

# As If It Matters

... six stories beneath the surface ...

... a video created by youth for youth ...

## VIDEO STORYBOARD

production/project Score 6 Date 7/31/01 Page      of     

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>① over the shoulder<br/>MS</p>  | <p>②<br/>WS</p>  | <p>③<br/>WS</p>   | <p>④<br/>MS</p>   |
| <p>Jen looking over her shoulder @ a mb. after bumping into ambi music etc...</p>            | <p>Jen walks into frame with Rosa Standing @ the counter</p> | <p>Starts at the other side of the desk Comes to foreground and sits down</p> | <p>Jen slumping in chair</p>  |
| <p>audio</p>   | <p>R: hey darlin' ... going on?</p>                          | <p>J says: Is it that obvious ... looks happy</p>                             | <p>J: Sigh ... R So b</p>   |
| <p>⑤<br/>CU</p>  | <p>⑥<br/>CU</p>  | <p>⑦<br/>CU</p>   | <p>⑧<br/>CU</p>   |
| <p>first profile talking looking down words and then looks up at Jen</p>                     | <p>Jen sitting in chair looking downwards</p>                | <p>close up of clock in record store</p>                                      | <p>same shot as before close but looking up to right</p>              |
| <p>audio</p>   | <p>Audio: tick, tick,</p>                                    | <p>J: And ... School</p>  | <p>J: It's Lunchtime. J: I've ... next class J: anyway ... to you</p> |
| <p>⑨<br/>WS</p>  | <p>⑩<br/>CU</p>  | <p>⑪<br/>ECU</p>  | <p>⑫<br/>ECU</p>  |
| <p>full body shot of Melissa walking or talking to people in school hallway @ slow speed</p> | <p>Melissa laughing</p>                                      | <p>hand to hip sensualization of melissa's body parts slow motion</p>         | <p>Hand through hair blowing (cheer!) melissa still</p>               |
| <p>audio</p>   | <p>Audio: faint sound of laughing</p>                        | <p>J: And ... School</p>  | <p>J: It's Lunchtime. J: I've ... next class J: anyway ... to you</p> |

# Student Organizing Manual



Statewide Office: 160 14th St., San Francisco, CA 94103, ph: 415.552.4229, f: 415.552.4729  
 Central Valley Regional Office: 4403 E. Tulare Ave., Fresno, CA 93702, ph: 559.453.9040, f: 559.453.9060  
 Southern CA Regional Office: 605 W. Olympic Blvd., Ste. 610, Los Angeles, CA 90015, ph: 213.534.7162, f: 213.553.1833

# introduction

*As If It Matters* was created by nine LGBT and straight ally youth. From start to finish we had you in mind. We made this video as an organizing and education tool for GSAs to use in their ongoing fight against homophobia and all forms of oppression in schools. The video voices the actual stories we see in our everyday lives and deals with issues of homophobia, cultural acceptance, body image, relationships, and labels. These issues are highlighted through the stories of six students over a 24 hour period.

This organizing manual is designed to help you use *As If It Matters* to make change at your school. Watch the video and review the organizing manual and curriculum guide to find the ideas and activities that best match your goals, your school environment, and your GSA's capacity. The curriculum guide will help spark dialogue, increase the visibility of LGBT youth experiences, and inspire people to take action against discrimination and harassment in their communities and schools. Creating awareness, showing truth and offering advice- we hope this video will create positive change in the way LGBTQ youth and their peers are treated in schools across the country.

*As If It Matters* was created through Free Zone, an arts for social change program of Gay-Straight Alliance Network and LYRIC (Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center). We collaborated with TILT (Teaching Intermedia Learning Tools) for media literacy and video education. The Free Zone class was made up of 9 youth and 4 facilitators that met throughout the summer of 2001 discussing oppression and power and bringing that learning into our script writing and other forms of pre-production. We then shot, directed, and edited those thoughts into something that we feel honestly represents us and the stories we have to tell.

## what's in this guide

### 1. Using *As If It Matters* in your club and school

- Discussion Questions for the GSA club
- How to use *As If It Matters* to make change at your school
- Getting *As If It Matters* into classrooms
- Tips for Peer Education
- Information Flyer for teachers
- Evaluation Form

### 2. Make It Real

- Information on AB 537, Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 and how to get involved in holding your school accountable to the law

### 3. Events, Organizing Skills, and Resources

- Making Your School A "Hate Free Zone"
- Day of Silence
- Media Skills Resource: Sample Press Release, Sample Press Advisory, Sample Letter to the Editor
- How to Plan an Event
- Conducting a School Survey
- Fundraising for your GSA
- Ways to Get More Members and Allies for your GSA
- Public Speaking
- Coalition Building

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# connection . acceptance . labels . reflection . homophobia . self-image



## *As If It Matters* discussion questions for GSAs:

1. What were some of the differences between the LGBT characters in the video? How do you relate? How is your experience different?
2. In the video there were several straight ally characters-- Maizy, Tiffany, and Gavin. What do you think about their roles and actions in the movie? What do you think about Tiffany encouraging Nykki to come out?
3. What are some of the things LGBT youth want from a straight ally? What does being a straight ally mean?
4. What can you learn from your hopes and expectations for straight allies in terms of being an ally to other oppressed groups? In what ways can you take action as an ally to other oppressed groups? How could your GSA build alliance and act in solidarity with other oppressed communities in your school?
5. How are LGBT people usually portrayed in the media? What effect does this portrayal have on society as a whole and for LGBT people? What was different about *As If It Matters*? What are some ways you and your GSA might contribute to perpetuating this image? How can your GSA contribute to creating a diverse understanding of LGBT people?
6. What role have "out" LGBT people played in your life?
7. Internalized oppression is when we attack ourselves. This happens when homophobia and heterosexism and other forms of oppression create a situation in which we blame ourselves and others in our own communities for problems we face. How can your GSA challenge internalized homophobia as well as other forms of internalized oppression and create a supportive environment?
8. What did you think about the silent character (Steve)? What do you think the video makers were trying to say with this character?



"Today will mark the moment in my life when I make an attempt to show the world who I really am and how I truly feel. The day I leave behind the place of childhood innocence and carefree laughter I grew up playing in. The day I face challenges of isolation, confusion and loneliness. I know things will never be the same. I will be caught between worlds, defined by labels and boundaries, not wanted or belonging in any of them. I'll have to think of ways to amuse myself and be occupied during classes and lunchtime while other students talk to each other about their day, their lives. It'll be hard and I am afraid, but I'm left with no other choice than to face these obstacles with an open heart and mind. Somehow, I know that I'll make it through."

Adapted from "Funny Boy" by Shyam Selvadurai, (p. 39) copyright 1994.





# . . . how to use *As If It Matters* to make . . . . change at your school . . . .

**Show *As If It Matters* in classes.** We created the video to spark dialogue and inspire transformation. The best way to make this happen is to use the video as a prelude to general discussions and activities from the curriculum guide. See the next page for more ideas on getting *As If It Matters* into classrooms.

**Have GSA members lead discussions and activities** after people watch the video. The curriculum guide is for both teachers and GSA members to use to deepen discussion and learning after watching *As If It Matters*. Practice leading the activities by facilitating them with the GSA. Review the Facilitation Tips in the curriculum guide.

**Organize a speaker or panel.** Hearing people talk about their personal experiences being LGBT or a straight ally is one of the most effective ways to build understanding and create transformation. Many LGBT centers and groups have speakers bureaus where you can schedule people to come and talk at your school. Also, consider having GSA members share personal stories after a class watches *As If It Matters*. See the resource sheet on public speaking that is included in this manual for some helpful tips.

**Use *As If It Matters* to make AB 537 real.** The video can help raise awareness about homophobia and AB 537, the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, which prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Learn more about how to hold your school accountable to the law from the Make It Real project manual ([www.ab537.org](http://www.ab537.org)).

