

Nova Scotia's Gay Straight Alliance Manual

A guide to creating and sustaining your school's GSA

The Youth Project
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youthproject.ns.ca



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As a side note,

This is the new updated version of the Youth Projects GSA manual! This manual is intended for use by students, teachers, guidance counsellors, Youth Health center staff, other school staff, parents or anyone else who is interested in forming or maintaining a GSA in their school. I hope that you will take what you learned from this manual to start, and keep your GSA running at its best. Also that you will take the activities and tips in here, and not only use them, but make changes to them to fit your GSAs needs, and make them your own!

In this manual the acronym LGBTQ (which stands for: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) is used, opposed to the longer (more complete) LGBTTIQQPA2A* (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, queer, questioning, pansexual, asexual, 2-spirit, ally & asterisk [for anything else not covered]). Besides making the manual easier to read, it is important that whenever the acronym LGBTQ is used, you remember that sexual orientation and gender identity is more than just black & white, in fact it's LGBTTIQQPA2A*!

Before you start going through the manual please keep in mind that the term "Gay Straight Alliance", although it may seem inclusive for some, it can also look very exclusive for others. (Keep this in mind when starting or running your GSA), as this could discourage others from joining because it just includes the terms "Gay" and "Straight", and barely even scratches the surface of the diversity that you want to include in your GSA (especially gender identity). Use advertising branding and methods that will include everyone under the LGBTTIQQPA2A* acronym and beyond.

Supporting your peers and social activism can be a very happy, rewarding, and fun experience if you make it that way! Best of luck!

Yours in activism
-Aaron Stevens

Who, What, Where, When, Why & How of GSAs

“Why is it that, as a culture, we are more comfortable seeing two men holding guns than holding hands?”

-Ernest Gaines

In this section...

- ▽ Who, What, Where, When, & Why of GSAs
- ▽ Steps on how to start a GSA
- ▽ How to write a GSA mission statement

What is a GSA?

GSA is an acronym for “Gay Straight Alliance” which is a group or committee in either a school or even university that focuses on LGBTQ (lesbian gay bisexual transgender, queer and questioning) issues. This group is often used as a safe space for LGBTQ youth and their allies to share their feelings on their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

A GSA is also for heterosexual (straight) allies to support LGBTQ people (like their friends and family) or even get support for harassment they may receive for being an ally. Along with being a support group, a GSA can also be an activist club that can fight for the rights of LGBTQ youth in the school and facilitate awareness around LGBTQ issues in schools by running events, facilitating workshops, hosting awareness days, etc.

Why is there a need for GSAs?

In Nova Scotia there is still a great deal of harassment and discrimination facing LGBTQ youth (also known as homophobia and transphobia). Isolation, fear, lack of resources and support are the most common problems reported. Homophobia and transphobia are factors in LGBTQ youth dropping out, running away, abusing drugs or alcohol, getting kicked out of their house and even committing suicide. A school environment that is unsafe and hostile towards LGBTQ students discourages positive self achievement, good self esteem, academic achievement and a healthy self image.

All students are affected by a school environment that is unsafe. Students that identify as LGBTQ are targets of harassment, violence and discrimination. Students who are suspected as being LGBTQ identified, or students who have LGBTQ parents, relatives and/or friends can be either targets or feel isolated, ashamed and/or fearful. EGALE Canada's 2011 school climate survey revealed that three-quarters of LGBTQ students feel unsafe in at least one place at school, such as change rooms, washrooms, and hallways. Half of straight students agree that at least one part of their school is unsafe for LGBTQ students.

This is why there is a need for GSAs in public schools. A GSA works together to create a safer environment in schools, free of harassment, bullying, isolation and oppression. In turn this reduces the number of LGBTQ students that drop out, abuse alcohol and/or drugs, commit suicide, and run away from home. A GSA is also an outlet for allies to support their friends and peers in a safe environment without fear or harassment.

Who can be involved in GSAs?

The answer for the question has a pretty easy answer, EVERYONE! A GSA is mostly made up of LGBTQ students and their allies, along with a staff advisor. You can also include school alumni, parents and community members that want to get involved. Keep in mind if your GSA wants to be as inclusive as possible, make sure that it is a safe place for everyone not only free of homophobia and transphobia but also: ageism, racism, classism, sexism, religious discrimination etc.

Where do GSAs meet?

A GSA will usually try and meet in the safest place possible. This can be a supportive teacher's classroom, the library, the school youth health center, student services, guidance office etc.

When do GSAs normally meet?

A GSA can meet anytime you want it to meet, since it is a student directed club things like planning when the group meets and what you do at the meetings are up to you. A GSA should meet when people are most available, which depends on the student population, like if the school is mainly bus students you may want to meet at lunch, but if your school has 2 different lunch periods then it might be good to meet after school. As for the frequency of the meetings you could do bi-weekly meetings or meet every week, whatever is best for the members! As for length of the meetings, it is all up to what the group decides.

How to Start a GSA

Here are some important steps to start a GSA, keep in mind that every school is different and you may have to modify these steps create more or remove some to make them work.

1) **Follow School rules about starting clubs**

Establish a GSA the same way you would establish any other group or club. Look in your Student Handbook or ask a staff member for the rules at your school. This may include getting permission from an administrator, finding an advisor, and/or writing a mission statement.

2) **Find a Faculty Advisor**

Find a teacher or staff member whom you think would be supportive or who has already shown they are an ally for LGBTQ youth. It could be a teacher, counsellor, school health nurse, librarian etc.

3) **Inform administration of your plans**

Tell administrators what you are doing right away. It can be very helpful to have an administrator on your side. They can work as liaisons on your behalf with other teachers, parent groups, community members, and the school board. If an administrator is resistant to the GSA, remain calm and fight for the right to have a GSA – meet together and talk about how important one is to your school. Ask the Youth Project to support you in talking to admin.

4) **Inform guidance counsellors, Social workers etc. about the GSA**

These individuals may know students who would be interested in attending the group.

5) **Pick a meeting place**

You may want to find a meeting place that feels safe for everyone to attend, maybe classrooms in a hallway that is not used that often, in your student services or guidance office or the Youth Health Center. Maybe even outside on nice days, the sky is the limit!

6) **Advertise**

Figure out the best way to advertise at your school. It may be a combination of school bulletin announcements, flyers, posters, and word-of-mouth. If your flyers are defaced or torn down, do not be discouraged. Keep putting them back up. Eventually, whoever is tearing them down will give up.

Advertising for your group and having words up such as "gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning" or "end homophobia & transphobia" or "discuss sexual orientation and gender identity" can be part of educating the school and can actually make other students feel safer -- even if they never attend a single meeting.

7) **Hold your meeting!**

You may want to start out with a discussion about why people feel having this group is important. You can also brainstorm things your club would like to do this year.

8) **Establish ground rules:**

Many groups have ground rules in order to insure 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. This can help make straight allies feel comfortable about attending the club.

Examples of ground rules:

Respect others:

You may hear ideas at GSA meetings that are new or different for you, and opinions that might be opposite 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 for "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. This is a great way to share your own experiences, and recognize that other people may have different ones.

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.

Respect Confidentiality:

"What happens in GSA stays in GSA" basically, this also applies when members are sharing personal anecdotes or stories; avoid using the real names of other people.

Right to Pass:

Not everyone has to say something if they don't want too, if the discussion is too personal for them or maybe they just have nothing to say. They can exercise their right to pass

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.

Respect Commitments:

While you are encouraged to take care of your personal needs throughout the meeting, please honour your commitment to being here by observing time guidelines during breaks, turning off distractions like phones.

Mission Statements

There are many different reasons to have a GSA at your school. Some students want a safe place to hang out and feel free to be who they are. Others need a supportive place to talk about what's going on in their lives. Then there are groups who want to create a school free of homophobia by implementing LGBTQ issues in their education.

Many schools require a club to write a constitution or a document stating their purpose. Your GSA should decide what type of group they want to be. Does your GSA want to be an activist or social Support GSA, or even a combination of the both?

A mission statement provides the foundation to your GSA's purpose or existence. It can be the backbone of your GSA as you move forward – it's what you stand for, who you are and what you do as a team. It might seem difficult but don't worry! Here are some tips on how to create your mission statement:

The following tips towards developing a mission statement have been compiled and/or adapted from a variety of resources.

- 1) A mission statement should say what you are what you do what you stand for and why you do it.
- 2) A mission statement is not a slogan, goal, action plan, ad or public relations piece.
- 3) Most mission statements tend to be 2 to 4 precisely written sentences.
- 4) Effective mission statements take time, usually 1-4 meetings. This time allows for input and final editing.
- 5) It is a good idea to examine other mission statements to get ideas for your own. However copying other mission statements probably won't accurately show what your group is really about.
- 6) Humour, sarcasm, cynicism and eloquence are not usually good components of a mission statement. Simplicity, honesty, frankness and inclusiveness are.
- 7) Statements often include an infinitive that indicates a change in status. You might want to include an identification of the problem or condition being worked on.
- 8) Finally an effective mission statement is best developed with input by all members of the organization. Even if certain members think it is silly or have no ideas (both are common) they will later understand the concept more if their opinion is recognized. Go around in a circle in your GSA and let everyone say what they think should be in the mission statement!

Sample Mission Statements

"The mission of Mosaic is to provide a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment, which accepts all persons regardless of sex, race, gender, sexuality, religion, past experiences, etc. to lend a non-judgmental and confidential ear, to help people better understand themselves and others through positive discussion, to educate students, teachers, and administration about sexuality and gender identity, to combat harmful stereotypes about sexuality and gender identity, and to enjoy ourselves while doing all of these things."

-MOSAIC at Auburn Drive High School, Halifax, Nova Scotia

"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."

-GSA at Libertyville High School, Libertyville, Illinois

"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."

-GSA, The Friends' Central School, Wynnewood, Pennsylvania

Now what?

How to keep your GSA running!

“A lot of people are afraid to say what they want. That's why they don't get what they want.”

-Madonna

In this section...

▽ Introduction

▽ Ideas and methods that can help!

Introduction

Congratulations! You have now started a GSA, unfortunately the struggle is not over, there is a new set of problems you might have to face, such as keeping your members inspired and involved in your GSA. Also making sure your GSA walks the walk instead of just talking the talk.

In this section, there are methods and suggestions to keep this from happening. But don't feel like you have to follow these tips and tricks step by step, adapt these suggestions to your specific situation, no two problems are the same.

Ideas and methods that can help!

