



Gay - Straight Alliances

What is a GSA?

A gay-straight alliance (GSA), also sometimes called a GSM, is a student run group which allows students, staff and allies to meet, network, discuss problems, get educated and eliminate biphobia / homophobia /transphobia. GSAs provide a safe, respectful environment for all members of the group. Some GSAs act as a support group, activist club, or social group. It is up to the members to decide what the GSA will be.

Who Can Join a GSA?

Any student can join a GSA, regardless of religion, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or age.

The Department of Education Safe Schools Policy:

This policy “**embraces the diversity of all peoples**, regardless of economic status, race, colour, national or ethnic origin, language group, religion, **gender, sexual orientation**, age or ability.” This ensures that every student shares the same rights.

Do You Have to Be 2SLGBTQ+ to Join?

No! This is the most common misconception and is one that deters many people from joining. You do **not** have to be 2SLGBTQ+ to join a GSA. Members of a GSA are **not** required to state their sexual orientation. One of the main purposes of a GSA is to unite youth, 2SLGBTQ+ and straight alike.

One of the main objectives of a GSA is to promote diversity, acceptance, and understanding. As such, some students prefer to initiate “Diversity Clubs” or “Human Rights Groups” which celebrate and advocate for all human rights.

Why is a GSA important?

GSA meetings may be the only opportunity available for some students to be themselves in a non-judgmental environment. This freedom can help 2SLGBTQ+ youth get through high school. For some, the GSA group can be the only support available.

¹ 2SLGBTQ+ is an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual, heteronormative, or gender-binary.

How Can a GSA Benefit My School?

- It allows 2SLGBTQ+ and straight students to come together and do things as a group.
 - It promotes diversity and inclusion.
- It is an effective tool for educating youth on 2SLGBTQ+ issues.
 - It can provide positive activities and opportunities.

What Kind of Activities Do GSAs Take Part In?

A GSA can host almost any activity, as long as the activity complies with the school's policies and is approved by administration. Usually activities are related to 2SLGBTQ+ activism.

- The GSA can host a “**Day of Silence**” (dayofsilence.org).
- The GSA may wish to host an event to commemorate the **International Day Against Homophobia** (homophobiaday.org).
- The GSA can host an event to mark the **International Transgender Day of Remembrance** (transgenderdor.org).
- The GSA can also host movie and pizza nights, bowling outings, hikes, etc. These events allow students to interact in a fun and safe environment

How Can I Start a GSA?

- 1) Find supportive staff.
- 2) Research policies.
- 3) Pick a meeting place.
- 4) Advertise.
- 5) Establish ground rules and guidelines.
- 6) Host your first meeting.

Where Can I Get More Information?

www.gsanetwork.org
www.schools-out.org.uk
www.egale.ca
www.nlsexualhealthcentre.org

Is a Gay-Straight Alliance Right for Your School?

- If you have students who like to make a change.....YES!
- If you have students who like to belong.....YES!
- If you want your school to be a more accepting place.....YES!
- If you have students who support diversity.....YES!
- If you have students who like to have fun.....YES!

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