

The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide

PART
1



**Building
and
Activating
Your GSA
or Similar
Student Club**

GLSEN[®]

GAY, LESBIAN & STRAIGHT
EDUCATION NETWORK

The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide

PART
1

WELCOME!

Welcome to *The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide*! GLSEN's student organizing team has created this resource to support new and established Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and similar groups that are working to make schools safer and more inclusive for all students. We've been hearing from many organizers that they need concrete ideas for building, shaping and activating their groups, and that's what this guide is all about. It takes you through the process of establishing your student club, identifying your mission and goals, assessing your school's climate, and engaging in projects and activities throughout the year. It also offers resources for further exploration.

This guide consists of eight self-contained sections; all are designed to help you *jump-start*—or bring fresh and creative energy to—your student club. Topics include:

- Building and Activating Your GSA
- Tips and Tools for Organizing an Action Campaign
- Strategies for Training Teachers
- Understanding Direct-Action Organizing
- Examining Power, Privilege and Oppression
- Creating Youth-Adult Partnerships
- Making Your Student Club Trans-Inclusive
- Evaluation, Continuation, Celebration!

Please note that we have chosen to use gender-neutral language in this resource. We recognize that replacing “he” and “she” with the gender-neutral “they” is grammatically questionable, but we hope you will overlook this in support of students who do not use “he” or “she” to identify themselves.

If you would like to receive more information about GLSEN, or to get involved in the safer schools movement, please register online at www.studentorganizing.org! We welcome your feedback on the activities in this guide—and we salute you for the important work you are doing to create safer schools for all regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

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**Building
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10 Steps Toward Starting a **GSA** or Similar Student Club

Establish a GSA

the same way you would start any other student club

Across the country, hundreds of students have started gay-straight alliances (GSAs) and similar clubs dedicated to making schools safer and more inclusive for all students. The 10 easy-to-understand steps below are commonly used in public secondary schools where other non-curricular clubs already exist and are allowed. Keep in mind that these are starting points; because situations and schools vary, no single process is applicable to every school.

1 Follow Guidelines

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

2 Find a Faculty/Teacher Advisor

Find teachers or staff members who you think would be supportive or who have already shown themselves to be allies around sexual orientation and gender-identity issues. Consult your school rules for more information on who can serve as a club advisor.

3 Find Other Students

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

4 Inform Administration

Let administrators know right away what you are doing. It can be very helpful to have them on your side. They can work as liaisons to teachers, parents, community members and the school board. If an administrator opposes the GSA, provide them information about the Federal Equal Access Act (EAA).

STUDENT ORGANIZERS The photos throughout this guide feature current and former members of GLSEN's Jump-Start National Student Leadership Team. Members of this team connect with, train and give advice to students and allies across the country; to contact a team member in your area, visit www.studentorganizing.org.



10 Steps Toward Starting a GSA . . . (continued)

5 Pick a Meeting Place

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

6 Advertise

There are many ways to advertise; think about how you've seen other clubs advertise. Use a combination of your school bulletin, announcements, flyers or word-of-mouth. If your flyers are defaced or torn down, don't be discouraged. Plan to check on them throughout the day and replace them if necessary. Eventually, whoever is tearing them down will give up or be reprimanded by the school. Besides, advertising your group and having words up such as "gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender" or "end homophobia" can be part of educating the school and can actually make other students feel safer—even if they never attend a single meeting.

7 Plan Your Meeting

Of course you want to have a good meeting, so plan ahead of time. There are tons of things you can do, from discussions to inviting speakers, holding workshops and playing games. Dozens of possible activities are described within *The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide*.

8 Hold Your Meeting!

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

9 Establish Ground Rules

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

10 Plan for the Future

Develop an action plan. Brainstorm projects. Set goals for what you want to work toward. (All of these steps are covered in *The GLSEN Jump-Start Guide*.) If you haven't already done so, contact GLSEN's Student Organizing Department so that you may share ideas, resources and information. Also look into local GSA networks in your town or city.



Advice from Student Club Leaders

GLSEN asked a number of student club leaders, "If you were graduating today, what advice would you have for future student leaders?" Their responses, collected below, may prove useful to you as you plan and implement the activities of your GSA.

“Make your **goals clear** in the beginning, and **stick to those goals**”

“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)

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

—Jon, El Camino High School (California)

“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)

“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 (Iowa)

“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



Advice from Student Club Faculty Advisors

“Try to **attract**
a broad
spectrum
of students
by having
activities
that a lot of
people could
support”

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

“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 toward 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)

“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)



Advice from Student Club Faculty Advisors (continued)

“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 encouraging teachers to challenge homophobic comments among students can really help create a more open community.”

—Trevor Drake, *Conestoga High School (Pennsylvania)*

“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)*

“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 and drama groups and other social-action clubs. Go to regional networking meetings, and try to get together with other GSAs.”