Preparing for Meetings

- ▽ Set the Agenda: make a list of issues and topics to be discussed at each meeting.
- ▽ Publicize the Meetings: Figure out the best ways to reach as many people as possible in your school and make announcements (e.g. daily announcements, flyers, posters).
- ▽ Designate a "Public Relations (PR) person" to be in charge of all publicity each week.
- ▽ Bring Food: Buy food if your club has money already or have potluck meetings! Who doesn't love free food?

Running a Good Meeting

- ▽ Ground Rules: To make sure the group members feel safe, establish ground rules such as respect and confidentiality.
- ▽ Decision Making: Figure out how your group will make decisions i.e. majority vote, consensus or hierarchy?
- ▽ Facilitator: Designate someone to keep the group focused on the meeting agenda.
- ▽ Make sure people are not feeling ignored and that everyone has a chance to speak.
- ▽ Notes: Take minutes at each meeting for members who couldn't attend.
- ▽ Post the notes on a GSA bulletin board, Facebook page, or even in the space where you meet.
- ▽ Create a comment box for suggestions or comments.

Creating an Action Plan

- ▽ Have brainstorming sessions, think of projects only at brainstorming meetings set your ideas into a list of priorities and concentrate on the top three.
- ▽ Have heads of committees! Make each project a committee and appoint a leader to organize the specific project.
- ▽ Spread out the leadership roles and share leadership duties.
- ▽ Set tentative dates.
- ▽ Put deadlines, dates of meetings, or anything else into official school calendars.
- ▽ Follow a schedule and take your deadlines seriously.
- ▽ Sub-Committees working on projects should meet separately from the regular GSA meeting and report back to the GSA. This ensures that GSA members no interested in the project still have a place in meetings, while allowing committees to get more specific work completed.

Tips for keeping your GSA from losing focus:

1) **Advertise!**

Make sure that you don't stop advertising when your GSA meets for the first few times. Make sure that if you do have posters around the school, that they have not fallen down, been vandalized, have outdated information, or have been torn down. Make sure that there is an announcement put in before each meeting, or advertise your meetings 2-3 days in advance in case people do not get the announcement.

2) **Make sure your GSA doesn't come off as a clique!**

After your GSA levels out to a group of regulars, or regularly attending members, make sure that the GSA doesn't have a reputation for being a clique, or an exclusive club. If you are planning on advertising make sure to include "everyone is welcome" or another inclusive slogan, and always be open to new people and ideas.

3) **Make sure at the beginning of the year you set out a timeline.**

This timeline will be important to reference throughout the year and this will also keep you prepared and have something to show the GSA to keep everyone motivated. You also have a reference to tell people when upcoming events or activities are happening.

4) **Make sure you set goals!**

I know it sounds a bit too much like school, but how are you going to know what you're doing, or when you are doing it, until you put it down on paper and map it out? Try using the **S.M.A.R.T** goal method:

- ▽ **S – Specific:** Instead of just saying "Paint a mural" make sure the goal is something like "we want to paint a mural on the south side of the school next to the main doors of a rainbow".
- ▽ **M – Measurable:** Know when you want the goal completed by and make a timeline on how you're going to do so. Example: On April 23rd we will have the mock up of what the mural will look like. By May 5th we will have the principal veto the planned mural. By May 17th we will have all the supplies ready to go. On May 23rd we will start the mural.
- ▽ **A – Attainable:** Are you able to accomplish what you want when you want it? Does the school approve of the project? For example: "The principal has allowed us to paint the Mural."
- ▽ **R – Realistic:** Is your goal too high? Maybe there are something to do to downsize your goal to make it more realistic, is there something you can do that doesn't take as much resources? Example: "Instead of painting 20 square meters of the wall, we will only paint 7 square meters, reducing costs"
- ▽ **T – Time:** Do you have enough time to complete the project? Do you have a proper and realistic time allotted to complete the goals at hand? Do you have extra time in the schedule in case the schedule encounters any obstacles?

5) **Have an agenda!**

Make sure you have an agenda ready to go at the beginning of every meeting! If you have a prepared agenda made for each meeting you can get more done and stay focused and on-topic. Plus if you prepare an agenda a meeting ahead you can advertise what you're doing next meeting to keep people interested.

Example of a 45 minute Agenda:

- ▽ Welcomes & Ice-breakers (5 minute)
- ▽ Review of past meeting (3 minutes)
- ▽ Review of goals (5 minutes)
- ▽ Topic of discussion introduced + Discussion or planning session (creating goals, planning events activities, maybe just hanging out, etc.) (17 mins)
- ▽ New Business (10 minutes)
- ▽ Wrap-up discussion and planning for next meeting (5 minutes)

Transformation!

Making your GSA Trans-inclusive

“Gender is the poetry each of us makes out of the language we are taught.”

-Leslie Feinberg

In this Section...

- ▽ About making your GSA Trans-inclusive
- ▽ Suggestions to make your GSA trans-friendly
- ▽ Gender-Related Terminology List

*Note: A lot of this section is about education on what transgender means, (mainly because some people may have some misconception about what it means to be transgender)

What does Transgender mean?

The term “Transgender,” often shortened to “trans,” is used to describe people whose gender identity and/or expression does not conform to the societal expectations of their sex assigned at birth.

Transgender is an umbrella term that can include many variations of gender identity and/or expression. The term transgender is sometimes used to describe people who identify as FTM (female to male), MTF (male to female), transsexual, genderqueer and others that feel the word reflects their gender identity.

What does it mean to be Trans-inclusive?

Being trans-inclusive means that your student club and its members commit to an ongoing process of education, and that you make an effort to ensure that all of your club's activities and advocacy efforts are inclusive of transgender people and issues related to gender identity. Although all student clubs should address these issues, it is even more important when using the acronym “LGBT.” All too often the “T” is forgotten or ignored.

Why is it important for student clubs to work to be Trans-inclusive?

Gender-based discrimination affects everyone. Protecting everyone's right to express their gender in the way that makes them feel the most comfortable should be important to everyone who wants to make their school a safer space. Not all youth are aware of their sexual orientation, but boys still get called “faggot” for “acting like a sissy,” and girls who “act like boys” are labeled “tomboys.” Much of the harassment that occurs in school hallways and on playgrounds is an attack on gender expression and/or identity whether as a tomboy, a feminine guy, a trans-identified person or anyone who does not conform to “gender norms.” An increased awareness of the issues that transgender people face only helps us to in our goal to eliminate gender based oppression from our schools for everyone.

GSA's can be a powerful force in the fight against discrimination on the basis of gender identity and gender nonconformity. Despite the fact that these issues are often at the root of homophobic harassment and bullying, many GSA's have not yet addressed gender/transgender issues because they do not know how to go about it. Here are some tips and suggested activities that can be used to help your GSA become more gender-inclusive. They offer a way to begin talking about gender and transgender issues, and make your school safer for transgender or gender-questioning students.

Suggestions to make your GSA more trans-friendly

▽ **What's your GSA's name?**

Although your GSA may be trans-inclusive in a number of ways, the term "Gay Straight Alliance" may make transgender students (and even advisors) feel left out. Change your name to something that includes everyone in the LGBTQ acronym. Be creative; maybe even make an acronym with the new name!

▽ **When your GSA asks for gender on a form or a survey, don't use checkboxes with "Male" or "Female". Leave a blank line and allow people to write it in.**

This allows people to identify however they would like. Always question if you even need this information and why you are asking for it. If you do decide to include a question about gender, consider noting that sharing this info is optional. Consider sharing this information with your school for their forms as well.

▽ **Create a safe space for self-identification**

Make it a rule in your GSA that anyone can use their name and pronoun of choice, and other members will respect and use them. Make sure you know **when** and **where** people use these names and pronouns (just in the GSA? Just at school? Do their parents or teachers use them too?). Respect their confidentiality if these are just identities they use only at GSA meetings – it may be their only place to do so comfortably.

▽ **Advocate for gender-neutral spaces in your school**

Places like washrooms, changing rooms and locker rooms can be unsafe, uncomfortable places for people who are transgender. While everyone has the right to be safe in every place at school, some people will find a gender-neutral space safer and more accessible, and it may allow them to participate in activities and events they may otherwise stay away from.

▽ **Don't separate your GSA into "boys" and "girls" for activities.**

For some this may seem harmless, but for a student who is trans, or questioning their gender, this can be an alienating and even traumatizing situation. Challenge yourself to notice the ways that you gender things and ask yourself why. Consider reasons that gendering activities might be problematic for trans as well as non-trans participants.

▽ **Design and lead a gender sensitivity training for students and/or teachers at your school.** Get folks talking about gender categories and gender-related expectations (What do we expect from women and men? Are they different?)

As a GSA, watch and discuss movies and TV shows with gender nonconformist characters

Films such as *Boys Don't Cry*, *My Life in Pink (Ma Vie en Rose)*, *All About My Mother*, *Joan of Arc*, *Breakfast With Scot*, and *Ready? Ok!* are films with characters who struggle against gender norms and expectations. Consider hosting a screening of one of these movies as an educational event at your school, or design a curriculum for teachers to use if they show one of these films in class.

▽ **Do this activity to examine gender roles and expectations!**

Ask everyone to cut out photos of someone from a magazine. Do not show your photo to others. Ask everyone to describe the person **without** referring to the person's body parts or pronouns that we associate with a specific gender. Have each person read aloud their description, and then have everyone guess what they think the gender of the person is.

Questions you can use for discussion when the "guessing" is done:

- 1) Why did you associate some adjectives with men or women?
- 2) Is something wrong with a person whose attributes are not considered normal for their gender? Why or why not?
- 3) Can someone be both masculine and feminine? Does that change their gender?

Break everyone into small groups. Give each person a bag of mixed jelly beans or M&M's (anything will work as long as they are the same size and shape and that they do vary in color). Tell each group to divide their bag up into two categories, using any criteria they can think of. Give people as much time as they need.

Here are some follow-up questions:

1. How did you divide up the contents of the bag?
2. Was it hard to think of criteria?
3. Can some objects fit into both categories? Can you think of an instance where one could? Is there an instance where neither group fits?
4. How does this relate to gender? What criteria do we use to create categories in our society to divide us? What happens when this criteria becomes too limiting or not accurate?

▽ **Always keep in mind that when you talk about gender, don't overstate it**

Allow people to feel comfortable. If you sensationalize people who are transgender or questioning (and members of your GSA may be struggling with issues of gender identity) you may make them feel even more uncomfortable or confused. You want to create a safe place for your peers.

▽ **Bring in books, current events stories and articles about people who are transgender. Talk about them in your GSA.**

Check and make sure that your GSAs outreach and publicity materials include information about Trans issues.

▽ **Read “*Transmissions*”!**

Transmissions is a book of stories, experiences, and poetry of transgender youth in Nova Scotia. Or make sure your school has copies. Stock your school's library, youth health center and guidance office with trans-friendly information and resources. (Copies of *Transmissions* are available for free from The Youth Project!)