**Conduct a school survey** before screening the video in classes. Talk about the results of the survey and the climate at your school. For more information on conducting a school survey, see the resource sheet in this manual.

**Share outreach and information materials** at the same time as screening *As If It Matters*. Be sure teachers know when the GSA meets and who students can talk to for more information. Get resource and information materials from local organizations about all the issues raised in the video, including body image, racism, and homophobia.

**Use *As If It Matters* in a teacher training.** Use the video to talk to teachers about the challenges LGBT youth face. Have GSA members talk about their experiences at your school. Have teachers brainstorm and practice how to interrupt slurs and harassment they witness on campus. Inform staff of what AB 537, the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, requires.

**Launch a Safe Zone poster campaign** in conjunction with using *As If It Matters*. See the included resource sheet to learn more about this strategy for stopping slurs and harassment at your school.

Use *As If It Matters* in conjunction with **Day of Silence** (April 10, 2002), **LGBT History Month** (June), **Coming Out Day** (October 11), or a **Diversity Day or Week** at your school. Encourage teachers to show the video in their classrooms during days or weeks when your GSA is doing other things on your campus. Teachers might be more interested in using one or two days of class for *As If It Matters* and related activities if they can relate it to other things happening at your school or across the country.

**Use *As If It Matters* as part of a fundraising event.** Hold a screening of the video in your community. Charge a sliding scale donation at the door or solicit donations to sell in a silent auction. Show the video as part of an evening featuring LGBT and straight ally youth art and expression. Host an event in conjunction with other GSAs in your area or local LGBT organizations.

# . . getting *As If It Matters* into classrooms

Watch *As If It Matters* with your GSA and discuss it. Decide if it will be a useful tool for fighting homophobia at your school by getting teachers to use class time for watching and discussing the video. Review the organizing and curriculum guide materials to find the ideas and activities that best match your goals, your school environment, and your GSA's capacity. Here are some helpful steps to take to get *As If It Matters* into classrooms.

- 1. Decide which classes you want to target.** You might want to target a specific department or maybe a set of classes through which you could reach all of the freshman. Maybe you simply want to work with the teachers who you know are your allies.
- 2. Decide if you want to use *As If It Matters* in conjunction with any other activism and events you are planning,** such as Day of Silence or a diversity day or week at your school. If there is a school wide event or something other clubs are involved in, bring the video and the curriculum guide to a meeting and propose using it as part of the program. Consider working with other clubs to promote *As If It Matters*.
- 3. Outreach to teachers.** Included in this manual is an informational flyer for teachers that you can put in teachers boxes or use when doing one-on-one outreach. Before photocopying it, be sure to use the blank space on the page to put in the name of your GSA, who teachers should contact for more information and to get a copy of the video, and anything else you want them to know about your GSA or *As If It Matters* at your school. If you want, distribute the *AB537 Fact Sheet* with the *As If It Matters* flyer. For one-on-one outreach, **make a list of which GSA members will talk to which teachers** by what date. It can be really effective to have two students go together to talk to each teacher. Tell teachers about *As If It Matters* and show them the curriculum guide. Tell them how you are hoping to use the video to make change at your school and ask for their participation. Be as specific as you can be about what you are asking them to commit to.
- 4. Make copies of the video** so multiple teachers and student can be watching at the same time. Look into using resources your school might have for duplicating videos. Assign this task to a couple of GSA members.
- 5. Designate someone to be responsible for collecting evaluations** of *As If It Matters* and the related activities. Before your photocopy and distribute the curriculum guide, write information on how to get the evaluations to the point person on the evaluation form at the end of guide. Send a copy of the evaluations back to GSA Network, c/o Jill Shenker, 160 14th St, San Francisco, CA 94103. These evaluations are really important to us, so please do collect and send them.
- 6. Make copies of the curriculum guide** for the GSA members and teachers who will be facilitating discussion and activities. Distribute these ahead of time so that people can have a chance to prepare and practice.
- 7. Check in with the teachers.** See if they have any questions. Confirm when and how they are planning to use the video in their classes.
- 8. Collect the copies of the video** along with evaluations.
- 9. Thank teachers** who used class time for *As If It Matters*. You want to be able to count on them as allies for the future.

# tips for peer education

Having GSA members lead discussions and activities about *As If It Matters* for your peers can be one of the most effective ways to make your school safer for LGBTQ students. If your GSA is planning to organize and lead classroom workshops, keep these things in mind:

## Ahead of Time:

### Consider attending a formal training.

The GSA Network offers trainings for GSAs on how to use *As If It Matters* at your school. Call our office to set up a training.

### Find teachers.

Find a teacher who is supportive and who thinks their class would be receptive to *As If It Matters*. This may be a teacher who attends GSA meetings or one you know is supportive in other ways. Often, health teachers and social studies teachers are interested in having this topic discussed in their class because it is relevant to the curriculum. Talk with them about how they can support you and discuss how they will handle any disruptions that might occur.

### Gauge the climate of the classroom.

Talk with the teacher or give a pre-workshop survey to find out what students already know, what they have misconceptions about, and what they want to learn.

### Practice!

## In the Classroom

### Draw connections.

Try to draw connections between your workshop and the subject of the class. (Psychology is obvious, as is Health or Family Life. Some less obvious ones would be History, tying it into the civil rights studies.)

### Invite an administrator or other teachers.

Invite a supportive administrator to see your workshop if you would like to get the video approved for other classes. Also, other teachers might like to see what you propose doing in their classes, so feel free to invite them.

### Make it clear that you do not speak for the entire LGBTQ community.

Make this disclaimer known at the beginning of the workshop. You do not speak for every LGBTQ individual in the world, and you should not be expected to represent your entire community. You can only speak from your personal experience. (Use "I" statements.)

### Define and clarify the terms you use.

Not everyone will be as versed as you in LGBTQ issues and language. You should define the terms you use, such as "sexual orientation" or "gender identity," to make sure that everyone understands what you mean. If you decide to use words such as "queer" or "dyke," which often have negative connotations, you should also discuss what they mean to you and why you are choosing to use them.

### Not everyone will agree with you.

The entire reason you are doing the workshop is to increase awareness. People will disagree with you and that is okay as long as they are not disruptive to the workshop. Be accepting of others' beliefs.

### Stick to your purpose.

You are there to do an anti-homophobia workshop, not a sex education workshop. Unfortunately, for many people the instant you mention "gay," they think sex. Emphasize that an anti-homophobia workshop is about making schools safer – free from harassment and violence.

### Be honest.

Above all else be honest about what you know. If you don't know an answer, that is okay. Tell the audience that you don't know.

## Afterward:

### Learn from your evaluations.

Make sure you give students enough time to fill out an evaluation, and be open to constructive criticism. Try not to let the overly negative ones get you down, though.

# ..... As If It Matters: six stories beneath the surface ..... an anti-homophobia video and curriculum for your class .....

Nine youth wrote, directed, produced, and edited *As If It Matters*, a video that voices the actual stories we see in our everyday lives. The video deals with issues of homophobia, cultural acceptance, body image, relationships, and labels through the stories of six students who struggle to discover themselves and build connections with their peers.

Together with a discussion and curriculum guide, *As If It Matters* is intended to spark dialogue, increase the visibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth experiences, and inspire people to take action against discrimination and harassment in their communities and schools. Creating awareness, showing truth, and offering advice--we hope this video will create positive change in how LGBT youth and their peers are treated in schools across the country..



**The California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000** (originally known as Assembly Bill 537 or AB537), protects students, faculty, and staff at public schools and non-religious schools receiving public funding from harassment and discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. You can **help make this law a reality** by building understanding and acceptance among your students. We hope that *As If It Matters* and the materials in the accompanying curriculum guide will help you spark discussion and growth in your classroom.

