risks loss of enthusiasm of your members and subsequent loss of momentum of your group. Get the process started early, keep it moving steadily along, and if at all possible, try to conclude it by your seventh or eighth meeting.

Establishing action steps

The key goals lend themselves well to the formation of some of your first committees. Getting people involved at the committee level builds enthusiasm, puts people in places that match their interests and expertise, and gets things done.

Some of the committees that form around your first short-term goals will evolve into standing committees, such as fundraising, policy or outreach committees, and those devoted to various types of activities (for example, event planning or publications). Others will probably be short-term committees whose jobs will be done within a few months, after which time they can dissolve.

The overall action plan that will be developed from the committees' input should include some basic information about each proposed action, including:

- What should be done;
- Who should do it (who is principally responsible for doing it, or seeing that it's done);
- Who should help (the individuals or committees who should support the above person in getting it done);
and
- When the action should be done (can be expressed as a beginning date, a deadline, or an interval of time)

Other categories of information that are included in some action plans include how much the action will cost and methods for evaluating its completion and/or success.

The committees should make certain that timelines and individual responsibilities are reasonable, keeping in mind that everyone has academic, personal and/or professional obligations. They should "assign" tasks to

For New (And Not So New) Groups... (continued)**Appendix**

people only with their full understanding and consent. Finally, they should develop the task lists with the recognition that the things that the committee can foresee needing to be done will almost certainly not be everything that winds up needing to be done over the course of the planning period. It is thus important to make sure that the actions in your plan will not be all-consuming tasks for any one individual or group.

It is equally important for the committee to ask itself this question: **If all the proposed actions are completed properly and on time, will the overall goal (the desired outcome agreed upon first) probably be achieved?** If the committee's proposed actions cannot be said to do this, they should be re-evaluated and revised until they can. If no set of actions the committee can come up with can reasonably and confidently be expected to produce the desired outcome, the committee should re-evaluate the goal itself. It should then recommend to the group as a whole a revised goal, and an appropriate set of actions to support it.

Forming a budget

Your group's budget may be determined by your school's administration, without your group's input, or it may be based on your group's needs from the year before. Perhaps your group receives no money from your school at all, and needs to rely completely on fundraising. Whatever the case, most action plans, even early ones like this one, require at least some money. You may need money for supplies, for printing, for transportation, for event logistics, or for other purposes. In order to give your plan a chance to succeed, you should develop a simple budget to support it. Even though you may be able to cover some initial small expenses out-of-pocket, it is important to figure out how much money it will take to do the job right, as well as to spare you any personal expense. A budget will give you something specific to show people when you approach them for contributions, and will serve as a reality check during the planning process.

Putting the plan into action

The world's shelves are full of good plans that were never used. In order to make sure that yours does not join them, you need to decide, as a group, on a system for its implementation. If you have formed a plan along the lines recommended above, one of the most important secrets of success - assigning clear responsibility for each and every task to a single person - should have been addressed already. That person should be the one who takes personal responsibility for the task, even if other people are providing support. The next step is to determine who will be the coordinator of the plan. Someone needs to review the progress toward implementation of the plan as a whole on a regular basis. If the plan is short and sweet, that should probably be the responsibility of your new group's chairperson(s). If your plan is lengthy and complex, it is probably best to divide the responsibility for coordination among committee chairs, who should in turn report regularly on their committees' progress to the chairperson.

Each of your group's meetings should include a brief update on plan implementation. The reports should be general in nature to give the group an overview of progress. They need not, and should not, be in such detail as to bog the meeting down. If the group is falling behind in an area in general, it is good to mention that and discuss it. It is usually not good a good idea, however, to become more specific, as individuals who for one reason or another may be behind on doing their part can become embarrassed or defensive.

People will sometimes fall behind. Count on it. When they do, it should be the job of someone (probably the committee chair) to check in and discuss the situation. Sometimes a simple reminder is all that is needed. At other times it is important to determine if the goals were too ambitious; if the actions that were chosen have proven not to be the best ones to take to pursue the goals; if unforeseen circumstances have arisen that make certain actions difficult, impossible, or no longer advisable; or if the people who took particular responsibilities turn out not to be the best suited for the tasks, for whatever reason. Adjustments can and should be made.

Remember: Your action plan is a road map, a set of guidelines, and, most of all, a tool. Be as faithful to it as possible while respecting people's obligations, limitations, and feelings. Keep focused on the goals, not just the actions, and remain flexible about how the goals can best be achieved. Maintain enough freedom to recognize and take advantage of new opportunities when they arise. If you do these things, your first action plan will put your new group on the road to success.

Adapted from a resource by Don Elder of the River Network

Advice from GSA Student Leaders**Appendix**

Here are their words when asked, “If you were graduating today, what words of advice would you have for future student leaders?”