▽ **Talk about terms and definitions!**

Discuss them with your GSA and talk about what you learned. Compare the definitions of Gender and Sex and consider the ways that they are used interchangeably and incorrectly. What can be learned from thinking about their distinct meanings?



Great GSA Resources and discussion topics:

- YP Posters
- A copy of *Transmissions*!
- I Am J* by Cris Beam
- Transparent* by Cris Beam
- Luna* by Julie Anne Peters

For Staff Advisors!

"When I give, I give myself."

— Walt Whitman

In this section...

- ▽ What every staff advisor should know
- ▽ Important things to know
- ▽ Tips from other staff advisors!

What every staff advisor should know!

GSA's are clubs run by and for students. However, these clubs would not be possible without the advisors who open the doors of their classrooms and offer support to students.

In most schools, students need to have a faculty advisor to start a club or GSA. This person can be a teacher, guidance counsellor, librarian, health nurse or other staff member. As a staff person of a school you can volunteer your time and support to students who want to start and run a GSA. GSAs are mainly student-run, but you can provide support and guidance when needed. The students may run into problems with leadership or administration and may require the guidance or advocacy of a staff person. If you want to start a GSA in your school, go ahead! The demand might be there, but students may be afraid or lost on how to start a GSA. Don't be afraid to call a meeting, and see how many people show up, or even ask around and see if any students are interested in starting a GSA.

Advisors are behind-the-scenes advocates, allies, and mentors. They offer advice and assistance, while supporting students in making their own decisions and empowering students in their leadership. To keep a GSA going, advisors offer continuity from year to year, as student leadership often changes.

The advisor has the ability to communicate with and educate other faculty and administrators. Having faculty and administrators as advocates helps students feel safe, supported and empowered. Adult allies can help other adults learn to respect young people's rights to be treated fairly, to express themselves and to form GSA clubs.

Some important things to ask yourself before you embark on assisting or starting a GSA.

- Are you willing to deal with issues around LGBTQ youth, and with the effects of homophobic and transphobic bullying?
- Is there another school nearby with an active GSA that you can visit and learn from?
- Identify the barriers that might keep you from forming a GSA in your school. How can you and your group tackle them?
- What will be your role in the GSA?
- Who else will support you in the school community?
- What supports do you need from your administration and co-workers to do this?

Here are some tips for teachers for how to get a GSA started!

Adults can act as allies for not only the school but for a GSA by:

- Offering positive encouragement and guidance in starting a GSA
- Providing a safe space to meet and access resources
- Assisting in creating the GSA guidelines and Mission Statement.
- Promoting the club to teachers, staff and administrators.
- Speaking up for students' rights to identity and expression
- Promoting inclusive language in schools, such as using neutral words like "partner", using LGBTQ examples and topics in curriculum, and stopping the use of slurs or other name-calling while at school.

Once the GSA gets started

Advisors can help it be effective by:

- Helping youth put together meeting agendas that reflect the needs of the club as determined by the students.
- Defining leadership roles and help set clear expectations for youth and adult allies.
- Stepping back once the club is organized and allowing youth to rise to occasion of running the GSA.
- Making sure the students have all of the resources they need.
- Supporting youth in gaining leadership skills to run the club and facilitate meetings.
- Evaluating the structure and group dynamics of the club: Did youth or adults start the group? Who leads the group? Have both youth and adults always participated? Do adults overpower the group? As an adult, be sure that the youth share responsibilities. Be able to discuss responsibility with the youth and allow them to finish their own tasks and responsibilities with help only when asked.
- Raising concerns about a particular project of the GSA by posing questions instead of handing down authoritative decisions.

Be an ally to a GSA in the broader school environment by...

- Bringing up the club in staff meetings and asking for colleagues to support the club.
- Leaving club flyers in the teachers' lounge.
- Inviting faculty and administration to GSA events and meetings.
- Locating other adult allies for support in addressing the anti-LGBTQ climate at school.

- Intervening when a co-worker engages in anti-LGBTQ comments or actions.
- Becoming familiar with federal and provincial laws, as well as district policies that protects LGBT students and speaking up to administrators if those laws aren't being followed.
- Advocating for youth who are the victims of homophobic and transphobic bullying

Advice from other GSA advisors!

Here are their words when asked: "if you were leaving today, what would you say to a future GSA advisor?"

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

- *Denise Johnson, Barrington High School (Rhode Island)*

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

- *Dani Meier, Jackson High School (Michigan)*

"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."

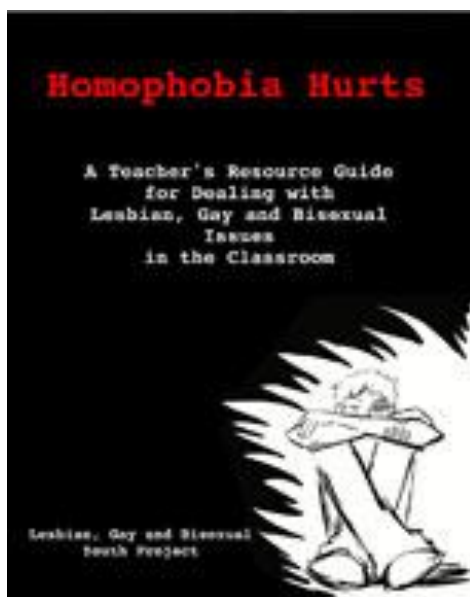
- *Sharon Reece Harrell (Massachusetts)*

"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)*

“Be genuine in your passion for the kids. You may be the only advocate some of your students have. Listen to them. Be their voice when necessary. Let them take the lead on discussions sometimes. While a GSA's purpose is to promote advocacy and awareness, don't turn it into a job for the students. Network, a small GSA here and there can be a large group when assembled. Invite controversy, talk about the issues facing students sexual orientation and gender identity wherever they are- classroom, home, work, wherever. Show or be an example of a successful LGBTQ identified person! Invite speakers; show movies- anything that helps the students realize that this aspect of their identity is not a stone around the neck but a valuable and wonderful facet of who they are. Break down barriers and stereotypes and confront falsehood and stigma surrounding queer issues wherever they erupt. Focus on the kids and their contexts. Make them feel safe, welcomed, and that they are never a stranger or an inconvenience to you.”

- Evan Barkhouse, Auburn Drive High School (Nova Scotia)



Homophobia Hurts: A Teacher's Manual

This manual is aimed at teachers and educators who are looking for more information on fighting homophobia in their school or classroom, providing support to LGBT students, or introducing these topics within the classroom.

It includes information on LGBT youth, strategies for teachers, educators and schools, sample lesson plans, and resources. *Homophobia Hurts* is on the Nova Scotia Department of Education approved resource list.

Available at the Youth Project!

Activities & Workshops!

*“Tell me and I'll forget; show me
and I may remember; involve me
and I'll understand”*

- Chinese Proverb

In this section...

- ▽ Tips for planning an activity
- ▽ Ice breakers & meeting activities
- ▽ Projects
- ▽ Events
- ▽ Workshops

Things you should consider before planning a project or 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.

What you should include on your work plan is:

- ∇ A brief description of the project/event.
- ∇ Dates for the planning period.
- ∇ Date(s) for the project/event.
- ∇ Goals (broad things you are working toward – this project/event is part of that work).
- ∇ Objectives (concrete things that this specific project will accomplish by its end).
- ∇ Strategies & steps for planning the project. Be detailed and specific!
- ∇ Dates for each step of the planning process to be completed by – and stick to them!
- ∇ Indicate of who is responsible for each step. Delegate and spread leadership.
- ∇ List materials that will be needed for the project/event and who is responsible for them.
- ∇ 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 record or take pictures of 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 in your school. 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 clubs and see if they want to be involved in putting on a project/event that addresses issues you are both addressing. 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 flyers, poster making, 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

Language

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

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 costs 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!

Space/Location

This one is important for obvious reasons – you want a space where people will safe attending 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?

Icebreakers & Meeting Activities

M&M game!

Pour M&Ms or any other multicolour candy into a bowl. Have everyone in the group grab as much or as little as they like from the bowl. Make sure that no one eats their candy right away. For each piece of M&M candy they took, they will have to say one interesting fact about themselves. Go around the room until everyone has shared interesting facts about themselves. This game can also be played with toilet paper and for each sheet a person takes, they have to say one fact about themselves.

Move your butt!

Set up chairs in a circle, count the number of people that are playing and make sure everyone has a chair except for one person. That person will stand in the center and say something that is true about themselves (“I have a dog”, “I walk to school”, “I like being in GSA”). If it also applies to the people sitting down, they must get up and find a new chair*. They must be quick, because there will always be one less chair – so there will always be someone in the middle! That person has to stand in the center and say something else true about them, and continue the game. Continue this until you want to move on to the next activity.

*You cannot move into the chair right next to you, or sit in the same chair you got up from.

Celebrity ID game!

The Celebrity ID Game is a good way to get a large group to mingle and break the ice by interacting with lots of people rapidly. To set up, the moderator prepares several labels with famous celebrity or well-known names (Mickey mouse, Madonna, David Suzuki, etc. Try to make them LGBTQ celebrities!). The moderator sticks a label on each person’s back. Then, the moderator announces it is time for the game to begin. At this point everybody mingles and introduces themselves to each other. Each person asks yes or no questions to gain clues about the name. When a person correctly identifies the name, he or she removes the label and continues to mingle until a preset amount of time.

Plan Outdoor Activities

Have your meeting outside! Make it a BBQ, play games that involve physical activity! Or even have a GSA picnic with blankets, food; feel free to go the whole 9 yards! Maybe even make it an event with other GSA's or even other clubs in your school!

Bring in books and newspaper articles about LGBT people in the media.

Talk and discuss them in your GSA meetings.

Arts and Crafts

Get together after school or during lunch and make your own pride gear, a banner to use for advertising, decorate things like (t-shirts) or art to display around the school and display cases is always a fun activity!

Projects!

Launch a campaign to create a gender-neutral bathroom at your school.

Write a proposal to the principal and the staff. Tell them you think that there should be one bathroom (this would probably be a single-stall bathroom) which is gender neutral. Let them understand that you want a safe space where a student of any sex, gender, or gender identity can change for a sport or use the bathroom and feel safe.

Get together with other GSAs or student clubs (like a diversity committee) from other schools.

It's cool to just hang out in a "safe-space" and chat - and it's good to get to know other local GSAs or student groups. Building coalitions with other groups or getting together with different students are great ways to share stories, get advice, plan events, learn from each other, and have fun!

Host a Diversity Day!