## *As If It Matters* at our school...

### ..... here's the situation .....

- **53% of students report hearing homophobic comments daily at schools.** (GSA Network Survey 1999-00)
- **84% of students report rarely or never hearing staff members intervene when anti-gay comments are made.** (GSA Network Survey 1999-00)
- **22% of LGBT youth skip school once a month because they fear for their safety on school grounds.** (Youth Risk behavior Survey MA, 1997)
- **Lesbian and gay youth are twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to report having attempted suicide in the past year.** (National Longitudinal

Study of Adolescent Health, 2001)

# evaluation

This evaluation helps us know how useful our materials are and enables us to continue to develop better resources for GSAs in California. Feel free to use the back side of this page, use additional pages, or email your responses to [asifitmatters@gsanetwork.org](mailto:asifitmatters@gsanetwork.org)

**Name of School:**

**Name of person(s) filling out evaluation:**

**Position in school and GSA, if applicable:**

**Phone Number:**

**Address:**

**E-mail Address:**

**Do we need to be discreet when contacting you? Y/N**

- 1.** How did you use *As If It Matters*? Did you do anything in conjunction with using the video?
  
- 2.** The numbers:
  - How many teachers used *As If It Matters*? \_\_\_\_\_
  - How many classes used the video? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Estimate how many students saw the video and had a discussion? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 3.** What do you think of the video, curriculum guide, and organizing manual? Were they useful?
  
- 4.** What was the impact of *As If It Matters* at your school? Did it help raise awareness about homophobia and other forms of oppression? Do you feel like using the video contributed to making a safer school environment? Please be as specific as possible.
  
- 5.** How did using *As If It Matters* affect your confidence about making change in your school?
  
- 6.** List three things you or your GSA learned how to do, or got better at doing, by using *As If It Matters*.
  
- 7.** Would you recommend other students and teachers use *As If It Matters*? Why or why not?

Please send your evaluation to GSA Network, *As If It Matters*, 160 14th St., San Francisco, CA 94103 or fax to 415-552-4729. Also, if there was any press related to the video at your school or in your region please send us a copy.



# AB 537 Fact Sheet

## California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act

### What is AB 537?

AB 537, the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, changed California's Education Code by adding actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity to the existing nondiscrimination policy. The state defines "gender" as "a person's actual sex or perceived sex and includes a person's perceived identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that identity, appearance, or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with a person's sex at birth." The nondiscrimination policy also prohibits harassment and discrimination on the basis of sex, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability.

### What does AB 537 cover?

AB 537 protects students and school employees against discrimination and harassment at all California public schools and any school receiving state funding except religious schools. Harassment is defined as "conduct based on protected status that is severe or pervasive, which unreasonably disrupts an individual's educational or work environment or that creates a hostile educational or work environment." The protections cover any program or activity in a school, including extracurricular activities and student clubs. This gives GSAs and other LGBTQ-related student clubs state protection in addition to federal protection through the Equal Access Act.

### How do you file a complaint?

First, file a complaint with your school. The process for filing a complaint at your school can vary. Look for information on how to make a complaint in your student handbook or ask a teacher or an administrator. It is often the same process as filing a sexual harassment complaint. If your school's harassment report form does not specifically include sexual orientation and the expanded definition of "gender," consider working to change this as a goal of your activism.

**Document everything.** Write down the key details of the harassment such as who, what, when, where, and witnesses. Include details from meetings you have with administrators. Keep a copy of all reports you file and confirmation that they were received.

### What is your school district obligated to do?

If your school does not adequately address your complaint, you can take your complaint to your district superintendent's office (ask for the designated complaint officer or compliance coordinator). Your school district must follow the state's "Uniform Complaint Procedures," which say that your school district must do the following:

- Have a staff member who is responsible for receiving and investigating complaints who is knowledgeable about the law.
- Every year, notify parents, employees, students, and anyone interested of the district complaint procedures, including the right to appeal the school district's decision to the California Department of Education.
- Protect you from retaliation after you make a complaint.
- Keep your complaint confidential as appropriate.
- Accept complaints from any youth, adult, public agency, or organization.
- Investigate your complaint, come up with a solution, and send you a written report no more than 60 days after they receive your complaint.

### What is the state Department of Education obligated to do?

As the authority over public schools, the California Department of Education (CDE) is responsible for making sure that schools follow AB 537. If your school district fails to adequately resolve your complaint, the CDE is obligated to do the following:

- If your school district does not act within 60 days of receiving your complaint or if you appeal the school district's decision, the CDE is obligated to complete an investigation within 60 days, and make a decision about whether the school district has lived up to its responsibilities and whether it needs to do anything else.
- Require schools to take steps to improve problems raised through investigation of complaints.
- Request a report of the schools' actions and keep a file of every written complaint received.

### Other options for holding your school accountable:

- **Litigation.** You can sue your school district. With the help of an attorney, students can ask a judge to order the school to stop discrimination before it happens or continues. This is called injunctive relief. It's cool because a judge issues an "injunction" (order) to your school district – and your school district has to do it immediately! You can do this while going through the complaint process.
- **Community Organizing.** Organize other students, teachers, staff, parents, and community allies to form a community response to the problem of homophobia in your school. Think of AB 537 as a tool and use it as leverage to work to change the school climate.

**To learn more about how you can implement and enforce AB 537, check out our student organizing manual at [www.ab537.org](http://www.ab537.org) or call our office.**





# The Day Of Silence

## **What is the Day of Silence?**

The Day of Silence is a day in which people of all sexual orientations and gender identities who support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights take a vow of silence to recognize and protest the silence that LGBT people face each day. According to organizers for the Day of Silence Project (contact information at the bottom of this sheet), "the event is designed to raise awareness and protest the silence faced by LGBT people, and offer tools with which to end the silence." **Day of Silence is generally on the second Wednesday in April. Visit [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org).**

The project consists of a vow of silence for the entire school day, or however long your school wishes to have it, where participants pass out cards that state their reasons for not speaking (see below). At the end of the silence, participants can host a series of follow up events to educate their communities on how to keep the silence from continuing.

Many GSAs have organized around the Day of Silence as a way of raising awareness and fighting homophobia in their schools. This resource sheet is designed to help GSAs get started in planning for participation in the Day of Silence.

### **Text for the cards that Day of Silence participants pass out:**

Please understand my reasons for not speaking today. I support lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights in solidarity with other oppressed or marginalized people. People who are silent today believe that laws and attitudes should be inclusive of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, races, national origins, ethnicities, religions, and abilities. The day of silence is to draw attention to those who have been silenced by hatred, oppression, and prejudice. Think about the voices you are not hearing. What can you do to end the silence?

## **Tips for Planning and Running a Successful Day of Silence**

### **Before...**

- Your GSA should prepare in advance for how exactly you want to approach the project and what you want the day to consist of. After deciding what it is your club would like to do, you should make a to do list so that everyone knows just what needs to be done. Be sure to include who is in charge of each item and when it needs to be finished.
- You should try and get as many people as possible aware of the event and involved in participating. You could do that by sending out e-mail announcements, advertising in the school newspaper, putting up flyers and posters, and of course word of mouth.
- Consider including other clubs in your school that may be interested in collaborating on the project, or having the Day of Silence be a multi-issue project reflecting on the silencing of multiple groups and communities.
- Find out if staff or faculty members may be interested in participating.
- Schedule a meeting with your principal explaining your plans for the Day of Silence.
- Have a pre-silence meeting to discuss positive ways to handle harassment from non-participants.
- Build bridges to other groups that face being silenced -- that way everyone feels as though they can relate.

### **During...**

- Have a resource spot or staffed table where people can find info about your GSA or other LGBTQ groups and resources.
- Organize some sort of a visible display such as having your participants all wear black or eat lunch together in silence.
- Post an announcement in the daily bulletin explaining the event and requesting that all staff and students be respectful of the participants of the project.
- Some participants may not be able to handle the length of the silence -- you should think of creative ways to handle these situations, such as: create a safe space or safe room where you can go if needed to reflect or get away from temptation to speak, or have a short, scheduled break in the day where you can all speak and then return to silence.