“Make members of the GSA feel that they are an integral part of the group.... if people have individual responsibilities they are more likely to show up and be excited every week.”

- Elizabeth, Hartford High School (Vermont)

“Make your goals clear in the beginning, and stick to those goals. Every once in a while reassess what your events are and make sure they further your group goals.”

- Becky (Massachusetts)

“Keep your club active and visible in the community. It is important that the community sees that you are not a “sex club” and that you are sincere in your desire to strengthen the community as a whole.”

- Brianna, Amador High School (California)

“Set group goals together. If group members’ hopes for the group aren't being met, they won't remain active.”

- Heather (Virginia)

“Do not try to do too many things at once. Plan what you want to do or hope to achieve and then give it a lot of time to develop (party, fundraiser, and so on).”

- Jon, El Camino High School (California)

”Stay inclusive and educated. Try to include everyone, but don't be half-assed about it. If you're going to include transgender and/or intersex folk under your banner then know what it means to be doing so and keep conscious of it. Also, remember that including bisexuals means more than just adding them to the list as well; you need to remain conscious of the different issues that each group has.”

- Adam Free, 18 (Iowa)

“ Everyone has a different reason for being involved. Try to get to know what their reasons are.”

- Joe Hecht, Cornell College (Iowa)

“If you are a leader of a GSA or similar group, one thing you should remember is to keep the privacy of all involved with the group as a sign of respect (if people want to find out what we talk about they should come to a meeting). Another is to allow all people in the group an equal opportunity to express opinions and concerns, rather than letting just one person take over the entire meeting.”

- Anthony R. Colin (California)

“ALWAYS plan your meetings ahead of time; advertise constantly; focus on projects.”

- Melissa, Analy High School (California)

“Keep all information talked about in meetings private; provide a warm, caring environment; be there for everyone.”

- Jen

Selections from the complete resource available online @ www.glsen.org under Student Resources.

Advice from GSA Adult Advisors**Appendix**

Here are their words when asked, “If you were leaving today, what words of advice would you have for future GSA Advisors?”

“Always work those lines of communication with teachers and staff. You will, of course, always find colleagues who are “not enlightened,” but I have found wonderful support in the most unlikely people. The Safe Zone Sticker program was the best tool for establishing and maintaining teachers as allies.”

- Denise Johnson, Barrington High School (Rhode Island)

“Keep it simple, fun, and light with an activity at the meetings that makes people feel included and involved. Icebreakers, personal check-ins, etc. It’s too easy to get carried away and overwhelmed if at every meeting you’re trying to organize a big event.”

- Cassandra Mortier, Casa Grande High School (California)

“Build a supportive network of adults at your school so that students have more contacts/places where they feel safe. Allow student members to drive the mission of the group - they may want to be activists, or they may just need to direct their energies at supporting each other. Even if attendance dwindles, keep publicizing the group and its meetings. Just reading about its existence in the bulletin once a week might be enough to let an LGBT youth know there’s someone out there who cares.”

- Gayle Brickert-Albrecht, Tucson High Magnet School (Arizona)

“Remember that by definition your job is to advise. You are involved with a student organization and the students can run it. You just give them advice on their ideas. Always remain positive, no matter what happens in your school, society, etc. Set a few big goals for both fun and action for the year and work towards them together.”

- Sharon Reece Harrell (Massachusetts)

“Put out a charter or mission statement that says what you’re REALLY about (creating safety and tolerance, etc.) and distribute to staff and any parents, media, community members who are interested.”

- Dani Meier, Jackson High School (Michigan)

“Try and be as inclusive as possible. Work with other diversity organizations. Try and keep administration, faculty, staff, and students updated as to your activities. Try to work with all people rather than against. We don’t attempt anything without discussion from within and outside. This helps others support us even if they don’t agree with our strategies because we have already educated them and worked with them as to the reasons for our actions.”

- Fletcher McNeill, GLOW of Garrison Forest School (Maryland)

“Make the club’s agenda the students’ agenda. Providing them with copies of relevant articles and information from GLSEN and other sources is good, but the push for action should come from their energy; this makes the club more vibrant and keeps it student-centered. A powerful force for change in the school’s culture is the faculty. Occasional informational sessions or even formal presentations at a faculty meeting, encouraging teachers to challenge homophobic comments among the students can really help create a more open community.”

- Trevor Drake, Conestoga High School (Pennsylvania)

“Try to attract a broad spectrum of students by having activities that a lot of people could support, such as painting a diversity mural, holding assemblies that work to improve school climate, anti-harassment campaigns, etc. Collaborate with other school clubs such as art & drama groups, other social action clubs. Go to regional networking meetings, and try to get together with other GSAs.”

- Sue Beers, Westford Academy (Massachusetts)

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