This activity is great if your school has a diversity club in existence. Sponsor a day of diversity in your school - get together with other diversity clubs in the school and plan events like an assembly, showcase night, diversity fair, have keynote speakers, host workshops, have entertainment, set up information tables, or any other ideas the sky is the limit. Building coalitions among various school groups can be a great way to meet new people, explore ideas, and raise awareness about LGBTQ issues at your school!

Plan or go to local rallies, student protests, or lobbying events!

It is always exciting to actively make change! There are always rallies, protests, and lobbying events you can find out about or learn from others on how to plan your own! Some happen every year: The Day of Silence, International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, National Coming Out Day to name a few!

Campaign for LGBTQ books in your school library.

See what your school has to offer to LGBTQ students. Talk to your administration or librarian about getting more diverse or inclusive books added to your library. Your group or local community organizations might also donate LGBTQ friendly books to the library, and The Youth Project has an online catalogue of accessible library books you can use as a starting point!

Get teachers to join the Ally Card program.

Create a campaign educating teachers on the importance of creating a safe space in their classroom. You can do this through creating fact sheets, writing testimonies, or possibly having a 1 on 1 meeting explaining the importance of a safe space for all students. Going a step further your group can get teachers to join the Ally Card program by going on the Youth Project's website. The GSA can start by approaching teachers they think are supportive and inclusive already, and encourage them to sign up.

Write Editorials!

Many student leaders write editorials for their school and community newspapers. These editorials can often be on just about anything, from discussing what it is like as an LGBTQ student at your school, the importance of addressing homophobia and transphobia in anti-bullying work, or about a certain issue or law/school rule dealing with LGBTQ issues. Highlight whatever your GSA is talking about in the moment, or speak out against homophobia and transphobia in your school & community.

Document school hetosexism and gender bias

Research and list examples of hetosexism and gender bias around your school, then present your findings to your school administration, your school newspaper or even make a video if your school has video announcements. Examples of this may include the lack of gender neutral washrooms in the school, photographs of homophobic graffiti in the school, addressing homophobic language you hear in hallways or classrooms, or school policies that might be unfair to LGBTQ students due to being outdated or exclusive.

Diversity panels

A number of schools have hosted “diversity panels” which give spokespeople representing different issues a chance to talk about their experiences with harassment and discrimination. This can be a good way to work with other human rights groups towards educating others and create safer school environment, while establishing alliances with other students and groups.

Educational theme months

Use pre established “theme months” and give them an LGBTQ slant. You could bring in speakers that relate to both the meaning of the month and may identify as LGBTQ and how that affected them, such as black history month and women’s history month. Talk about the intersections of being LGBTQ and other aspects of life. **And don’t forget October is LGBTQ history month!**

Handouts and Information Boards

Create a handout or fact sheet on LGBT issues, or host a Monthly bulletin board with such information. Issues may include statistics and reports of the harassment LGBTQ youth face or even the history of an LGBTQ related item like the stonewall riots and the pink and black triangle. You could highlight all the LGBTQ celebrities, authors and public figures that students might not know about.

Non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy

Find out what your schools anti harassment and discrimination policies are, do they include the words, “actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity?” Your group could organize a letter-writing campaign or you could talk to your administration to get the words included if they’re not. See what your school board’s policy says, partner with other GSA’s in your school board and work towards getting them included - and you don’t have to stop there! You can check town and Provincial policy to know how you are protected under the law.

Outreach to junior high schools

Research has found that anti-LGBT slurs are the second most commonly used insults uttered by elementary school children. Since junior high is a time when most people are trying to figure out who they are, especially when the average age of figuring out if you’re LGBTQ is 13, it is an import time to educate other students that homophobia and transphobia is wrong. Also if you educate earlier you can prevent bigger issues down the road from happening.

Print or make T-shirts

Draw or design them yourselves and give them away, or use them to help raise funds for your group's projects. Or use them as uniforms when running events! They can have anything on them, from rainbows to quotes about positivity and acceptance.

Queering the curriculum!

Brainstorm ways teachers of each subject can be inclusive of LGBTQ issues in their classes. Examine the curriculum your teachers are using, and brainstorm ways they could include LGBTQ people, events, or topics in the lesson plan. Go subject by subject and then distribute the results of your brainstorm to each department. Furthermore, include some of the many LGBTQ curriculums that are available from organizations such as The Youth Project or GLSEN. And include a note on why it is so important to be inclusive of all students in a classroom.

Create a poster campaign!

Advertise your GSA meetings, local support centers or rally to raise awareness about transgender issues, such as Transgender Day of Remembrance or other gender-related days of action.

School Climate survey

A number of GSAs have sent out surveys to assess the level of acceptance their school has for LGBTQ students and to better target the work that needs to be done. Some have surveyed students, staff and parents about issues relating to LGBTQ students and homophobia.

For example: A GSA gave out a survey to 849 students to measure some the anti-LGBTQ bias in their school, and published the results in the school newspaper. They found that 36% of the school reported that verbal harassment based on sexual orientation happened daily in the school. 400 students at another high school were surveyed and 34% of the school said that their friends would be uncomfortable if they found out that "someone they knew was LGBTQ". Surveys can be helpful in determining what sorts of educational activities to plan and what sort of posters might help some people re-think their assumptions.

Consider issuing an annual survey to measure the schools climate and effect of your GSAs work. In most schools the surveys must be approved by administration. Meet and work with them on how you can approve the school climate for everyone.

Teach the teachers

Consider sponsoring training for teachers in your school about issues facing LGBTQ students and the things you would want them to know. Put together a panel of students who want to talk about their own experiences or things that have witnessed in school. Invite a speaker from a community organization like The Youth Project or PFLAG to come speak about LGBTQ issues in schools or perhaps choose a video for teachers to watch.

Events!

Movie Night

Attend a screening of an LGBT themed film at a local theatre, or if you have a big enough group, consider arranging a special showing. You can also rent movies and get together to watch them and hang out.

Host a BBQ or Picnic

Involve the other GSAs in your area for a potluck picnic or BBQ. You can have the event in a public park or in someone's back yard. If it's fun, consider having one once a quarter or semester, or at the end of the school year.

Chalk Day!

Write messages of acceptance, positivity and celebration on the walkways outside school. Talk to your administration for their support – you may want to explain your event and prevent the perception that this event is graffiti. Write down the messages your group wants to use (“You are awesome”, “It's okay to be YOU”, “I accept you for who you are”, “everyone deserves a safe school”) and let the admin see them beforehand. Grab some colorful chalk and decorate your sidewalks!

Plan a GSA Dance or go to a LGBTQ dance

Dances can be a great way to bring GSA members together and can be a fun way to reach out to the school community. Large dances require a lot of planning, so it's a good idea to have several GSAs sponsor and coordinate the event. If you don't want to plan your own, look into a LGBTQ dance in your area (like the Youth Project's Queer Prom).

Throw a party!

Who needs an excuse to party?! Be creative with food and decorations, there are lots of possibilities. Organize local bands or speakers to come in! If you can't hold this at your school, contact a local community college, or your local REC center and ask to use their space. This event could also serve as a fundraiser for your club.

Host the Day of Silence, the International Day Against Homophobia, National Coming Out Day, LGBT History Month, or the Transgender Day of Remembrance.

- ▽ The **Day of Silence** (April 20th) is a day where people can take a vow of silence to bring awareness to the LGBTQ people that are silenced so that they can live a safe life. The silence can last anywhere from 24 hours to only the school day. Hand out cards during the event to explain why you are silent.
- ▽ The **International Day Against Homophobia** (May 17th) and **National Coming Out Day** (October 11th) both draw attention to the severe impact homophobic bullying can have, and how unsafe it is for some students in schools or at home. They are great times to have guest speakers, panels or campaigns.
- ▽ **LGBT History Month** (October) is a time to focus on LGBT icons, historical figures, and important people that may otherwise be hidden or ignored.
- ▽ The **Transgender Day of Remembrance** (November 20th) is to observe all those who have been victims of transphobic violence. This is a great time to focus on issues transgender students face, read stories by transgender authors, and create displays about transgender people in history and the media, and highlight just how many transgender people have contributed to our society.

Guest Speaker

Many groups invite speakers or guests from local LGBTQ or diversity community groups to discuss different issues, speakers may be invited for group meeting, or an administrative approved school wide event. Some community groups that could be invited are NSRAP (Nova Scotia Rainbow Action Project), PFLAG (Parents and friends of Lesbians and Gays), the AIDS coalition of Nova Scotia and The Youth Project.

Peer Education Workshops

Educating your peers about issues of sexual orientation, gender identity, homophobia and transphobia can be one of the most effective ways to make your school safer for LGBTQ students, and GSAs are a great framework for implementing an anti-homophobia peer education program. If your GSA is planning to organize and lead classroom anti-homophobia workshops, keep these things in mind as you go along:

Ahead of Time

- ▽ Consider that your GSA may want to attend a formal training session.

- ▽ Figure out what you need to do to get the workshop(s) approved by the school.
- ▽ Talk to your advisor and meet with administrators and/or other faculty members. Present them with a potential workshop agenda and be able to tell them why you think this is an important thing to do.
- ▽ Find a teacher that is supportive and who thinks their class would be receptive to your presentation. 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. 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 folks already know, what they have misconceptions about, and what they want to learn.

Practice in a classroom so you can get the feel for the space and so you have access to a board. Practice answering questions that are positive, and then practice answering questions that are based on stereotypes, myths or ignorance. It's important to keep a cool head, and respond to questions in a calm manner.

Invite a supportive Administrator to see your workshop if you'd like to present it in other classes, also other teachers might like to see what you propose doing in their classes, so feel free to invite them.

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

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 shouldn't be expected to represent your entire community. You can only speak from your personal experience (Use "I" statements), but these are still important experiences that you want to share.

Set guidelines. It's important both speakers and listeners abide by a set of guidelines for the workshop. Set rules like:

- ▽ **Respect** (for other peoples' thoughts, opinions and ideas – even if you don't agree, you must disagree respectfully).
- ▽ **Challenge Yourself** to be open to new ideas, and to engage with them.
- ▽ **Questions are okay.** Some people have never had the opportunity to ask questions or learn about this topic, and they might come across as ignorant, hurtful or silly without meaning to. Treat every question seriously, and don't take it personally if it comes across that way.

- ▽ **Add your own to create a safe, structured environment in your workshops.** Start with your guidelines first and get the group to agree to abide by them before you start your workshop.

Define and clarify the terms you use. Not everyone will be as versed as you in LGBTQ 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," you should also discuss different contexts of the terms.