### **After...**

- Host a party or get together to break the silence and celebrate coming together for this cause.
- Write up an evaluation documenting your club's planning process and experience with the Day of Silence.

**This resource sheet was adapted from materials published by the Day of Silence Project.  
For more information, check out the website: [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org).**



[www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)

For more information and resources for Gay-Straight Alliances, contact GSA Network:

Statewide Office: 160 14th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, ph: 415.552.4229, f: 415.552.4729

Central Valley Regional Office: 4403 E. Tulare Ave, Fresno, CA 93702, ph: 559.453.9040, f: 559.453.9060

Southern California Regional Office: 605 W. Olympic Blvd, Suite 610, Los Angeles, CA 90015, ph:

213.534.7162, f: 213.553.1833

# How to Plan an Event

## Work Plan

**When planning events and projects as a GSA, it will be helpful to create a "work plan." This document will cover details of the planning process and designate responsibility for different tasks. Taking the time to make one at the outset will help your group stay organized and focused. This document will also address issues that your GSA should keep in mind while planning your event.**

### Here's what to include on your work plan:

1. A brief description of the project/event.
2. Dates for the planning period.
3. Date(s) for the project/event.
4. Goals (broad things you are working toward – this project/event is part of that work).
5. Objectives (concrete things that this specific project will accomplish by its end).
6. Strategies/steps for planning the project/event. Be detailed and specific!
7. Dates for each step of the planning process to be completed by – and stick to them!
8. Indication of who is responsible for each step. Delegate and spread leadership.
9. List of materials that will be needed for the project/event and who is responsible for them.
10. A description of how the project/event will be evaluated and who will conduct and analyze the evaluation results.

**Don't forget to document all of your work (work plan, planning meeting agendas, etc.) and save it in a folder so that future planners can reference it. If you have access to the equipment, you may want to also videotape or tape record the event, not only for future leaders but also for members who couldn't attend the event.**

## Strategies

### Advertising:

When advertising for your project/event don't just announce it to your GSA. Think about other audiences who might be interested in attending. For example, invite other diversity or civil rights groups on your campus. In addition, keep staff, faculty, and administrators in mind. Your project/event may be a great way to educate them.

### Co-Sponsorship:

Joint projects are a great way to develop relationships with other groups and build allies. Approach various groups and see if they want to be involved in putting on a project/event that addresses issues you are both dealing with. Keep in mind that there are several ways for groups or individuals to help co-sponsor your project/event. Money is an obvious method of contribution, but groups may also help with flyering, postermaking, making copies, or volunteering at the event. Above all, make sure to be fair when distributing the credit – be sure to recognize everyone who participated.

## Accessibility

### Space/Location:

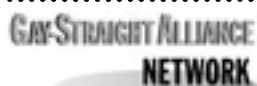
This one is important for obvious reasons – you want a space where people will safely attend your project/event. However, you also want to think about whether the location is accessible to various people. Is it in a place that is easy to find? What about wheelchair accessibility?

### Hearing Impaired:

It is important for us to remember that the LGBT community includes people from all backgrounds and abilities. Do some research on your campus to find out if there is anyone who knows sign language who can volunteer their time. Having a signer at your project/event is an important way to be inclusive of the deaf community. Depending on the event, you may want to get a manuscript of the performance ahead of time to make it easier on the interpreters.

### Language:

Language is a common barrier that students face at their school. Make sure your flyers are translated into multiple languages to reach a broader audience. Collaborate with other clubs on campus to help bring in bi-lingual speakers or have bi-lingual students be able to translate at the event. If you are showing a video, make sure it has subtitles in other languages.



[www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)

For more information and resources for Gay-Straight Alliances, contact GSA Network:

Statewide Office: 160 14th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, ph: 415.552.4229, f: 415.552.4729

Central Valley Regional Office: 4403 E. Tulare Ave, Fresno, CA 93702, ph: 559.453.9040, f: 559.453.9060

Southern California Regional Office: 605 W. Olympic Blvd, Suite 610, Los Angeles, CA 90015, ph:

213.534.7162, f: 213.553.1833

### General Access:

There are many things to keep in mind to be sensitive to the socio economic diversity in your GSA and community. Recognize that people have varying access to resources including money, cars, computers, etc. Make sure that your project/event is accessible through public transportation. In addition, try to coordinate carpooling. When deciding on the cost of your project/event consider a sliding scale. For example, students pay less than adults or you can ask patrons to pay what they can afford. Of course, you can always try to do enough fundraising so the event is free!

### Evaluation

It is always a good idea to evaluate your project/event. Not just to see if people enjoyed it, but also as a way to measure the diversity of the issues and communities you address and represent. Take the evaluation seriously. It is a great way to look at the work you are doing and to get input and feedback from your audience. Upon looking at the evaluation results, ask your self the following questions: How diverse are the projects/events we are hosting? Are we reaching any new audiences? What topics haven't we explored?

### Sample Evaluations

You want to have two versions of an evaluation; one for the presenter(s) and one for the audience. Feel free to duplicate these evaluations or alter them as you see fit. Whenever asking questions about one's identity, it is always recommended to let the individual fill the information out rather than you assuming an identity for them.

#### Presenter

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Event: \_\_\_\_\_ Theme/Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Format: VIDEO WORKSHOP LECTURE DISCUSSION PERFORMANCE OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Race(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual Orientation: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

How do you feel the event went? What could make it better?

#### Audience

Title of Event: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual Orientation: \_\_\_\_\_ Race(s): \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1-5, 5 being the highest, how would you rate this event? (Circle One)

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Ever been to the GSA before?                      YES                      NO

Ever been to one of our events before?                      YES                      NO

How did you hear about this event?

FLYER    POSTER    FRIEND    ANNOUNCEMENT    E-MAIL    OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

What did you like about this event?

What did you dislike about this event?

What other topics would you like to see explored?



Media coverage can be really helpful for educating your school community and winning the important change you are working towards. The next six pages include resources and examples to help you use the media to make your voices heard. You can use your work with *As If It Matters* as the hook for getting your vision and issues into both school and local newspapers, as well as on radio and television. You might try contacting local LGBT organizations to ask who the local journalists are that cover LGBT and civil rights issues. Use the media to inform people, engage them with your issues, influence debate, and shape public opinion. Your voices are powerful.

## News releases

The who, what, where, when and why of it all

**The fact:** Other than the telephone, press releases and media advisories—often lumped together under the term “news releases”—are the basic methods of communicating your news to reporters.

**The Reality:** Reporters throw away or ignore many if not most press releases because they do not contain any news; do not have contact information or other key data to make the reporter’s job easier; are filled with typos and other embarrassments, causing the reporter to doubt the integrity of the organization that sent the release; are confusing, poorly written, or worse—boring.

Reporters’ desks are overflowing with news releases announcing some “big news” that really is not. Most of these are trying to sell some commercial product or event in the guise of news. Fortunately, your release, which will promote your cause, can and will distinguish itself from the others if you follow these basic tips below.

First, some definitions:

### Media advisory

This is a short, one-page, concise piece *advising* the media of news to be made. Typically, a media advisory invites reporters to cover some event or press conference, or notifies them of your news. It usually contains the who, what, where, when and why of the news, including contact names, numbers and other pertinent facts. The media advisory is sent out before an event or news is made.

### Press release, a.k.a. media release

This document is longer than a media advisory, but rarely more than two pages. A press release is typically written like a news story—containing quotes, “color” and background—and summarizes your news. It is written as if it were to appear in the

morning newspaper—though, of course, that will not happen since most media will not run your release verbatim. The press release is often handed out at a news event or included in a press kit.