—Sue Beers, *Westford Academy (Massachusetts)*

Additional resources for student organizers and faculty advisors are online at www.glsen.org.

Why I'm Here Today and Where My Priorities Lie

Understanding participants' **motivations and aspirations** will help your group set **common goals**

Ready... People join groups for a variety of reasons—and when they do, they bring a wide range of experiences and expectations. Perhaps some people came to your meeting today because they identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (often abbreviated as **LGBT**); others may have chosen to attend because they're questioning their sexual orientation, gender identity or the ways in which they express their gender. Some may be perceived to be LGBT, whether or not they identify as such. Others may be straight allies with LGBT relatives, friends or acquaintances. Still others may be concerned about bias and discrimination in the school community. Whatever the reasons, it's important for all participants to take some time to reflect on what brought them to the meeting and what they bring to the group, and to learn about one another's motivations and aspirations. Beginning with this understanding will help your group set common goals and work together in achieving them. It's always easier to collaborate when you know where everyone is coming from and where you want to go!

Set... **People:** Entire group, working first as individuals, then in pairs, then as a whole

Tools: Index cards (two per person), pens (one per person), large construction paper (lots), markers (just a few), tape

Time: 35–55 minutes

Additional Resources: "10 Awesome GSA Activities and Icebreakers" and "Running an Effective Meeting" in the Appendix

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 Are You Here Today? (10 minutes)

Step 1: Take five minutes to reflect on your motivations for coming to this meeting. This is the time to focus on your motivations, not your aspirations; think about 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 interest in the group; maybe you've been thinking about how to make your school a safer place. Write anything that comes to mind on the card, but give it some thought first, and try to be as specific as possible.



Why I'm Here Today . . . (continued)

Consider This...

- How might you use this information to develop a mission statement and to set goals for your group?
- If you simply choose the priorities of the majority, you may alienate people who don't share those priorities. But if you try to accomplish every single priority of every single person, you may ultimately get nothing done!
- 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.

Step 2: Form pairs and take five minutes (about two minutes per partner) to share what you've written on your "Why I'm Here Today" card. Try to pair with someone you don't know very well or haven't spoken to lately. Once you and your partner have discussed your respective reasons for attending the meeting, separate.

What Are Your Priorities? (15–25 minutes)

Step 3: Now take another five 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 emotional support? What you write on the "Where My Priorities Lie" card will be shared with the entire group. Don't be afraid to think big if you want to—this is a brainstorm, not a binding commitment.

Step 4: Come together as a group after everyone has written something on their "Where My Priorities Lie" card. Place a big sheet of paper on the floor or tape it to the wall, and draw a big Venn diagram, like the one below, 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 part of the circle labeled "Social." Those who primarily seek support from the group should attach their cards to the section labeled "Support." And those who want to organize actions to change your school's climate with regard to LGBT people and concerns should attach their cards to the "Advocacy" circle. Those whose priorities lie in more than one area should attach their cards to overlapping parts of the diagram. Remember that everyone's priorities are important; honesty should be encouraged and affirmed.

Step 6: After all the cards have been placed, everyone should return to the diagram and see how the cards have been distributed.

Group Aspirations (10–20 minutes)

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



Creating a Mission Statement

Your **Mission Statement**

should lead your group's efforts in planning its **goals and projects**

Ready... Organizations that work to bring about social change usually have a **mission statement**. These brief, focused statements serve several purposes: they identify the organization's reason for existence; they spell out the goals and philosophy of the group; and they explain the actual work of the organization. Mission statements should be simple, honest and direct—something you could state as easily to a friend as to a school board member or reporter.

For example, the GSA at Libertyville High School in Libertyville, Illinois, defines its mission this way:

"Our mission is to work toward a more accepting environment for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, through education, support, social action and advocacy. We believe that schools can be truly safe only when every student is assured of access to an education without fear of harassment or violence. The GSA welcomes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, questioning youth, and their heterosexual allies."

Set... **People:** Entire group, working first in two to five small groups, then as a whole

Tools: Large construction paper (10 sheets), markers, tape, "Where My Priorities Lie" diagram from Activity 1.1

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

Mission Statement of the GSA at Friends' Central School in 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.



Creating a **Mission Statement** (continued)

GO! Round Robin: Exploring Your Group's Identity and Mission

(20 minutes)

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. As a group, review these four questions, using the ideas below:

"Who Are We?" Who is in your group, and whom do you welcome as members? You don't need to name 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.

Mission Statement of the GSA at Nutley High School in 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 and straight students.

"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. Examples include: raise awareness of anti-LGBT harassment in your school and in society; draw attention to gender role construction and gender inequity; confront the interconnected "isms" (including racism, sexism, classism, ableism, ageism and heterosexism) in the school community; provide a safe, supportive space for marginalized students; and so on.