Not everyone will agree with you The reason you are doing the anti-oppression workshop is to increase awareness. People will disagree with you, and that's okay as long as they are not disruptive to the workshop (refer to your guidelines if needed). Be accepting of others' beliefs, and ask they in turn be accepting of yours.

Stick to your purpose Avoid getting sidetracked to other topics not involving homophobia or transphobia, or getting derailed or rattled by people in the audience. Some people might think this is their only opportunity to ask questions, or believe in some myths and stereotypes. Others will try to throw you off as a way of avoiding the topic. Try to diffuse these questions, or give time at the end to revisit them.

Afterward Learn from your evaluations. Make sure you give folks enough time to fill them out, and be open to constructive criticism. Don't let the overly negative ones get you down, though.

Sample Classroom Anti-Homophobia Workshop Agenda

INTRODUCTION (10 min)

- ▽ Personal introduction (name, age, what, why you're doing this workshop, etc)
- ▽ Purposes of Workshop: Increase awareness of the impact that homophobia and transphobia have on students at the school.
- ▽ Increase awareness of what homophobia and transphobia is.
- ▽ Create a safe space for people to ask questions about LGBTQ issues
- ▽ Discuss how students can be better allies for LGBTQ people in schools.

Ground Rules/Agreements/Norms

- ▽ Why is it important to have agreements? So that people feel safe, comfortable and respected to say what's on their minds, everyone gets heard.
- ▽ Put up Ground Rules. Let the class help generate these if you have time)
- ▽ Ask everyone to agree to the Agreements/Norms/Ground Rules.

Terms & Definitions (5 min)

- ▽ Go over basic terms of LGBT, sexual orientation, and gender identity and any others you think are important (Remember not everyone will be comfortable with these and many won't be familiar with them).
- ▽ Ask for slang terms (you can discuss origins of the slang terms if you know them and have time).
- ▽ Ask for stereotypes (if you have time).

Activity (Do an activity, such as a *World Cafe*, that covers basic concepts and gets into the issues.) (10 min)

- ▽ Say the name and purpose of the activity in your own words.
- ▽ Explain instructions.
- ▽ At the end of the exercise, ask for reflection from students on how it felt to participate in the activity.

Personal Impact Stories (2 speakers) (20 min)

- ▽ Explain that the presenters are going to share personal stories.
- ▽ Mention that these personal stories are not necessarily representative of every LGBTQ person's experience.
- ▽ At least one of the speakers should identify as LGBTQ, but straight allies with friends or family members can also share personal stories.
- ▽ Each speaker gives a 5 minute highlight of their story, and then allows 10 minutes to answer questions. Highlights:
 - ▽ When did you know you were gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender?
 - ▽ What is it like to be a bisexual, lesbian, gay or transgender youth in high school?
 - ▽ When you came out, were you supported by your friends? Family? Others?
 - ▽ What made it easier for you to come out?
 - ▽ What (if anything) makes it difficult to be in school?
 - ▽ If you are a straight ally, talk about your experience in relation to homophobia. How have you experienced homophobia because you have friends or family members who are LGBTQ? How does homophobia affect your friends and family members?
- ▽ Ask for questions from the group.

Resources & Evaluations (5 min)

- ▽ Resource materials to hand out:

- ▽ Make resource sheets, for example: “What Every Straight Ally Should Know”
- ▽ Information on community resources, such as LGBTQ youth centers, hotlines, groups, etc.
- ▽ Information about your GSA.
- ▽ Ask the students to complete the evaluation.
- ▽ If you have more than 50 minutes, consider making the panel discussion longer, for many students this may be their first chance to hear LGBTQ people speak about their experiences. Give more time for questions. Or have another panelist. It is always nice to have an Ally talk about why they find it important to be an Ally.
- ▽ Do an agree/disagree activity. To get the most out of Agree/Disagree you need at least 20 minutes or longer. Also please tailor your questions to your community, in addition to the ones that are included with the instructions. This is an activity to get the class thinking.

World Café Activity

If time allows, break your large group into small groups, and give each smaller group a handout with some questions on it. Get them to discuss their answers, and then share when you come back together as a class. Some questions you might want to ask are:

- ▽ How often do you hear homophobia and transphobia in your school? (Phrases like “that’s so gay” or words like “fag” or “dyke”)
- ▽ If you had to define homophobia and transphobia are, how would you explain it?
- ▽ Can you see the effects of homophobia and transphobia? What are they?
- ▽ Why do some people feel this way about LGBTQ issues or people?



Troubleshooting

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

- Thomas Edison

In this section...

- ▽ Problems and possible solutions
- ▽ Tips from GSA members

Here are some common problems & possible solutions!

Problem: We can't find a staff advisor!

Go around to each staff member individually and ask if they would consider being your advisor. Or, put an announcement in the school; use the school newspaper, anything to get the message out there that you need someone. If you still have no luck, see if it's acceptable to bring in an alumni (a former graduate of the school). Alumni can come in to the school for your meetings and facilitate them if there is no teacher willing.

Problem: Our posters keep getting ripped down.

Perseverance! Keep replacing your posters, and sooner or later, people will stop once they realize you won't give in. If they are still getting ripped down, try placing index cards behind the posters that let people know that ripping GSA posters down is a display of fear, hatred and ignorance. There's always duct tape! Also if your bulletin board is being vandalized keep maintaining it! Either way, never give up!

Problem: We're receiving a lot of direct homophobia/harassment from students and/or teachers.

Talk to your staff advisor on what to do about this. If this is repeated harassment from a certain group of students or a teacher, your staff advisor or alumni can address the problem, possibly with assistance from the principal.

Problem: the school said no to us forming a GSA.

If other groups within a school are allowed to form (Amnesty International, Multi-Cultural Group, Christian Coalition Etc.) then a GSA should be allowed to form as well. If other groups meet, you will have a right to meet as well. If this still is not allowed, try and get support from inside and outside the school. Friends, teachers, political figures, parents, The Youth Project, etc. Fight for your right to have a GSA. Also you could also join or even start a diversity club in your school and make sure that LGBTQ issues are addressed properly.

Sometimes administrators don't realize what a GSA is, or what it does. Invite your administration to sit down and chat with The Youth Project about how a GSA could be an asset to your school.

Problem: Our meetings are being crashed.

Try to get your staff advisor to deal with the crashers. If they still persist, move your meeting place to a different location, and make sure all members are aware of the change. New members wanting info but don't know of the location can see the staff advisor or see the GSA leader(s).

Problem: Someone I don't like is in our GSA!

Be the bigger person! As a GSA member (or GSA leader) you need to make sure that everyone in the GSA feels welcome, and after all if you advertise your GSA as a welcoming and inclusive place, you have to make sure everyone that shows up feels welcome. Plus what is the point about talking about acceptance and equality when you can't even accept the people in your own GSA! If it's a serious issue, talk to your advisor about addressing it outside of GSA meetings so you too can feel comfortable in the GSA.

Problem: Our meetings are not working out well because everyone is talking at once.

Have a talking stick, pride flag or other item! Only the person who has the item can speak. Or give everyone some paper and pencils so they can write down their ideas, then have a roundtable (go around and, one at a time, share what you have to say). Make sure you give people the right to pass if they don't want to say anything. You could also try other forms of facilitated discussion (World Café, fishbowl etc.).

Problem: There are people making transphobic comments in our GSA!

Education on issues related to gender identity is always a good thing to do. Consider giving your whole GSA a workshop on what is so offensive about what their saying, or just about what Transgender and intersex means. Also, introduce gender neutral pronouns (like Ze and Heir [pronounced Ze and here]) to your GSA and even suggest using them in meetings. Bring in The Youth Project to give a Trans 101 workshop and learn together!

Problem: Our teacher advisor is too overbearing.

You can get them to read the teacher section in this manual. Also when asking staff members to help out with the GSA make sure you stress the point that a GSA is **STUDENT RUN**.

Problem: Our leader is well... not a good leader.

Consider referring them to leadership training (like the Nova Scotia Secondary Students Association [NSSSA]), or talking to The Youth Project. To see what guidance they have to offer. If your leader is too busy with other commitments consider electing a co-chair.

Problem: People in our GSA are not following the rules.

If your rules are from previous year, update them to fit this year's GSA. Call your rules something like "Community Standards" or "GSA Ethics" will make them less intimidating to talk about. If one of the rules is broken, try talking to the people who broke them separately, or reminding everyone of the rules if you don't want to single anyone out.

Problem: our GSA cannot seem to settle on a decision.

One way around this is to set up a system of decision making for example: "There must be a majority (2/3 of the people present) in order for a motion to pass".

Possible decision making models include:

- ▽ **Unanimous** - A process called consensus is used to make sure everyone at the meeting agrees on the decision. This involves discussion when there is a dissenting opinion.
- ▽ **Majority or 2/3 vote** - This model usually works best when only club members present at the meeting are given a vote. You may want to publicize the meeting agenda beforehand so people will know what is being discussed (and will be more likely to show up if they feel strongly about the issue and want to be involved in the decision-making process).
- ▽ **Club officers have ultimate decision-making power.** This model may include further levels of decision-making power, such as Leaders--> President/Advisor-->Administration. This can give power to a small amount of people and lead to being undemocratic, so choose this model carefully and make sure your leaders will represent the GSA's best interests.

Tips from GSA members!

Plan an assortment of activities for your GSA to host: Have a Pride walk where students can travel a designated route accompanied by teachers and would have to stop at 5-6 stations, where they will get different coloured stamps or prizes. Each participating student will have to pay money (1-5 dollars) to miss class. This also raises money for the GSA. Also try having designated days for fun and some for work so that lovable slackers don't disrupt. Leaders don't be afraid to be tough and if necessary implement a talking stick.

- **Christian L. (Auburn Drive H.S. Nova Scotia)**

When one runs a GSA you should always keep your head high, and stand up for your GSA. Always put positive energy towards moving forward.

- **Barry R.**

Go to a guidance counsellor for support and advice on LGBTQ issues and help on how to start a GSA and keeping it running and for meetings mix it up! Try going on fieldtrips!

- **Matty A. (Junior High, Nova Scotia)**

Some ideas to keep a GSA running would be to plan fun things to do together, like art projects and field trips, for teacher advisors keep an open mind and try to be empathetic with everyone's backgrounds. Keep information pamphlets on everything you can. Leaders, keep control of leadership in your GSA, it may be helpful if you have elections at the end of every year to choose a leader for the upcoming year, let everyone know what role the leader has and more importantly what role members have. Make sure to keep everyone involved!

- **Kierstyn M.**

Make sure you have plenty of information and options when starting your GSA! Make your GSA as open and inclusive of a space as possible, keep your ideas fun and inclusive, make sure that you use preferred pronouns i.e. Ze, Hir, He, She, etc. Leaders, be awesome, and make it clear IT GETS BETTER!