The key to successful news releases is brevity and factual accuracy. Get to the most important part of the news as soon as possible and make sure everything is accurate: facts, name spellings, dates and times. Some reporters have said that if their attention is not piqued by the headline or the end of the lead paragraph, they rarely read any further.

### When to send the release

In general, you should *mail* the release 10 days before the event, *fax* it five days before the event, and follow up with a *phone* call within three days of the event. (See “When to Call Reporters,” page 52). Of these three methods, faxing and calling are paramount. Also, consider e-mailing the release.

**Remember:** Do not call reporters to ask if they got your release. They do not have time to respond to every release they receive. Instead, call them to pitch the news and remind them about the release. Be prepared to send another if the first was misplaced. Do not send multiple copies of the same release to several different reporters at one news outlet with the hope that at least *someone* will cover it. Reporters talk to one another and will be onto your game. Send only to your key contacts or call and ask who might be interested.

### News release taboos

Do not include jargon or political rhetoric in your releases. There should be no mission statements in releases. Do not write in long sentences and ponderous paragraphs. One- or two-sentence paragraphs are fine. Typos, factual inaccuracies and other mistakes kill the integrity of your organization and news.

From SPIN WORKS! A Media Guidebook for the Rest of Us ©Spin Project. 2000, [www.spinproject.org](http://www.spinproject.org)

## Writing news releases

Starting at the top of the page, all news releases should contain:

- Either *For Immediate Release*—meaning the information can be used as soon as a reporter gets it—or *Embargoed*—meaning the reporter cannot use the news until the date specified (see “*Embargoes and your report*,” page 67).
- The date the release is distributed.
- Contact name(s) and number(s), including cellular phone numbers.
- Your organization’s logo. This should be at the very top of the paper.
- The headline is key. Most reporters have about 30 seconds to scan a news release. They want the news to jump out at them. If you do not catch their attention in the headline, into the “circular file” the release goes. Summarize your news into a headline. The headline can be up to four lines long, centered, in bold face and written all in capital letters, usually in a larger type size. You may do a stacked headline (see “*Making news with your report*,” page 66). The headline should capture the larger frame of the news, communicate a sense of drama and pull reporters into the story.

### Media Advisories

In media advisories, list the “Five W’s”—who, what, when, where and why—after the headline and lead framing paragraph.

**WHO:** Who is announcing the news? This will probably be your organization or coalition. But remember, the news is not the fact that your group is announcing something, but what is being announced. Therefore, the lead paragraph will first communicate the news, then indicate who made it. A brief list of key speakers may be included here, with their names and affiliations.

**WHAT:** What is being announced: a media event, rally, protest, press conference or release of a new report.

**WHERE:** The location of the event. Include the actual address or directions, unless it is an obvious place like the steps of City Hall.

**WHEN:** The time—include a.m. or p.m.—and the day and make sure it corresponds with the date.

**WHY:** This is your key message. It is why you are making news, condensed into your messages.

If your event will feature strong visuals, as all media events should, tip reporters off to the photo opportunities at the end of the media advisory. This is particularly useful for TV.

### News Releases

- In news releases, after the headline, the first paragraph—“the lead”—is paramount. This is the summary paragraph that communicates the most important components, and frames the issue for maximum media impact. It must also capture attention. Caution: Do not try to explain *everything* in this paragraph.
- Write the remainder of the press release in descending order of importance. In journalism, this is called the “inverted-pyramid” style of writing. The most important, base-laying news goes at the top, the lesser details below.
- Frame your news—establish its importance and impact, and your position—by the end of the lead paragraph. At the latest, your news should be framed by the end of the second paragraph. By the third paragraph you should move your key messages (see “*Key media messages*,” page 26).
- Include one or two pithy soundbite quotes in the press release.
- End both advisories and press releases with the marks: ###, or -30-. This lets journalists know the release is over. If your release jumps to the next page, write “more” at the bottom and center it. At the top left corner of the next page, write “Page 2” and provide a subject reference.

# media skills

## SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 9, 2001

Gay-Straight  
Alliance  
Audre Lorde  
High School

GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE  
NETWORK

Contact:  
John Doe  
Student, Audre Lorde High School  
(415) 555-4567  
me@hotmail.com

Jane Doe  
Advisor, Audre Lorde High School GSA  
(415) 555-4321  
cell: (415) 555-6543  
janedoe@hotmail.com

Jill Shenker  
High Contrast Coordinator, GSA  
Network  
(415) 552-4229

### EXHIBIT SPARKS HOMOPHOBIC HARRASMENT AT AUDRE LORDE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DEMAND THE ADMINISTRATION FOLLOW THE LAW AND TAKE ACTION

OAKLAND, CA – The Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) at Audre Lorde High School announced today that a meeting with Principal Diane Brown has been set to discuss the administrative response to anti-gay harassment that has occurred at the school in relation to a visiting photo exhibit dealing with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth. The public meeting will be held on Monday, February 12 at noon in room 235 of the school, where students will demand that appropriate action be taken in accordance with AB 537, the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000.

“Our GSA has been fighting homophobia for nearly 2 years. Still, we hear slurs every day and teachers and administrators almost never do anything about it,” said student and GSA president, John Doe. In order to raise awareness and start discussions about homophobia and other forms of oppression, the Audre Lorde GSA brought *High Contrast*, a photo-narrative exhibit by LGBTQ youth, on campus. “We’ve seen some backlash in relation to this exhibit. Students have reported increased verbal harassment and homophobic graffiti was found in one of the bathrooms. Finally, more of the school community is realizing the homophobia that exists at this school all of the time—it just came out more visibly with the public display of *High Contrast*,” said Jane Doe, a teacher at Audre Lorde High School and the GSA advisor.

In January of 2000, sexual orientation and gender were categories added to the state nondiscrimination policy. However, schools and school districts have been slow to implement required measures. “In light of the vandalism of *High Contrast*, the GSA Network calls upon Audre Lorde High School administrators to comply with the law,” said Carolyn Laub, Founder and Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network, “Complying will send a clear message to the students and faculty that harassment is not welcome and will not be tolerated. We are committed to continued efforts to get them to follow the law.” The GSA Network is currently engaged in a lawsuit against Visalia Unified School District and is represented by the ACLU of Northern California and the firm of Howard, Rice, Nemerovski, Canady, Falk & Rabkin.

Community members, media, and elected officials are invited to Monday’s meeting to find appropriate resolution to these recent acts of harassment and begin to define a long-term strategy to create safe schools for all youth. Contact John Smith for details.

The Audre Lorde GSA brings together LGBTQ youth and straight allies to fight homophobia on campus and in the community. By raising awareness of different sexual and gender identities, linking homophobia with other oppressions, and advocating for equal treatment for youth of all sexual orientations, the GSA works to create a school environment free of homophobic sexual, verbal, and physical harassment.

Gay-Straight Alliance Network is a youth-led organization that connects school-based GSAs to each other and community resources. Through peer support, leadership development, and training, the Network supports young people in starting, strengthening, and sustaining GSAs and build the capacity of GSAs to: 1) create safe environments in schools for students to support each other and learn about homophobia and other oppressions, 2) educate the school community about homophobia, gender identity, and sexual orientation issues, and 3) fight anti-LGBT discrimination, harassment, and violence in schools. *High Contrast* was created through a collaboration of GSA Network and LYRIC (Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center).