"How Do We Do It?" Although you may still be in the early stages of planning, you probably have a general sense of your **tactics**—that is, the specific steps you will take to accomplish your goals. (Look back 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; working with teachers to develop lesson plans on LGBT history; organizing a coalition of allies in the school community; holding fundraisers to purchase LGBT library materials; and holding weekly meetings where students can find support, voice their concerns, and/or plan educational events and social gatherings.

Creating a Mission Statement (continued)

10 TIPS for Writing an Effective GSA Mission Statement

- 1 Stay focused.** A mission statement should say who you are, what you stand for, what you do and how you do it.
- 2 Keep it concise.** Mission statements tend to be two or three precisely written sentences.
- 3 Describe your goals.** Mission statements often include an infinitive that indicates a change in the status of a situation or in your school climate: for example, *to increase*, *to decrease*, *to prevent*, *to eliminate*.
- 4 Be honest.** Clarity and frankness are the ideal characteristics of a mission statement.
- 5 Invite input.** An effective mission statement is best developed with ideas from all members of your group.
- 6 Be inclusive.** Even if your membership does not currently include individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or straight, it's important that your mission statement convey the fact that your group is inclusive of LGBT issues and open to straight allies.
- 7 Examine other mission statements** to get ideas for your own. Simply copying other groups' statements, however, probably won't accurately reflect what your group is about.
- 8 Take your time.** Effective mission statements usually take a while to develop. Revisiting your mission statement drafts during a couple meetings allows for additional input and final editing.
- 9 Distribute copies** of the completed statement to everyone in your group. Your mission statement should lead your group's efforts in planning its goals and projects.
- 10 Share your mission statement widely.** Consider posting copies around your school, having it published in the campus newspaper, submitting it to your school's administration, printing it for your group archives, and including it in all your published materials—flyers, posters, event programs, website pages and so on.

Developing Your GSA's Mission Statement

(15-25 minutes)

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 five minutes at each question sheet.

Step 2: Hang a fifth sheet of paper beside the other four sheets and designate one person (the "recorder") to document everyone's ideas. 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 approval of the group.

Step 4: Now it's time to look at your four lists. How can you combine them into one clear, concise statement of two or three 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 24." 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.

Planning and Running GSA Meetings

Everyone should have the opportunity to contribute to a discussion of what **safety, focus, fun and respect** actually look like

Ready... It's an undeniable truth: Meetings need structure! Having a consistent meeting format will make your space safer and your strategy more effective. It will also enable you to make the most of your meeting time. Remember, you can renegotiate your structure, but you should work together as a group to agree upon a format for your meetings.

In order to make meetings safer, focused, fun and more respectful—and thus to work effectively as a group in supporting one another and planning activities—everyone should have the opportunity to contribute to a discussion of what safety, focus, fun and respect actually look like. It's also important to discuss how you can put these goals into practice. Remember, everyone brings 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 and creates a system for 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 Activity 1.1

Time: 40–65 minutes

Additional Resources:

"Guidelines for Active Listening," "Running an Effective Meeting" and "10 Awesome GSA Activities and Icebreakers" in the Appendix



Planning and Running GSA Meetings (continued)

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 begin your discussion of Working Agreements. *Working Agreements are standards of behavior that group members expect of one another so that a safer, more respectful and more 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 acknowledging our differences rather than avoiding 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?

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

Step 2: Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen. Then give members two minutes to reflect on the above questions and to write down one Working Agreement they believe the group should 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 inside 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 items be combined or restated to express a broader idea? Keep in mind that it's better to have a longer list with very specific items than 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

Sample Meeting Agenda

Welcome and check-in
Icebreaker: Common Ground
Review minutes
Goal-setting for this year
Plan upcoming activities:
• Ally Week - October
• Transgender Day of Remembrance - November
• Martin Luther King Jr. Organizing Weekend - January
• Day of Silence - April
Presentation by guest speaker
Working with Diversity Center and other clubs
Reports from committees
New business
Debrief

Planning and Running GSA Meetings (continued)

Hang your
list of
**Working
Agreements**
in a
visible spot
to remind
everyone of their
commitments

and gender identity,” you could say, “Respect everyone’s right to self-identify their gender and sexual orientation by avoiding surface assumptions and by using gender-neutral language.”

Step 5: Once you’ve finished generating your central list, use the remaining five 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”—that is, support and agreement from the entire group?

Step 6: Keep the central list in a safe place and hang it 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.

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

Step 7: As a group, discuss the question below. Designate a recorder to write responses on the board or on a large piece of construction paper that you hang on a wall.

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

Step 8: Keep in mind that this decision 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 extra-curricular 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 if you consider their schedules and try to find a time that is convenient for the majority of group members. 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 to 10 minutes to list your ideas. The recorder should write down everyone’s input.