- **Lindsay Y. (Cole Harbour High, Nova Scotia)**

When starting your GSA try not to do it alone, get a committed group of people to back you up! Promote your GSA in any way you can! Signs, YouTube videos, Facebook groups and make sure to be proud when promoting the GSA! Make sure to thank your staff advisors! Educate on Trans issues whenever possible in your meetings! Spread the message of tolerance and acceptance HOLLA'.

- **Reanne M. & Jasmine H. (Cole Harbour High, Nova Scotia)**

Terms & Definitions

Androgynous: Used to describe a person whose gender expression and/or identity may be neither distinctly female nor male, usually based on appearance.

Asexual: People who are asexual usually do not experience sexual attraction. They do sometimes have emotional attractions, and form relationships (just not ones that involve sexual behaviour) – this means sometimes people who are asexual can also identify as straight or LGBTQ

Biological sex (Sex): A medical term referring to genetic, biological, hormonal and/or physical characteristics (including genitalia), which are used to classify an individual as female, male or intersex at birth.

Bisexual: A bisexual person is emotionally and physically attracted to men and women – it doesn't have to be 50/50, or an equal feeling. Someone could be more attracted to men or more to women, but feels they could have a relationship with either.

Butch: Used to describe people of all genders and sexes who act and dress in masculine ways, and who have positively claimed their own masculinity. Butch should be a word used for self-identification, and not necessarily put upon a person by others.

Drag King/Queen: A person who “performs” gender, often involving the presentation of exaggerated, stereotypical gender characteristics. Drag can be used to highlight how rigid gender roles can be, make serious statements about them or even to poke fun at them. Individuals may identify as drag kings or drag queens, or even just as drag performers. Drag performers do not necessarily identify as the gender they perform as.

Femme: Used to describe people of all genders and sexes who act or dress in feminine ways, and who have positively claimed their own femininity. Like butch, femme is also a self-identity and should be chosen by the person themselves.

FTM (female to male): Used to identify a person who was assigned a female gender at birth and who identifies as male, and perhaps lives as male. People who are FTM may also identify as transgender, or as a transman.

Gay: Men who are attracted to men. Sometimes we use gay as a blanket term, in phrases like “gay community” and “gay pride week”, and some women will identify as gay. These uses are all okay too.

Gender: A social construct based on a group of emotional, behavioural, psychological and physical characteristics that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, female, male, and androgynous or other. Gender can be understood to have several components, including gender identity, gender expression and gender roles.

Gender expression: Any combination of how someone outwardly presents characteristics and behaviours that are socially defined as masculine or feminine - including dress, hair, our actions, speech patterns and social interactions. Gender expression is how we express our gender identity.

Gender identity: An individual's self-perception or deeply felt sense of being a man, male, a woman, female, both, or neither. Gender identity can match the sex someone is assigned at birth, but sometimes does not.

Genderism: The systematic belief that people need to conform to the gender assigned to them at birth, in a binary system that includes only female and male. Related to sexism, genderism is a form of institutionalized discrimination as well as individually demonstrated prejudice.

Genderqueer: A term used by people who identify their gender to be somewhere on the continuum, in-between, or outside the binary gender system altogether. Genderqueer people may prefer a gender-neutral pronoun.

Gender role: The social expectation of how an individual should act, think and/or feel based upon one's assigned gender.

Homophobia: The fear, hatred and ignorance of people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Intersex: A person born with anatomy or physiology that differs from what is commonly thought of as female or male anatomy. This could include ambiguous or undefined genitalia, having different chromosomes, or different levels of hormone production (there are many ways a person could be intersex!). People who are intersex were formerly referred to as “hermaphrodites”, which is not a correct term to use. People who are intersex are sometimes “medically assigned” a gender when they are born (which means a doctor decides and then operates). This can be a problematic decision, to select someone's identity without asking them. Many intersex adults advocate for leaving intersex infants alone until they can decide who they are for themselves. Being intersex also challenges our notion of a binary gender system.

Lesbian: A woman who is attracted to women

MTF (male to female): Used to identify a person assigned male at birth who identifies as a female, or possibly lives as female. People who are MTF may also identify as transgender, or as a transwoman.

Pansexual: The word “pan” means “all”, so pansexual is used to mean a person who is attracted to people of various identities and expressions. If you think of the word bisexual, “bi” means “two”, implying there are only two genders. Some people disagree with this, and use pansexual as a way of lifting those limitations on gender. It does not mean that bisexuality is seen in a negative light, just that there are other identities that some people find more comfortable.

Queer: Queer can be an identity that is a little less limiting than others. Queer means someone is not straight (or heterosexual), but feels words like lesbian, gay or bisexual aren't quite right either. It can also be useful because it doesn't gender someone, or indicate the gender of someone's partner. Many like to identify as queer for these reasons. **Note:** queer is also used as a slur, and should always be defined before using. Make it known you are using queer in a positive way. People also like to use queer in a positive way because it can take away the negative power of the word.

Sexual Behaviour: Sexual behaviour is often confused with sexual orientation. Where sexual orientation is about attraction, sexual behaviour is just about sex. Someone's sexual behaviour does not necessarily tell us someone's sexual orientation, or vice versa

Sexual orientation: Who we are romantically, emotionally, and/or physically attracted to. Sexual orientation is about who you like, who you crush on, who you form relationships with – who you love. Everyone has a sexual orientation, and some of the most common labels are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and straight (but there are more, like queer or pansexual).

Straight (Heterosexual): A person who is attracted to the opposite sex/gender.

Transgender (or trans): Transgender can be used as an umbrella term to include people who transgress (or move beyond) rigid gender definitions, or people whose gender does not conform to social expectations. Transgender (or trans) can also be an identity people use to mean that their gender identity and the sex they were assigned at birth do not match. There is a disconnect between how people see themselves as male or female, and how they are seen by other people. Someone might identify as transgender for their whole lives, or for just a part of it until they feel comfortable in their own bodies.

Transition: Transition is the process of changing one's gender presentation to match with a deeply felt sense of gender identity. Transition could include changing names and pronouns, wearing clothing that is more comfortable,

taking hormones (testosterone or estrogen), or surgeries to make the body more congruent with how someone sees themselves as male or as female. Transition is different for every person, everyone makes their own decisions about what steps are right for them.

Transphobia: The fear, hatred or ignorance of those who are transgender, or those whose gender identity or expression does not conform to social norms.

Transsexual: A person who does not identify with their birth-assigned gender and alters their body surgically and/or hormonally. Transsexual can fit under the umbrella term of transgender, but describes a specific experience of undergoing medical transition (most often meaning hormones and surgery).

Two-Spirited: This term refers to LGBT people of the First Nations. Two-spirited people were once revered by their communities for possessing both male and female spirits – they were considered healers and artists.

Ze & Hir: The most common spelling for gender-neutral pronouns. The first is subjective, replacing “she” or “he,” and the second possessive and objective, replacing “her,” “his” or “him.”

Resources!

*“If you think education is expensive,
try ignorance.”*

- Derek Bok

In this Section...

- ▽ LGBTQ themed books
- ▽ LGBTQ themed movies
- ▽ LGBTQ related websites
- ▽ LGBTQ people in the spotlight
- ▽ Statistics

LGBTQ themed books!



The God Box – Alex Sanchez

High school senior Paul has dated Angie since middle school, and they're good together. They have a lot of the same interests, like singing in their church choir and being active in Bible club. But when Manuel transfers to their school, Paul has to rethink his life. Manuel is the first openly gay teen anyone in their small town has ever met, and yet he says he's also a committed Christian. Talking to Manuel makes Paul reconsider thoughts he has kept hidden and listening to Manuel's interpretation of Biblical passages causes Paul to reevaluate everything he believed.

Rainbow Boys – Alex Sanchez

Jason Carrillo is a jock with a steady girlfriend, but he can't stop dreaming about other guys. Kyle Meeks doesn't look gay, but he is. And he hopes he never has to tell anyone -- especially his parents. Nelson Glassman is "out" to the entire world, but he can't tell the boy he loves that he wants to be more than just friends. In a revealing debut novel that percolates with passion and wit, Alex Sanchez follows these very different high-school seniors as their struggles with sexuality and intolerance draw them into a triangle of love, betrayal, and ultimately, friendship.

So Hard to Say – Alex Sanchez

When Frederick shows up at school, Xio is thrilled. The new boy is shy, cute, and definitely good boyfriend material. Before long, she pulls him into her lively circle of friends. Frederick knows he should be flattered by Xio's attention. After all, she's popular, pretty, and a lot of fun. So why can't he stop thinking about Victor, the captain of the soccer team, instead?

Boy Meets Boy – David Leviathan

The thing is, even if the gay kids and the straight kids get along just fine, even if it's all right for the star quarterback to be a cross-dresser named Infinite Darlene and the cheerleaders ride Harleys into the pep rally, the road to true love is still a strange and winding path Paul discovers when he meets the boy of his dreams. Charming, funny, and utterly heart-warming, this teen novel speaks with depth about our need to love and be loved.

Geography Club – Brent Hartinger

Russel Middlebrook is a sophomore at Goodkind High School. He has a secret crush on a baseball jock, Kevin, and soon discovers that Kevin is also gay. The boys become friendly outside of school and set up the "Geography Club" with three other gay students, one of whom is Russel's closest friend, Min. The club members relish the opportunity to discuss their lives and to relate to one another openly and honestly. The "Geography Club" becomes the "Goodkind High School Gay-Straight-Bisexual Alliance," in this exciting novel!

David Inside Out – Lee Bantle

David Dahlgren, a high-school senior, finds solace in running with the track team; he's a fast runner, and he enjoys the camaraderie. But team events become a source of tension when he develops a crush on one of his teammates, Sean. Scared to admit his feelings, David does everything he can to suppress them: he dates a girl, and keeps his distance from his best friend who has become openly gay. In this coming-of-age novel, Lee Bantle offers a raw, honest, and incredibly compelling account of a teenager who learns to accept himself for who he is.

Totally Joe – James Howe

As a school assignment, a thirteen-year-old boy writes an alpha biography--life from A to Z--and explores issues of friendship, family, school, and the challenges of being a gay teenager.

The Misfits – James Howe

Four students who do not fit in at their small-town middle school decide to create a third party for the student council elections to represent all students who have ever been called names.

Free your Mind – Ellen bass and Kate Kaufman

A practical resource guide for gay teenagers and college students helps gay youth understand, accept, and celebrate their sexual orientation; overcome obstacles; make healthy choices about relationships and sex; and participate in the gay and lesbian community.