###

Gay-Straight Alliance Network, 160 14th St., San Francisco, CA 94103, Ph: (415) 552-4229 f: (415) 552-4729, www.gsanetwork.org

**MEDIA RESOURCES-- as if... ..it matters**

**Media Advisory**  
**For Immediate Release**  
January 20, 2001

go | get out



**Press Contacts:**

Greg Zhovreboff (go/Washington High School Senior), (415) 820-7327  
Meredith Fenton (Washington High School Gay-Straight Alliance Advisor), (415) 750-8554  
Jill Shenker (Gay-Straight Alliance Network), (415) 442-4726

**PRESS INVITATION**

**YOUTH FIGHT HOMOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION IN HIGH SCHOOL**

**Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Straight Ally Youth Use Art to Share Experiences of Hate and Hope**

**What:** *Exposure*, a gala reception to launch the touring of the *High Contrast* exhibit, sponsored by go, the Washington High School Gay-Straight Alliance, in partnership with the Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network). *Exposure* will also feature the premier of gOnline and highcontrast.org, student artwork by the Washington High School GSA, and spoken word by RESYST, a queer youth poetry group. The *High Contrast* exhibit will remain at Washington High School for one week, transforming the environment of the school and influencing hallway conversations. Classes will visit and discuss the exhibit. Teachers will use curriculum that highlights key points of *High Contrast*, such as overcoming homophobia, sexism, and racism.

**About High Contrast:** *High Contrast* is a photo-narrative exhibit created by a group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and straight ally youth, that will visit nearly twenty Northern California High Schools by June. *High Contrast* is an organizing and education tool to confront discrimination in schools. *High Contrast* is an exhibit using art as a means for change - to show people what they may not choose to see, to incite dialogue and to inspire transformation. *High Contrast*, supported in part by a grant from the Youth Initiatives Program of the Open Society Institute, is a collaborative project of GSA Network, Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center, the Wedge Program of the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

**Where:** Washington High School Auditorium Lobby, San Francisco, CA  
Enter at 30th Avenue and Anza Street

**When:** Wednesday, February 7th - 6:00 to 8:00 pm  
Showing at Washington from Friday, February 9th - 15th 2001

**Who:** *Exposure* is sponsored by go, the Washington High School Gay-Straight Alliance, and the GSA Network. Guests will include youth artists from the Washington High School GSA, RESYST, and the youth artists who created *High Contrast*. Members from the Washington High School community, San Francisco Board of Education, Board of Supervisors, and various organizations have been invited to attend. go is an organization with on and off campus programs for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning students at Washington High School and surrounding communities. GSA Network is a youth-led non-profit empowering youth to fight homophobia in schools.

**Why:** Harassment and discrimination are, unfortunately, daily experiences of many students in high schools. Despite the existence of laws such as AB 537, California's School Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, schools still need to work to prevent harassment and discrimination. *Exposure* will be a space that challenges us all to work to transform our schools into places that are safe and encouraging for all students. It will be an evening of youth articulating their experiences and visions for change through art.

**Media Visuals:** *High Contrast* features four eight-foot tall panels featuring photography and poetry by youth. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a school desk with slurs written on it, with the words "Take a seat, I dare you" on the seat. Also featured are works done by Washington High Students, readings, computers to access related web content, and live music. Images from High Contrast can be viewed and downloaded from [www.highcontrast.org](http://www.highcontrast.org). Contact Jill Shenker at [jill@gsanetwork.org](mailto:jill@gsanetwork.org) for reprint permission.

## Letters to the editor

**Make them short and concise:** one hundred fifty to 200 words, or less than one typed, double-spaced page. The sentences and paragraphs should be even shorter than in op eds.

**Write no more than three or four short paragraphs.**

The first paragraph cites any previous coverage of a story: "In the January 2 issue of *The Daily Courier* you reported that..." The second paragraph introduces something personal and states your side of the argument: "As a person born and raised here in Our Town, I believe that..." The third paragraph moves the key messages—the same ones communicated in your press releases. The fourth and final paragraph gives a "kicker" to the letter.

**Sign all letters and provide a phone number.** Most media will not run unsigned letters and will call to verify their authenticity. If confidentiality is an issue, you may request that your name is withheld from publication. However, first check your local paper's policy on this.

**Personalize the letter!** The best letters are those containing attention-getting information.

**Submit the letter via postal mail, fax or e-mail,**

**depending on your local media's preference.** It is not necessary to contact the editor numerous times to check on the status of your piece. This annoys editors. One friendly "heads-up" call is sufficient.

**Remember that space is limited on the letters page;** not every letter will run. Write your letter in a hard-hitting, personalized and concise manner. The chances of it running are much greater that way.

**Consider writing "boiler plate" letters.** In other words, compose standardized letters—that community folks in your "letters tree" can customize with their own personal information.

**Encourage members of your community to write letters.** Some people are letter factories and will submit one after another. Do not go overboard, but keep the letters coming.

**Finally, remember that letters to the editor are one tool in your media kit.** They are not the be-all and end-all of your media plan. Scoring a letter is valuable, but not as valuable as the front page feature and the op ed. Go for the grand slam: a feature, an op ed, an editorial *and* a slew of letters.

Letter to the editor example

### Musical jobs

*Jobs with Justice, a labor rights organization based in Washington, DC (see Case study: "Developing and moving key messages, page 27), composed the following boiler plate letters to the editor. These were included in their Day of Action media kit and distributed to every organization in the JWW coalition. These examples were adapted accordingly by each group and then sent to local papers to be printed in the letters section.*

The welfare reform debate in (Your State) has been filled with talk about dignity through work and replacing dependence with independence. The problem is that all of this rhetoric fails to address a question near and dear to the hearts of working people, like myself, across the state. Where will welfare recipients go when federal law mandates they move into jobs or they reach their lifetime limits?

There is a gap in (Your State) between the projected (Your State) job creation numbers over the next two years and the number of people federal welfare reform mandates must move from welfare to work in the coming year of more than (insert figure from National Report) jobs. The honest, reform-minded and hard working citizen must ask, "Where will all these people go and where will I end up?"

The nightmare of this version of welfare reform is that when working America wakes up to it we will discover that the federal welfare reform law is playing the music for an horrific game of musical jobs. This is what Lucy Smith in NJ discovered when she was laid off from her job of seven years at DSS only to be returned to that same position as a workfare placement for less money and without benefits. I'm sure plenty of people here in Ohio are worried about this same tragedy striking their family.

Unless the \$3 billion in welfare to work money, and more, is spent frugally and precisely on a job creation campaign that meets family and community needs, then 1998 will come and go without any meaningful improvement in the welfare system. It is imperative that we give the job creation efforts from Wisconsin to California and from Philadelphia to Birmingham our support—and that we make sure the same programs are put into place here.



# media skills

Dear Editor:

On January 1, 2000, AB 537, “The California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000” became law in California. AB 537 prohibits discrimination and harassment based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.

AB 537 is important because of the widespread harassment and discrimination faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students or those who are perceived to be LGBT. A recent national study found a 34% increase in anti-gay violence at public schools and colleges. Attacks against straight youth that were perceived to be gay also increased by 36%. As a result, 22% of LGBT and questioning students skip school at least once a month because they fear for their safety in the classroom.

Our school has had its own share of discrimination and harassment against students. TELL YOUR STORY HERE. BE AS SPECIFIC, YET AS CONCISE AS POSSIBLE.

AB 537 was an important victory for student safety, but it is incumbent on all of us, students, teachers and administrators, to do everything in our power to ensure a safe learning environment for all of the students at NAME OF YOUR SCHOOL. Take a moment to ask yourself this simple question: What you are going to do to make our school safe for everyone?

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME OR SCHOOL CLUB NAME

# Conducting a School Survey

## Developing a school survey:

- Decide as a GSA how you want to write and conduct the survey. Divide up tasks and set deadlines. If your group is large enough, you may want to form a separate "survey committee."
- Pinpoint the specific issue(s) you would like to learn more about through the survey. For example, you might choose to focus on anti-gay slurs or teacher attitudes toward the GSA. Design several questions relating to each of these issues.
- Be sure to include demographic questions such as gender, race, and grade. This will help you organize your results later.
- Many GSAs have found that including one or two open-ended questions at the end of the survey can be a good way to generate useful and revealing information about people's attitudes. See the included survey questions and results for examples.
- Keep the survey fairly short -- it shouldn't take more than 5-10 minutes to fill out.