Small-Group Brainstorm: Planning for the Year Ahead (10–15 minutes)

Step 9: Now look back at your “Where My Priorities Lie” diagram from Activity 1.1. Take the next 10 to 15 minutes to discuss the role of group meetings in achieving your short-term and long-term goals. For example:

Planning and Running GSA Meetings (continued)

10 TIPS for Running an Effective Meeting

- 1** **Opening every meeting with a check-in** 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!
- 2** Similarly, **having a few minutes to debrief**, or review what's happened during the course of the meeting, can help bring everyone together and stabilize the group if any conflicts have arisen.
- 3** **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.
- 4** 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.
- 5** If you're having trouble coming to a consensus about your meeting structure, **come up with two or three different options** and experiment with them over the next few meetings.
- 6** As part of your Working Agreements, **develop a strategy for handling individual breaches** of your group's ground rules. How do you want to call attention to them? How do you want to fix them?
- 7** Be sure that your faculty advisor attends all meetings. Negotiate your advisor's role during the meetings. **Your advisor should participate as an equal** rather than controlling or dominating the space.
- 8** **Document** discussion topics, activities and attendance at meetings.
- 9** **Start and end** meetings on time.
- 10** **Provide snacks**, if possible!

- , **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" and "learn about multiculturalism and anti-oppression work"? If so, you might want to have everyone in your group pick a topic that interests them and set aside time at upcoming meetings 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!
- , **Advocacy:** If educating your school community is a priority for your group, there are lots of activities and events that you could use your meeting time to design: The Day of Silence Project, Ally Week, GLSEN's Day of Actions, LGBT History Month, and thematic teach-ins are just a few examples.
- , **Support:** If group members made a priority of getting emotional support and encouragement 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 issues.
- , **Policy:** If changing school policy is a priority for your GSA, 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 about how to approach members of your school board and how to mobilize community support for policy change. To view a sample policy, click on the "Library" tab at www.glsen.org and type "Sample Anti-Harassment Policy" in the Search box.

Planning and Running GSA Meetings (continued)

, **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, concrete actions. Some ideas include writing a complimentary (or critical) note to a news publication or journalist for covering (or ignoring) LGBT issues; sending messages to your elected officials; or making posters with quotes from LGBT historical figures and straight allies to hang in visible areas of your school.



, **Fun/Social:** Isn't all of it fun? Well, either way, you should set aside time for doing something fun together, or just talking. It's also important to find time to celebrate your successes and accomplishments.

, **"Open Time":** Make sure that you leave a little time for whatever may arise at the last moment!

Large-Group Discussion: Planning Your Meeting Structure (10–20 minutes)

Step 10: Reconvene as a whole group after everyone has had a chance to contribute to their group's list. 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.

Planning and Running GSA Meetings (continued)

Working
Agreements
set a clear and
positive tone
that allows
group members
to interact
comfortably
and **safely**

Sample Working Agreements

Working Agreements (also known as 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 consider for your group:

- ⇒ **Respect Others:** You may hear ideas at GSA meetings that are 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 make an effort to be supportive.
- ⇒ **Speak From the “I”:** Speak from your own personal experiences and do not judge 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 during GSA meetings. 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 ways.
- ⇒ **Respect Confidentiality:** Please be sure that everything said in the room stays in the room. When sharing personal anecdotes, avoid using the real names of other people.
- ⇒ **Step Up, Step Back:** Though we encourage you to express your ideas and opinions, we ask that you not monopolize the group’s time, and that you help 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.

Organizing Your Group's Leadership

What does
your group
need and
expect from its
leaders?

Ready... 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 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 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 Activity 1.1, Mission Statement from Activity 1.2, Working Agreements from Activity 1.3

Time: 30–55 minutes

Additional Resource: "The Five Practices and Ten Commitments of Leadership" in the Appendix, which describes the attributes of effective leaders

GO! **Reflections on Leadership** (5 minutes)

Step 1: Distribute loose-leaf paper and a pen to everyone in the group. Then give participants five minutes to answer these 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 an activity or effort. It can be one brief occasion, such as an in-class group assignment, or a position you held for a 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 you consider a good leader. What actions did that person take as a leader? What attributes contributed to the person's effective 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 your "Where My Priorities Lie" diagram, Mission Statement and Working Agreements side by side. Hang two sheets of blank construction paper next to them.



Organizing Your Group's Leadership (continued)

Step 3: The recorder should write "Actions" at the top of the first blank sheet **and "What Makes an Effective Leader?"** at the top of the second. Then take five to ten 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 "What Makes an Effective Leader?" 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 refer to themselves and which refer to leaders they've known.

Choosing Your Leaders

- 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"?
- 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?

It's likely that in the group brainstorm, communication skills came up. Given your overall goals, how important are **public speaking** and **good writing skills**? 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.

Organizing Your Group's Leadership (10–20 minutes)

Step 4: Now 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 5: Take the next five to ten minutes to discuss your group's leadership needs, using your "Where My Priorities Lie" diagram, your Mission Statement, your Working Agreements and the information you gathered in your "Actions" and "What Makes an Effective Leader?" lists. The recorder should list everyone's suggestions on the "Our Leadership" sheet.

Step 6: Once everyone has had the chance to provide input, prioritize your group's leadership needs.

Then give your leader(s) or potential leader(s) five min-

utes to "talk back" to the group. Do they consider themselves capable of meeting the needs you have identified? Do they have any concerns about any of your group needs? Is there anything they require from the group in order to meet the group's needs? Be open and direct with one another now. It will save you from guessing, mind-reading and misunderstanding later!

Step 7: Take the remaining time to discuss how **everyone** views their own role in and responsibility to the group.

This activity draws its ideas from *The Leadership Challenge* by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner.

Finding **New Members** FOR YOUR **GSA**

Publicity, coalitions and visible actions can **expand** your group's membership

Ready... Finding and keeping committed members can pose a challenge for student groups, including GSA's. Some prospective members may misunderstand the purpose of the group; others may fear its visibility. Current members develop schedule conflicts, their interest grows during times of high activity and wanes in slower periods, and they sometimes feel overburdened or underutilized. It's important to establish a concrete strategy for finding and keeping members in order to ensure that your group remains 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

Additional Resource: "10 Cool Tips for Finding New Members" in the Appendix



Finding **New Members** for your **GSA** (continued)

GO! **Small Group Brainstorms** (10–15 minutes)

Step 1: Begin by dividing into three small 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**.

5 TIPS for strengthening Membership of Your GSA

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

Planning Publicity

The **publicity group** should come up with at least five tactics your GSA could use to publicize its mission and activities in your school. Begin by identifying “official” media and information sources, then get creative! For each tactic, identify the person your group would need to contact for submission and permission criteria. Think about print outlets (such as the school newspaper and yearbook), websites and display opportunities.

Forming Coalitions

The **coalitions group** should make a list of at least five other school and/or community groups that your GSA could approach with proposals for collaborative projects. Possible projects include painting a diversity mural, planning an assembly that highlights “unknown heroes” from history, and showing a film

that addresses common interests. Begin by identifying the clubs, teams, religious and community groups to which you belong, as you already have an “in” with those groups: yourselves! For each item on your list, identify the person your group would need to contact in order to set up a meeting.

Taking Action

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

Finding **New Members** for your **GSA** (continued)

Large-Group Discussion (5–10 minutes)

Step 2: Reconvene as a whole group after each small group has brainstormed its list. Each small group should take a couple minutes to present its ideas 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 these ideas; just come back to them in the future.

Step 4: Once everyone has 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 five to ten minutes to discuss, as a whole group, how you can **use each of the final list items as a way to reach out to potential new members.** The recorder should write down everyone’s ideas for outreach strategies 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 talents, as they will be more personally invested and thus more inclined to tell others! Beyond that, they will be more likely to commit to the group for the long term if they’re given specific responsibilities early on that help them 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.

Assessing Your School's Climate

This **survey** will tell you how often students are hearing **anti-LGBT, racist and sexist** remarks in **your school**

Ready... Since its founding in 1995, GLSEN has conducted several national surveys that measure bias against LGBT students in school. GLSEN has 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 these groundbreaking surveys in their work.

Students in GSAs have told GLSEN that they would like to measure bias and harassment in their local communities and 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. It will also tell you whether students feel safe or unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation, gender, gender expression or race. The results of the survey will enable you to assess the amount of bias at your school and will help you 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 (a few sheets), markers (a few), tape, and GLSEN Local School Climate Survey, online at www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/1985.html

Time:
20–30
minutes

Sample Survey Questions

- How often do you hear the expression “That’s so gay” or “You’re so gay” in school?
- In the past month, how many times have you skipped a class because you felt uncomfortable or unsafe in that class?
- When you hear racist remarks at your school, how often does another student intervene?
- When sexist remarks are made at your school and a teacher or other school staff person is present, how often does the teacher or staff person intervene?



Assessing Your School's Climate (continued)

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” and “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 box below for more specific information about survey rules.

3 TIPS for Maximizing Your survey's Effectiveness

- 1** Depending on your school and school district, **you may need additional permission** to conduct 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.
- 2** 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 a 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 a 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.
- 3** Once your survey is complete, there are **many ways to use and publicize the findings**. These include submitting an article on the survey results to your student newspaper; presenting the data at a school board meeting; creating a poster campaign that highlight especially disturbing statistics about your school’s climate; writing a letter to the editor of newspapers in your community and state; and pitching a story on your survey results to local television and radio stations. Sharing the results widely is a vital part of conducting your survey!

Step 2: Who should take the survey? 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 student clubs, teams and organizations, but then you won’t get the perspective of students who aren’t really involved in school life outside the classroom. Another option is to distribute the survey to a cross-section of students, such as all math classes (you could ask your math teachers to give you extra credit for tallying the survey data and presenting the findings in class, 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.

Assessing Your School's Climate (continued)

Step 3: Where and when should participants take the survey? If you decide 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 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 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)

Step 5: Who will be responsible for tallying the survey results, and when will they do it? The number of people tallying will depend upon the number of surveys you receive, but make sure that you assemble enough people 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.

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 like the one below,** or to use a spreadsheet program such as Excel. If you're having trouble, ask your advisor or a math teacher to help you! As an example, let's say you get back 100 surveys for the question "How often do you hear homophobic remarks in our school?" 53 students check "Frequently," 27 check "Often," 10 check "Sometimes," 7 check "Rarely," and 3 check "Never."

Sample question: How often do you hear homophobic remarks in our school?

Answer	Number of Students	Total Students Who Answered the Question	Number of Students divided by Total Students
Frequently		00	%
Often		00	%
Sometimes	0	00	0%
Rarely		00	%
Never		00	%

Identifying Anti-LGBT Biases at Your School

Imagine how much **more effective** your work will be if you can tell administrators **exactly** where your school needs improvement

Ready... How are LGBT people and issues treated at schools around the country? To answer this question, GLSEN has created four “climate categories”: Hostile, Resistant, Passive and Inclusive. These four categories are not rigid or absolute definitions; rather, they represent a continuum, or spectrum, of LGBT awareness and inclusion along which all schools can be found.

In this activity, you will share your ideas about where your own school falls on this continuum and begin to consider how you can identify in specific, objective terms the anti- or pro-LGBT practices at your school. Imagine how much more effective your work will be if you can sit down with administrators and tell them exactly where your school needs improvement instead of simply saying, “Our school is unsafe for LGBT people.”

Set... **People:** Entire group

Tools: Large construction paper (four sheets), loose-leaf paper (a sheet or two), a pen, tape, one copy of each of the four “School Climate Outlines” in the Appendix

Time: 20–35 minutes

GO! **Social Barometer** (5–10 minutes)

Step 1: Designate one person to serve as the recorder for this activity. (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 the sheets as closely as you need to, as long as they’re hung in a row. The recorder should then write “The Hostile School” on the first sheet, “The Resistant School” on the second, “The Passive School” on the third and “The Inclusive School” on the fourth.

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 between two signs.

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



Identifying Anti-LGBT Biases (continued)

Large-Group Discussion: Defining School Climates

(10–15 minutes)

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

Consider This...

- 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.
- 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 pursue this action?

Step 5: Once everyone has read the four School Climate Outlines, take a moment 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 moved. Discuss how your group's initial ideas of the four school climates compare to GLSEN's descriptions. 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; 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 regard 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. You may want to appoint several members of your group to a committee that will follow up on designing and administering a survey of your school climate.

Awesome **Activities** and **Icebreakers**

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

1 Common Ground

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. *Source: Kerry Ashforth*

2 Gender Stereotypes

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 (for example, “boys are good 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 LGBT people, helping us recognize that everyone has different traits that don’t define our sexual orientation or gender. *Source: Various*

3 Heterosexism in the Media

Bring in popular, mainstream magazines, newspapers 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 the 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. *Source: Various*

Awesome **Activities** and **Icebreakers** (continued)

4 Three Chair Listening Exercise

Set up three chairs in a row; turn the two on the ends toward 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” 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, 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 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 schools. The story should be personal. 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” moves 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 also discuss how your own listening style might make you more apt to internalize information presented according to one approach or the other. *Source: Various*

5 Concentric Circles, Inner/Outer Circles

This exercise works well to open dialogue. It requires an even number of people, with a minimum of six or eight. 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 form an outer circle. The inner circle should face outward and the outer circle should face inward, so that each person has 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 whose members don’t know one another, you can have people introduce themselves to their partners before they begin answering the question asked. After the minute is up, the inner circle answers the same question.

Awesome **Activities** and **Icebreakers** (continued)

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, participants should discuss their conversations as a large group.

Sample Questions:

- ⇒ Growing up, what were all of the names (positive, negative and 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? *Source: Jason Fleetwood-Boldt*

6 Cultural/Identity Linking

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 or refuse someone’s hand?” (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.) *Source: BiGLTYNY Leadership*

Guidelines for Active Listening

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."

Six steps toward active listening:

1. **Clarifying:** "When did this happen?"
2. **Restating:** "So, you would like _____. Is that right?"
3. **Reflecting:** "You seem very _____." (Identify feelings and emotions.)
4. **Encouraging:** "Can you tell me more about...?"
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..."

Adapted from resources provided by www.helpforfamilies.org and Jason Fleetwood-Boldt

Running an Effective Meeting

How to Facilitate a Meeting

- ⇒ Be prepared! Create an agenda based on the purpose of the meeting
- ⇒ Set guidelines and working agreements as to how the meeting will operate
- ⇒ Be specific about outcomes and expectations
- ⇒ Assign tasks (i.e., recorder, timekeeper, etc.)
- ⇒ Take minutes
- ⇒ Summarize without introducing new ideas; schedule next meeting
- ⇒ Follow up on proposals made during the meeting; distribute minutes via mail or E-mail, or post to the group's website

Tip for Facilitators

It is important for meeting facilitators to **maintain neutrality**. This can present a challenge, especially when discussion topics evoke passion. In these situations, it is sometimes appropriate to relinquish the facilitator's position for the discussion of a sensitive topic or for the duration of a meeting.

Points to Consider Before Scheduling a Meeting

- ⇒ Is the meeting necessary?
- ⇒ Are the location and time allotted appropriate?
- ⇒ Who should attend this meeting?
- ⇒ Who should facilitate this meeting?
- ⇒ What are the expected outcomes?
- ⇒ How can I make sure all attendees participate actively?

How to Run a Meeting

- ⇒ Icebreaker
- ⇒ Introductions
- ⇒ Review agenda
- ⇒ State the working agreements
- ⇒ Take minutes
- ⇒ Refer to committees, when appropriate, for assigned tasks
- ⇒ Always do follow-up
- ⇒ Start and end on time

Guidelines for Facilitators

- ⇒ Don't take issues that arise personally
- ⇒ Let the discussion flow, but do not lose control
- ⇒ Hear to listen, not to respond; listen to what participants are saying
- ⇒ Be prepared to improvise if your original plan doesn't work
- ⇒ Make decisions, recommendations and/or assign tasks to move forward

The **Five Practices** and **Ten Commitments** of **Leadership**

Challenging the Process

In *The Leadership Challenge*, authors James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner identify actions and attributes that contribute to strong leadership. Their research shows that leaders search for opportunities to change the status quo. They look for innovative ways to improve the organization they are leading. 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 their 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 strive to create an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect 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 choices, assigning critical tasks and offering visible support.

The **Five Practices** and **Ten Commitments** of **Leadership** (continued)

Modeling the Way

Leaders establish principles concerning the way people 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 red tape when it gets in the way of 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.

Adapted from The Leadership Challenge by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner (Jossey-Bass, Third edition, 2003).

10 Cool Tips for Finding New Members

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 clubs 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.” Another effective tactic is to hang a second poster in back of the primary poster. 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 club brings a friend to the meeting. This can help 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 with 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) and local LGBT community 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 (such as e-mail or phone) about upcoming meetings. **Be sure that you ask for safe places to contact members.**

10 Cool Tips for Finding New Members (continued)

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 attend 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 issues concerning your club. 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 BookLink online at www.glsen.org.

8 Tabling

Setting up a table 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; others allow school clubs to set up during 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 to your meetings is simply to ask! Asking someone in person, one-on-one, provides an opportunity for you to tell the person why they should come, what's happening in your club 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! 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 club.

School Climate *Outlines*

The Hostile School

- 1. School policies do not protect the rights of LGBT people.**
- 2. Curricula are devoid of LGBT themes.**
- 3. Book and 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 nonexistent and strongly discouraged.**
- 6. Athletic programs are unwelcome spaces for LGBT or gender-nonconforming students.**
- 7. Health and guidance support for LGBT students and families is nonexistent.**
- 8. Anti-LGBT language and harassment are rampant.**
- 9. LGBT people are invisible and feel unsafe being open about their sexual orientation and gender identity.**

School Climate *Outlines (continued)*

The Resistant School

- 1. Non-discrimination policies may include sexual orientation.**
- 2. Curricular inclusion of LGBT issues is limited to clinical references in health or sex ed classes.**
- 3. Access to books and materials with LGBT content is limited.**
- 4. Adults feel discomfort and may believe there is danger in exposure to LGBT people or 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 and guidance staff show compassion, but information and support regarding LGBT issues are not generally accessible.**
- 8. Anti-LGBT language is common in hallways, locker rooms and school yard, though not in classrooms.**
- 9. A “don’t ask, don’t tell” atmosphere exists for LGBT people.**

School Climate *Outlines (continued)*

The Passive School

- 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 and materials with LGBT content are available.**
- 4. The 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 and 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.**

School Climate *Outlines (continued)*

The Inclusive School

- 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 and materials with LGBT content are visible and available to all students and staff.**
- 4. The adult community has prioritized LGBT inclusion as 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 and off the playing field.**
- 7. Health and guidance staff work with outside agencies to provide outreach, support and education to LGBT people.**
- 8. Anti-LGBT language and behavior are rare and 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.**

Getting **Informed and Inspired**

One of the most frequent comments we've heard from students working in GSAs and similar clubs is that they consider their most valuable resource to be other people, especially students engaged in similar work. This section provides information on an array of resources available through GLSEN and numerous other organizations around the country. They're full of ideas, stories and materials that provide information, inspiration and insight!