Nothing Pink – Mark Hardy

Vincent Harris, the teenage son of a Baptist minister, has always known he is gay and uses his faith to avoid any sinful thoughts or acts, but when his family moves to a new church in the late 1970s, he meets Robert Ingle, falls in love, and watches as his nature and faith collide.

Transmissions!

Transmissions is a book produced by youth from the Youth Project. It contains stories, journal entries, poems and artwork written by transgender youth. Transgender youth from the Maritimes, the Eastern U.S. and the U.K. all contributed. This book is in our library, but youth can receive their own copy for free (while supplies last)

The Vast Fields of Ordinary – Nick Burd

The summer after graduating from an Iowa high school, eighteen-year-old Dade Hamilton watches his parents' marriage disintegrate, ends his long-term, secret relationship, comes out of the closet, and savours first love.

Keeping You a Secret -Julie Anne Peters

With a steady boyfriend, the position of Student Council President and a chance to go to an Ivy League college, high school life is just fine for Holland Jaeger. At least it seems to be. But when Cece Goddard comes to school, everything changes. Cece and Holland have undeniable feelings for each other, but how will others react to their developing relationship? This moving love story between two girls is a worthy successor to Nancy Garden's classic coming out novel, *Annie on My Mind*

Empress of the World – Sara Ryan

Nicola Lancaster is spending the summer at the Siegel Institute Summer Program for Gifted Youth—a hothouse of smart, articulate, intense teenagers, living like college students for eight weeks. Nic's had theater friends and orchestra friends, but never just friend friends. And she's certainly never had a relationship. But on the very first day, she falls in with Katrina the Computer Girl, Isaac the West Coast Nice-Guy-Despite-Himself, Kevin the Inarticulate Composer...and Battle. Battle Hall Davies is a beautiful blonde dancer from North Carolina. She's everything Nic isn't. Soon the two are friends—and then, startlingly, more than friends. What do you do when you think you're attracted to guys, and then you meet a girl who steals your heart?

Out of the Pocket - Bill Konigsberg

Star quarterback Bobby Framingham, one of the most talented high school football players in California, knows he's different from his teammates. They're like brothers, but they don't know one essential thing: Bobby is gay. Can he still be one of the guys and be honest about who he is? When he's outed against his will by a student reporter, Bobby must find a way to earn back his teammates' trust and accept that his path to success might be more public, and more difficult, than he'd hoped. An affecting novel about identity that also delivers great sports writing.

Realm of Possibility – David Levithan

Enter *The Realm of Possibility* and meet a boy whose girlfriend is in love with Holden Caulfield; a girl who loves the boy who wears all black; a boy with the perfect body; and a girl who writes love songs for a girl she can't have.

Luna - Julie Anne Peters

Regan's brother Liam can't stand the person he is during the day. Like the moon from whom Liam has chosen his female namesake, his true self, Luna, only reveals herself at night. In the secrecy of his basement bedroom Liam transforms himself into the beautiful girl he longs to be, with help from his sister's clothes and makeup. Now, everything is about to change-Luna is preparing to emerge from her cocoon. But are Liam's family and friends ready to welcome Luna into their lives? Compelling and provocative, this is an unforgettable novel about a transgender teen's struggle for self-identity and acceptance.

Blue Boy – Rakesh Satyal

Satyal's lovely coming-of-age debut charts an Indian-American boy's transformation from mere mortal to Krishnaji, the blue-skinned Hindu deity. Twelve-year-old Kiran Sharma's a bit of an outcast: he likes ballet and playing with his mother's makeup. He also reveres his Indian heritage and convinces himself that the reason he's having trouble fitting in is because he's actually the 10th reincarnation of Krishnaji. He plans to come out to the world at the 1992 Martin Van Buren Elementary School talent show, and much of the book revels in his comical preparations as he creates his costume, plays the flute and practices his dance moves to a Whitney Houston song. But as the performance approaches, something strange happens: Kiran's skin begins to turn blue. Satyal writes with a graceful ease, finding new humour in common awkward pre-teen moments and giving readers a delightful and lively young protagonist.

Strong Hollow – Linda Little

Linda Little has crafted a story where music, creativity, and sexuality merge, as a young Nova Scotian carver embarks on a profound discovery of his sense of self. *Strong Hollow* tells the powerful story of Jackson Bigney, a young man coping with a crippling past of repression, alcoholism, and poverty. Failure seems built-in to Jackson's life. His father, a brutal man, despises his son. The day Jackson finds his father dead in a ditch beside the MacIntyre road is the day he begins his own metamorphosis. One summer, Jackson meets Ian Sutherland, an accomplished fiddler and a powerful attraction develops between them. Jackson feels alive with anticipation and fulfillment. A Youth Project favorite!

Naomi and Ely's No-Kiss List –David Levithan

Naomi (funny and gorgeous) and Ely (funny, gorgeous and gay) live in the same apartment block. They've been soul mates since forever, sharing clothes, music, in-jokes, adventures . . . they even have a 'no-kiss' list of people who are absolutely off-limits for kissing (as an insurance policy against a Naomi and Ely breakup). When Ely kisses Naomi's current boyfriend, the fault lines in their relationship begin to crack . . . A quirky New York story of friendship, love and all life's funny complications.

I Am J – Cris Beam

J always felt different. He was certain that eventually everyone would understand who he really was: a boy mistakenly born as a girl. Yet as he grew up, his body began to betray him; eventually J stopped praying to wake up a "real boy" and started covering up his body, keeping himself invisible - from his family, from his friends...from the world. But after being deserted by the best friend he thought would always be by his side, J decides that he's done hiding - it's time to be who he really is. And this time he is determined not to give up, no matter the cost.

LGBTQ themed movies!

<p style="text-align: center;">Tru Loved</p> <p>Sixteen-year-old Tru is uprooted by her lesbian moms from her comfortable gay-friendly home in San Francisco and moved to a conservative, suburban community in Southern California.</p> <p>Tru's only friend is a closeted football player who depends on her to keep his secret, but soon that friendship is jeopardized when she starts a Gay/Straight Alliance at her school. Tru must balance what she wants with concerns for her friends, and their own struggles with homophobia.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Milk</p> <p>Using flashbacks from a statement recorded late in life and archival footage for atmosphere, this film traces Harvey Milk's career from his 40th birthday to his death. He leaves the closet and New York, opens a camera shop that becomes the salon for San Francisco's growing gay community, and organizes gays' purchasing power to build political alliances. He runs for office with lover Scott Smith as his campaign manager. Victory finally comes on the same day Dan White wins in the city's conservative district. The rest of the film sketches Milk's relationship with White and the 1978 fight against a state-wide initiative to bar gays and their supporters from public school jobs.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Philadelphia</p> <p>Andrew Beckett, a gay lawyer infected with AIDS, is fired from his conservative law firm in fear that they might contract AIDS from him. After Andrew is fired, in a last attempt for peace, he sues his former law firm with the help of a homophobic lawyer, Joe Miller. During the court battle, Miller sees that Beckett is no different than anyone else on the gritty streets of the city of brotherly love, sheds his homophobia and helps Beckett with his case before AIDS overcomes him.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Prayers for Bobby</p> <p>At first sight, the devout Presbyterian Griffith family lives idyllically in a small town. But when son Bobby confides to his older brother Ed he's gay, which Ed tells ma Mary, she bombards him day and night with 'help to heal'. Bobby's school and social life go to pieces and after a stay with a libertarian cousin in Portland, where he meets an ideal gay mate, David. But after a strained visit back home. Bobby soon breaks and ends up suicide. Only now, grief then opens Mary's mind up to 'modern Biblical attitudes'.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Prom Queen: The Marc Hall story</p> <p>Set in the working-class town of Inniston, Prom Queen introduces viewers to Marc Hall (Ashmore), a popular student who manages to avoid the typical harassment a gay kid in a small town would expect to face. But when Marc decides to take his boyfriend to the prom, he finds he has stepped over the line, straight into the fight of his young life. Suddenly, with the spotlight of the nation's media cast squarely on his struggle, he discovers he is battling not just for his right to date, but for the rights of gay people everywhere.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Get Real</p> <p>When homosexuality was still an absolute in England, sensitive rural town model student Steven Carter hides his gay feelings, except from neighbour Linda. Suddenly his desperate search for partners leads to a blind date with golden boy John Dixon, bound for an Oxbridge career. Steven finds the courage to approach John by volunteering for the school paper as sports photographer. A wonderful affair follows, but John is terrified of losing his social status. As the boys' love blossoms, so does despair about secrecy or outing consequences.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Ma Vie En Rose</p> <p>Ludovic is a young boy who can't wait to grow up to be a woman. When his family discovers the little girl blossoming in him they are forced to contend with their own discomfort and the lack of understanding from their new neighbours. Their anger and impatience cave and Ludovic is sent to see a psychiatrist in the hopes of fixing whatever is wrong with him. A movie that addresses trans-gender and gender issues in general through the eyes of a child.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Breakfast With Scot</p> <p>Eric and Sam have been in a committed relationship for four years. Eric's a former hockey player turned sportscaster and Sam's a sport's lawyer. But when Sam's adventure seeking brother Billy, takes a job in South America, his ex-girlfriend, Julie, is discovered dead from a drug overdose leaving her son Scot (not Billy's son) to Billy. But Billy is missing in action so Sam is left to pick up the pieces.</p>

Transamerica

Southern Californian Bree Osbourne, who was formerly Stanley Chupak, has finally received the news for which she has been waiting: she has been approved for male-to-female sexual reassignment surgery. But before Margaret, her therapist, will allow her to go through with the surgery scheduled in a week's time, Bree has to deal with an unresolved issue from her past. Her son, Masquerading as a Christian social worker, Bree, not telling him either of her true identity or her transgendered status, bails her son Toby out of jail and tells him she will take him to Los Angeles, where Toby has aspirations of becoming a porn actor and reconnecting with his biological father. As Bree and Toby take their trans-American journey which includes some interesting encounters along the way, Bree has to decide what is best for Toby while having the foremost goal of making it back to Los Angeles for the scheduled surgery

Latter Days

Aaron Davis and Christian Markelli are the two most opposite people in the world. Aaron is a young Elder (or a Mormon missionary) who wants to do his family proud and is quite passionate about his religion and film. Christian is a shallow waiter/party boy who only looks forward to bedding a new guy every night. After Aaron and three other missionaries move into the apartment across from Christian, Christian instantly latches onto Aaron. There are two problems, though - Christian is falling in love with Aaron and the Mormons are not the biggest fans of the homosexual community. Once Aaron is discovered, the two have to go through trials of regret, loss, perseverance, and forgiveness if they both want to get to the thing that matters to them most: each other.