## Getting your survey approved:

- Show your GSA advisor a draft of your survey and ask for feedback.
- Find out how other surveys at your school are approved and follow the same process. For example, some surveys get approved by Student Leadership. At some schools, it is wise to get the approval and/or endorsement of the principal so that if you run into any trouble with certain teachers giving out the survey you'll have the principal's support behind you. Some schools have simply approached a department chair (e.g. Social Studies or English) to help you distribute the survey through teachers in their department.
- When seeking approval, be able to articulate why you want to conduct a survey, what you hope to get out of it, and how it can benefit the larger school community.
- Develop a feasible plan for conducting the survey. Think about getting a good cross-section of the student population.
- If you don't get approval to conduct the survey in classrooms, consider handing it out at lunch time. Offer an incentive such as candy or cookies so lots of students will be interested in participating, not just those who support the GSA already.

## So we gave out a survey - now what?:

- If you use the survey on the back of this resource sheet without changing it, GSA Network will analyze the data and send you a report of the findings, including graphs of responses. Send the surveys you collect to our statewide office: GSA Network, 160 14th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.
- Tally the results. Write up a report. Include the quantitative results for each question as well as the qualitative comments. You can also write a cover letter or introduction that gives background on why the survey was conducted and what major themes were discovered.
- Publish! Make a write up of why you did the survey, the results, quotes from respondents and submit it to your school newspaper or local city/town newspaper.
- Use survey stats to publicize your GSA meetings and raise visibility in your school through announcements, posters, and advertisements. Example: "72% of students surveyed at Alhambra said that things need to change to make LGBTQ students safer here. Now DO SOMETHING! Create change! Come to the next GSA meeting, Wednesday at 3:00 in room 100. And bring a friend."
- Identify some of the major issues with your school environment as indicated by the survey results (ie. teachers don't intervene when homophobic comments are made in the classroom) and design projects to address them
- Consider formulating the results so as to compare answers between grade levels and/or males and females.
- Think about giving out another survey at a later date to measure if your school climate is changing.

**Turn this page over for a sample survey.**



[www.gsanetwork.org](http://www.gsanetwork.org)

For more information and resources for Gay-Straight Alliances, contact GSA Network:

Statewide Office: 160 14th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, ph: 415.552.4229, f: 415.552.4729

Central Valley Regional Office: 4403 E. Tulare Ave, Fresno, CA 93702, ph: 559.453.9040, f: 559.453.9060

Southern California Regional Office: 605 W. Olympic Blvd, Suite 610, Los Angeles, CA 90015, ph:

213.534.7162, f: 213.553.1833

# School Climate Survey

Your responses to this survey will be kept confidential

**sexual orientation:** describes whether a person is romantically and/or physically attracted to members of the same sex (gay or lesbian), to members of the opposite sex (heterosexual) or to members of both sexes (bisexual)  
**gender identity:** a person's understanding, definition or experience of their own gender regardless of biological sex  
**transgender:** a term for people who don't fit or identify with the gender roles assigned by society based on their biological sex

Grade:  6  7  8  9  10  11  12

Gender:  Male  Female  Transgender  Questioning  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual Orientation:

Gay/Lesbian  Bisexual  Straight/Heterosexual  Questioning  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Race (check all that apply):

American Indian or Alaska Native  Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander  Asian  
 Black/African-American  Latino/Hispanic  White/Caucasian  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Have you had education about lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) issues at school (presentations, speakers, classroom discussions)?  
 yes  no  don't know
2. Do you know of any vandalism or graffiti being directed against students at your school because people think they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)?  
 yes  no  don't know
3. Do you know of any physical attacks occurring against students at your school because people think they are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)?  
 yes  no  don't know
4. During the past 12 months, how many times on school property were you harassed or bullied because you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender or someone thought you were?  
 4 or more times  2 to 3 times  1 time  0 times
5. How often do you hear anti-LGBT slurs directed at specific students, teachers, or staff?  
 several times a day  once a day  once a week  once a month or less  never
6. How often do you hear anti-LGBT slurs at school not specifically directed at an individual (example: "that's so gay" to mean something is bad)?  
 several times a day  once a day  once a week  once a month or less  never

If you hear anti-LGBT slurs of any kind,

7. teachers or staff step in:  always  often  sometimes  never
8. you or other students step in:  always  often  sometimes  never
9. Do you know of students who openly identify as LGBT?  yes  no  don't know
10. Do you know of teachers or staff who openly identify as LGBT?  yes  no  don't know
11. If you wanted information and/or support about sexual orientation or gender identity, would you know where at school to go?  
 yes  no  don't know

- |  | Strongly Disagree |   |   |   | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|
| 12. At school, it's ok for girls to be masculine. ( <i>circle one</i> )      | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| 13. At school, it's ok for boys to be feminine.                              | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| 14. I feel my school is a safe place for LGBT students, teachers, and staff. | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |
| 15. I feel safe at my school.  | 1                 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5              |

16. Is there anything your school could do to make it safer for LGBT students, teachers, and staff? Any other thoughts on these issues? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Fundraising for Your GSA

**Here are some guidelines to follow and cool ideas to use when fundraising for your GSA. If your club has other good tips or ideas for raising money, let us know!**

- 1. Become familiar with your school's system for financing student organizations.** How do clubs set up bank accounts? Where will donations go? Who will donation checks be made out to? Who has the power to sign checks? Talk to other student leaders at your school, your advisor, and an administrator to get ideas and advice.
- 2. Explore the funding avenues at your school.** Ask your advisor, or meet with the Dean of Students/Activities director to see if there are ways your club can get access to school funds or resources (such as photocopying and mailing).
- 3. Have GSA members do individual fundraising** among relatives, family friends, co-workers, etc. See the back of this sheet for a sample donation request letter and a script to use when asking for money over the phone.
- 4. Engage in fundraising as a club activity.**
  - Have a bake sale or car wash – it's not very original, but it usually works. Or add your own twist – instead of selling just cookies, sell... cookies with rainbow chocolate chips.
  - Sponsor a play, concert, or other cultural event to benefit your GSA. You might also consider donating part of the proceeds to a community organization or charity. A few years ago, Drake High School in Marin teamed up with their school's Drama Department to put on a play that dealt with issues of homophobia and stereotyping in a school setting. The play ran for four nights to sold out audiences, and raised lots of money for the Drake GSA and GSA Network.
  - Get a local business to help you raise money by donating a portion of their profits (from a given block of time) to your GSA. Lynbrook High School in San Jose did this at Ben & Jerry's one evening. For every customer that mentioned the Lynbrook GSA that night, the club got a percentage of the money. If you'd like to set up a fundraiser at a Ben & Jerry's near you, contact the company at 310.546.1717.
- 5. Look into community grantmaking programs.** The following organizations/foundations have funding available for youth-initiated projects, and some have funded GSAs before:
  - Youth Initiated Projects (Youth Leadership Institute) – San Francisco*, several grant cycles per year, call 415.397.2256 for more information.
  - Youth Grants Board (Youth Leadership Institute) – Marin County*, two or three grant cycles per year, call 415.455.1676 for more information
  - Youth Grants for Youth Action (Community Health Academy) - Oakland*, grants awarded often, call 510.436.3681 for more information.
  - Youth in Philanthropy (Community Foundation Silicon Valley) – Santa Clara County*, several grant cycles per year, call 408.278.2200 for more information.
  - Youth Grantmaking Program (Community Foundation Santa Cruz) – Santa Cruz County*, call 831.477.0800 for more information.