Why Register?

By registering online at www.studentorganizing.org, you can:

- ⇒ Join a national network of over 10,000 students and allies working to create safer schools!
- ⇒ Sign-up to participate in events—such as the DAY OF SILENCE—and share your experiences and learn from others.
- ⇒ Add your student club, commonly known as a gay-straight alliance (GSA), to the national database.
- ⇒ Connect with the Jump-Start National Student Leadership Team for support from trained student organizers.
- ⇒ Learn about and network with other student clubs in your district and state.
- ⇒ Subscribe to state and national e-mail listservs, keeping you informed on events, activities and important news.
- ⇒ Subscribe to and receive quarterly GLSEN mailings that include free resources, news and products, such as buttons and stickers.
- ⇒ Return at any time to update your profile, change subscription options or check out new options.

Student Organizing Resources

More than 1,000 resources are currently available in the GLSEN Library at www.glsen.org. Here's a brief description of what you'll find under each resource category tab at the GLSEN Library:

Know the Issues: Find surveys, stories, news items and other resources that explore why GLSEN is here in the first place.

Changing Schools: Tools available to help ensure safer schools.

Policy and Law: Resources related to GLSEN's Public Policy Platform and positions, along with ongoing legal and political battles around the country.

Curriculum: Lesson Plans and Curriculae for the classroom.

Training: Tools to assist with local organizing.

Additional Items: Our "other" category for resources that may not fit quite so neatly into one of the above categories.

Additional Resources

Organizations

Schools & Youth Program of the ACLU's LGBT Project

Strives to make public schools safe and bias-free, defends free expression in public schools and helps students establish gay-straight alliances (GSAs); also offers free information and assistance to students who are experiencing anti-LGBT discrimination in their schools or want to know what their rights are under the law.

125 Broad St., 18th Floor
New York NY 10004
212.549.2673
www.aclu.org/lgbt/youth

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE)

Seeks to engage, connect and empower people to make the world a better place for children of lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender parents and families.

1550 Bryant St., Suite 830
San Francisco, CA 94103
415.861.KIDS (5437)/415.255.8345 (fax)
colage@colage.org
www.colage.org

Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Network

Supports young people in starting, strengthening and sustaining GSAs

1550 Bryant St., Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94103
415.552.4229/415.552.4729 fax
info@gsanetwork.org
www.gsanetwork.org

International Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organization (IGLYO)

European-based organization that focuses on combating the discrimination and persecution of LGBT youth around the world

P.O. BOX 3836
1001 AP AMSTERDAM, the Netherlands
info@iglyo.com
www.iglyo.com

Additional Resources (continued)

From Our House to the Schoolhouse: A National Campaign of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)

Uses its national network in over 500 communities to help make schools safer.

1726 M Street, NW Suite 400

Washington, D.C. 20036

202.467.8180/ 202.467.8194

jhoff@pflag.org

www.pflag.org/From_Our_House_to_the_Schoolhouse.schools.0.html

Online Resources

Bi Youth Resources

www.bisexualyouth.org

Deaf Queer Youth

www.deafqueer.net/cmra/dyr/

Lesbian Youth Resources

www.youthresource.com/living/women.htm

Jewish Queer Youth

www.jqyouth.org

Resources for GLBT Youth of Color

www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-glb_t_youth_of_color.html

QueerAmerica Database of Local Resources for Youth

www.queeramerica.com

Resources for Transgender Youth

www.transproud.com

Youth Guardian Services (safe online spaces for GLBTQ Youth)

www.youth-guard.org

Resources for GLBTQ Youth

www.youthresource.com

Additional Resources (continued)

National Toll-Free Hotlines

The Trevor Helpline

1.866.4.U.TREVOR (1.866.488.7386)

24-hour, free and confidential hotline for GLBTQ youth to talk to trained counselors.

National Runaway Switchboard

1.800.RUNAWAY (1.800.786.2929)

24-hour hotline offering resources to keep runaway youth off the street.

GLBT National Resource Hotline

1.888.THE.GLNH (1.888.843.4564)

Confidential peer counseling and information on local resources.

Open Monday through Friday, 4-12 p.m. EST; Saturday 12-5 p.m. EST

GLBT National Youth Hotline

1.800.246.PRIDE (1.800.246.7743)

Youth volunteers available for counseling and information on local resources.

Open Monday through Friday, 8-12 PM EST

Check out more local and national resources at www.studentorganizing.org.

Or contact GLSEN's Student Organizing Department at:

GLSEN

90 Broad Street, 2nd floor

New York, NY 10004

Tel.: 212.727.0135 / Fax: 212.727.0254

E-mail: jumpstart@glsen.org