Mambo Italiano

Angelo Barberini is the oddball son of Italian immigrants Gino and Maria, who inadvertently ended up in Canada rather than the States. Angelo shocks his parents by moving out on his own without getting married, and shocks them further still when he reveals that he's gay. But his boyfriend, policeman Nino Paventi isn't as ready to come out of the closet -- especially not to his busybody mother, Lina.

Show Me Love

Rachel and Heck, longtime friends, finally tie the knot, and during the celebration, Rachel starts a friendship with their florist, Luce. And while Rachel originally intended to match her new friend up with her husband's friend, she soon finds out that Luce is a lesbian. During the course of their friendship, Rachel starts to question her own sexuality. As she falls more in love with Luce, Rachel must figure out what she wants and who she is.

But I'm a Cheerleader

Megan is an all-American girl. She's a cheerleader; she has a boyfriend, etc. But she doesn't like kissing her boyfriend very much. And she's pretty touchy with her cheerleader friends. And she only has pictures of girls up in her locker. Her parents and friends conclude that she *must* be gay and send her off to "sexual redirection" school, full of admittedly homosexual misfits, where she can learn to how to be straight. Will Megan be turned around to successful heterosexuality, or will she succumb to her love for the beautiful Graham?

D.E.B.S.

Recruited by the U.S. government for their unique ability to lie, cheat and fight, Amy, Max, Janet and Dominique join an underground academy of secret agents known only as D.E.B.S. These crime fighters set out to save the world and keep their lipstick perfectly applied while doing so. Now the girls must combine their skills for their most important mission- to capture Lucy Diamond, the deadliest criminal the world has ever known. When D.E.B.S. star player, Amy, falls for Lucy, chaos erupts and the D.E.B.S. loyalty is put to the test.

Boys Don't Cry When Teena Brandon (Hilary Swank) moves to a small Nebraska town in search of a new life, she takes the name Brandon Teena, passes herself off as a boy, begins dating a beautiful girl (Chloe Sevigny) and makes friends among the town's redneck men ... until the truth is revealed. Swank's Oscar-winning portrayal of this real-life character illuminates one woman's voyage of self-discovery -- and the tragic events that cut it short.

LGBTQ Youth related websites

glsen.org

A great website for teachers! Although it is based in the United States, it still offers a great amount of resources, videos, stories, and ideas on what you can do in your school!

gsanetwork.org

This site is great for all things GSA related, it is based in California, but it offers ideas, tips, tricks, videos and more for your GSA!

Mygsa.ca

A cross Canada GSA network that allows you to sign up and see what is going on with other Canadian GSAs. The site offers forums pictures, stats and more!

youthproject.ns.ca

The youth project provides support services and events to Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered, Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) youth 25 and under across Nova Scotia. The project has been running since 1993 and provides a safe supportive youth directed environment where youth can access information peers support and social activities. The youth project strives to meet the needs of all LGBTQ youth across Nova Scotia regardless of geographic region, socio-economic status, race religion, gender sex, ethnicity, etc.

LGBTQ people in the spotlight!

LGBTQ Musicians

Vanessa Carlton	k.d. lang
Peaches	Melissa Etheridge
David Bowie	Elton John
George Michael	Ani Difranco
Jake Shears (Scissor sisters)	Indigo Girls
Lady Gaga	Micheal Stipe (R.E.M.)
Beth Ditto (Gossip)	Ricky Martin
Bjork	RuPaul
Adam Lambert	Jimmy Sommerville
Rae spoon (Local artist)	Rufus Wainwright
Lucas Silveira (The Clinks)	Clay Aiken
Billie Joe Armstrong (Green Day)	MIKA
Lance Bass (N-Sync)	

LGBTQ Actors/TV Stars

Portia De Rossi (Actor – arrested development)	Lily Tomlin (Actor Ms. Frizzle Magic School bus)
Rosie O'Donnell (TV personality)	Adamo Ruggiro (Marco – Degrassi)
Sarah Gilbert (Actor – Roseanne)	Chris Colfer (Kurt - Glee)
Nathan Lane (Actor)	BD Wong (Law and order)
T.R. Knight (Actor Greys Anatomy)	David Hyde Pierce (actor – Frasier)
Tim Gunn (Project Runway)	Neil Patrick Harris (actor)
Jonathan Groff (Jessie - Glee)	Jane Lynch (Sue Sylvester – Glee)
Cynthia Nixon (Sex & the City)	Bryan Batt – Actor (Mad Men)
Suze Orman (TV personality)	Angelina Jolie (actor)
Rick Mercer (Comedian)	Anthony Rapp (Actor RENT)
Cherry Jones (Broadway Actor)	Wanda Sykes (Comedian)
Sook-Yin lee (CBC Radio Host)	Sean Hayes (Jack - Will & Grace)
John Waters (Director - Hairspray)	

LGBTQ people of History!

Sappho (Greek Philosopher)	Alexander the great (Ruler)
Plato (Greek Philosopher)	Hadrian (Roman Emperor)
Richard the Lion Hearted (king)	Leonardo da Vinci (Italian Artist)
Francis Bacon (English Statesman)	Christopher Marlow (English writer)
Lord Byron (English poet)	Hans Christian Anderson (author)
Herman Melville (US author)	Walt Whitman (US poet)
Peter Tchaikovsky (composer)	Oscar Wilde (English playwright)
Willa Cather (US author)	Amy Lowell (US author)
Gertrude Stein (US author)	Alice B. Toklas (US author)
John Maynard Keynes (Economist)	Tennessee Williams (playwright)
E.M Forster (English author)	Bessie Smith (US singer)
Charles Laughton (English actor)	Cole Porter (US composer)
Virginia Woolf (English Author)	James Baldwin (US actor)
Yukio Mishima (Japanese Author)	Rock Hudson (actor)
Edward Albee Playwright	Alan Turning (scientist)
Andy Warhol (Artist)	Freddie Mercury (Singer)
Bayard Rustin (civil rights activist)	Janice Joplin (musician)
Liberance (Pianist)	Margret Mead (anthropologist)
Harvey Milk (City councillor SF)	J. Edgar Hoover (FBI director)
Keith Haring (Artist)	Michelangelo (Italian Artist)

LGBTQ Athletes/ Authors and Activists

Martina Navratilova – Tennis	Chaz Bono (Activist Chers Son)
Scott Brison – Nova Scotian politician	Christopher Rice – Anne rice son/author
Sheryl Swoopes – WNBA	Gareth Thomas – Rugby
Glenn Burke - Baseball	David Levithan – Author
Greg Louganis - American Diver	Oscar Wilde – Author
Mark Tewkesbury – Swimmer	Dan Savage – Author/Blogger
John Amaechi – Basketball	Brendan Burke – Hockey

Statistics

This study was funded by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust, the University of Winnipeg, and SVR/CIHR This study Involved surveying almost 1700 LGBTQ and heterosexual students from across Canada.

Key Findings

Unsafe spaces

- ▽ Three-quarters of LGBTQ students feel unsafe in at least one place at school, such as change rooms, washrooms, and hallways.
- ▽ Half of straight students agree that at least one part of their school is unsafe for LGBTQ students.
- ▽ 87% of Transgender students see these places as unsafe.
- ▽ LGBTQ students see more places as unsafe for LGBTQ people than do straight students, and transgender students most of all (4, 2, and 5 unsafe spaces, respectively).

Homophobic Comments

- ▽ Three-quarters of all participating students reported hearing expressions such as “that’s so gay” every day in school.
- ▽ Half heard remarks like “faggot”, “queer”, “lezbo”, and “dyke” daily. Over half of LGBTQ students, compared to a third of non-LGBTQ reported hearing such remarks daily.
- ▽ LGBTQ students were significantly more likely than non-LGBTQ to notice comments about boy’s not acting masculine enough or girl’s not acting feminine enough every day.
- ▽ A third of transgender participants heard derogatory comments daily about boys not being masculine enough, compared to a quarter of LGB students. Transgender students were more than twice as likely as LGB students to report hearing comments about girls not being feminine enough.

- ▽ LGBTQ students were more likely than non-LGBTQ individuals to report that staff never intervened when homophobic comments were made.
- ▽ Half of transgender students reported that staff never intervened when homophobic comments were made compared to 34.1% of LGB respondents.
- ▽ Current students were even more likely than past students to hear expressions like “that’s so gay” in school.
- ▽ Current students were also more likely than past students to hear homophobic comments from other students every day.
- ▽ One sign of progress: Current students were significantly less likely than past students to report that school staff never intervened.

Victimization

- ▽ Six out of ten LGBTQ students reported being verbally harassed about their sexual orientation.
- ▽ Nine out of ten transgender students, six out of ten LGB students, and three out of ten straight students were verbally harassed because of their expression of gender.
- ▽ One in four LGB students had been physically harassed about their sexual orientation.
- ▽ Almost two in five transgender students and one in five LGB reported being physically harassed due to their expression of gender.
- ▽ Two-thirds of LGBTQ students and just under half of non-LGBTQ have seen homophobic graffiti at school. One in seven LGBTQ students had been named in the graffiti.
- ▽ Over half the LGBTQ students had rumours or lies spread about their sexual orientation at school, compared to one in ten non-LGBTQ.
- ▽ One third of LGBTQ participants reported harassment through text-messaging or on the internet.

Impacts

- ▽ Three-quarters of LGBTQ students and 95% of transgender students felt unsafe at school, compared to one-fifth of straight students.
- ▽ Over a quarter of LGBTQ students and almost half of transgender students had skipped school because they felt unsafe, compared to less than a tenth of non-LGBTQ.
- ▽ Many LGBTQ students would not be comfortable talking to their teachers (four in ten), their principal (six in ten), or their coach (seven in ten) about LGBTQ issues.
- ▽ Only one in five LGBTQ students could talk to a parent very comfortably about LGBTQ issues. Three-quarters could talk to a close friend.
- ▽ Over half of LGBTQ students did not feel accepted at school, and almost half felt they could not be themselves, compared to one-fifth of straight students.

- ▽ Transgender students (over a third) were twice as likely as LGB students to strongly agree that they sometimes feel very depressed about their school that they do not belong there, and four times as likely as straight students.

Institutional Responses

- ▽ Fewer than half of participants knew whether their school had a policy for reporting homophobic incidents. Of those, only one-third believed there was such a policy.

LGBTQ students who believed their schools have anti-homophobia policies were much more likely than other LGBTQ students...

- ▽ to feel their school community was supportive (one half compared to fewer than one-fifth),
- ▽ to feel comfortable talking to a counsellor (one half compared to fewer than one-third), and to feel comfortable talking to classmates (over a third compared to one-fifth),
- ▽ to believe their school was becoming less homophobic,
- ