

Overview of Gay-Straight Alliances

What is a Gay-Straight Alliance?

A Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is a student-run club, typically in a high school, which provides a safe place for students to meet, support each other, talk about issues related to sexual orientation, and work to end homophobia and transphobia. Many GSAs function as a support group and provide safety and confidentiality to students who are struggling with their identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning.

In addition to support, some GSAs work on educating themselves and the broader school community about sexual orientation and gender identity issues. They may bring in outside speakers to cover a particular topic such as LGBTQ history. They may organize a "Pride Week" or "LGBTQ Awareness Events" and offer a series of educational workshops, panels, and pride celebrations. Many participate in the Day of Silence, a day when participants remain silent all day as a way of acknowledging the silence induced by homophobia in our society. Some GSAs organize a "Teach the Teachers" staff development day which focuses on teaching school staff how to be better allies for LGBTQ students. For example, GSA members would present scenarios about discrimination or harassment and get teachers to brainstorm how to respond to those situations.

Other GSAs are activist clubs and have worked to get LGBTQ issues represented in the curriculum, LGBTQ related books in the library, and progressive non-discrimination policies implemented at a district level. For example, many GSAs in California are working to insure that their school district implements AB 537, California's School Safety and Violence Prevention Act that prohibits discrimination in schools on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Additionally, many GSAs have participated in activism outside of their school on a city or state level.

All of these different types of GSAs also provide a social outlet for LGBTQ students and straight allies. Lots of GSAs organize barbecues or movie nights, go to a local LGBT Prom or a local LGBT Pride Parade, and attend conferences together. GSAs are a great way to build community at your school and lessen the isolation that LGBTQ students might otherwise experience.



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

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