## **These are some things to keep in mind when applying for grants:**

*(This advice comes from Julie Dean of the Community Foundation Silicon Valley, an organization that has funded GSAs.)*

- Be SPECIFIC about what you plan to do with the grant - what activities your group will do and how you will spend the money (research your budget and make it realistic!).
- Be clear WHY you want to do the project described in your grant. For example, how will the project benefit your group? benefit your school? benefit others in the community? What is the effect your project will have? It is important to describe the activities you will do, but also explain why your group wants to do the project and why it is important.
- Be YOURSELF. Don't try so hard to make your application sound "professional" that it doesn't sound like anything you would ever say. The people reviewing your application will usually be more impressed if you keep it real than by big words.
- Be THOROUGH. Always double-check that you included all the information requested, whether it is filling in a form, writing on a separate sheet, or attaching a list, budget, or other info. When you are providing a phone number/address for a contact person, it is usually helpful to indicate if it is a youth or an adult, and to provide contact information for one of each.



www.gsanetwork.org

For more information and resources for Gay-Straight Alliances, contact GSA Network:

Statewide Office: 160 14th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, ph: 415.552.4229, f: 415.552.4729

Central Valley Regional Office: 4403 E. Tulare Ave, Fresno, CA 93702, ph: 559.453.9040, f: 559.453.9060

Southern California Regional Office: 605 W. Olympic Blvd, Suite 610, Los Angeles, CA 90015, ph:

213.534.7162, f: 213.553.1833

## Asking for Donations...

### **Sample Phone-Call Script:**

Hi, May I please speak with \_\_\_\_\_?

Hi, this is \_\_\_\_\_ calling. I wanted to talk to you about an organization I'm involved with at school, do you have a few minutes?

I'm a member of a student-run club at my school called the \_\_\_\_\_ <Name of your GSA>. We work to fight homophobia and anti-gay harassment in our school by educating our peers about sexual orientation issues and providing a safe space for queer youth and their allies.

Some of the projects and events we've sponsored in the past include: \_\_\_\_\_. This year, we'd like to \_\_\_\_\_ <Examples: "Increase our visibility around school with posters," "Facilitate a teacher training about confronting homophobia in the classroom." Be specific about what kinds of programs your GSA is working on – make it clear to them what sorts of things their money will go toward.> We also have weekly meetings at school, where folks come to hang out, have a snack, plan events, and talk about issues in their lives.

I'm calling to ask if you'd like to become a Supporter of the \_\_\_\_\_ <Name of your GSA> by making a \$40\* donation to our club. <pause and give them time to think – let them answer before you say anything>

\* Note: Ask for an amount that you think is appropriate.

*If Yes:*

Great! Do you have a pen? You should make your check payable to: \_\_\_\_\_. You can send the check to: \_\_\_\_\_.  
<Thank them.> <In a few days, call them to see if they've had a chance to mail the check yet.>

*If Maybe/Unsure:*

<If they can't afford the amount, ask if they would be able to donate half now and half next month. If they can't do that, ask them if they would like to make a smaller donation. Don't give up right away!>

<If they want to know more about the GSA, try to answer any questions they have and offer to send them GSA-related materials if you have any.>

*If No:*

<Thank them for their time and move on to the next person. You can't win 'em all. You should expect as many as half of the people you ask to say no, that's normal. People have many reasons for saying no, don't assume it's personal.>

### **Sample letter:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

For the past \_\_\_\_\_ months, I have been involved with a student-run club at my school called the \_\_\_\_\_ Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). We work to fight homophobia and anti-gay harassment in our school by educating our peers about sexual orientation issues and providing a safe space for LGBTQ (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/questioning) youth and their allies. I am writing to ask you to donate \$40 <or other appropriate amount> to this organization to help make some of our upcoming projects possible.

Homophobia and harassment toward LGBTQ youth (and those who are perceived to be LGBTQ) is a very real problem in schools. In the Bay Area, violence against queer youth in schools has doubled in recent years. In many schools, students hear words or phrases such as "faggot" and "that's so gay" multiple times per day in the classroom. <You may want to give specific examples from your school – If you've done a school survey, offer statistics from the results.> \_\_\_\_\_ <Name of your GSA> was started to help make our school safer for LGBTQ students, teachers, staff by educating the school community about homophobia and sexual orientation issues.

I joined my school's GSA because... <talk about why you got involved and what you've learned/how it has helped you>

Some of the projects and events we've sponsored in the past include: \_\_\_\_\_. This year, we'd like to \_\_\_\_\_ <Examples: "Increase our visibility around school with posters," "Facilitate a teacher training about confronting homophobia in the classroom." Be specific about what kinds of programs your GSA is working on – make it clear to them what sorts of things their money will go toward.> We also have weekly meetings at school, where folks come to hang out, have a snack, plan events, and talk about issues in their lives.

We can't continue this important work without the support of individuals who really believe in what we're doing to fight homophobia in our school and make it safer.

Thank you,

P.S. If you have other questions about the \_\_\_\_\_ GSA, please call me at: \_\_\_\_\_.

<NOTE: If you send a letter, it is very important to do follow-up phone calls about a week later. This will increase your success in getting donations.>



# Ways To Get More Members & Allies For Your GSA

- 1. Provide food at your meeting**
- 2. Put an announcement in the daily bulletin or assembly**
- 3. Advertise at club day - have a table and pass out ribbons or lollypops with a sticker with the name of your GSA**
- 4. Participate in school pride or spirit week at your school**
- 5. Set up an info table at lunch or special events in a visible place**
- 6. Pass out rainbow ribbons or GSA buttons to GSA supporters**
- 7. Make flyers or posters about specific meetings, topics, or events and post around campus**
  - \* Example: Make flyers defining what a straight ally is with information about your GSA at the bottom**
- 8. Ask teachers to permanently post your group's general flyer in their classroom**
- 9. Get an article about your group in the school paper**
- 10. Hold a "bring-a-friend day" at your GSA meeting**
- 11. Have an open GSA meeting where you show a movie or have a speaker**
- 12. Make presentations at other clubs' meetings about your group, invite these clubs to make presentations at your GSA meeting.**
- 13. Send group representatives to classes to make an announcement about your group's meetings or activities**
- 14. Put together a panel of speakers for a conference or similiar event**
- 15. Set up a time to speak to teachers at faculty meetings or help conduct a teacher in-service/teacher training**
- 16. Create a display in your library (i.e. for Queer History Month) or display case in a hallway**
- 17. Practice Guerilla Theater: stage a public exchange between GSA members about homophobia or transphobia and your GSA**
- 18. Partcipate in the Day of Silence Project: [www.dayofsilence.org](http://www.dayofsilence.org)**
- 19. Invite teachers, faculty, and staff to GSA meetings**
- 20. Write a letter to your school board asking for support**
- 21. Spread the word! Tell others about your GSA!**



# Public Speaking (So What's the Big Deal Anyway?)

**You know it had to happen! This is the moment you've feared the most. Don't worry! You're not alone -- most people fear public speaking. No matter what level of experience you have, here are a few points to think about when you step in front of a crowd.**

- **Breathe** (you may be surprised how many people forget to do this and how much it helps)
- **Relax** (this may be hard to do, but it might help if you refer to the first point)
- **Know What You're Talking About** (understand what you're speaking about, don't make up things, people can generally tell when you're faking it)
- **Talk About What You Know** (speak from personal experience and be yourself, a good speaker speaks from the heart)
- **Posture** (this is your moment, so take it and own it, stand up and be counted for it)
- **Articulate** (clearly say your words and pause at the end of sentences -- when practicing it helps to exaggerate)
- **Make Eye Contact** (look into my eyes, you can keep people's attention by looking at them. If you can't make direct eye contact, try looking at people's foreheads)
- **Project** (talk clearly and loud, even if you think you are loud, you probably aren't)
- **Use Complete Sentences** (use statements that make sense and try not to drop off the end of your sentences)
- **Practice** (try to memorize or run through your speech as much as possible, practice in front of a mirror and number any note cards you may use)

**...and don't forget to breathe!**



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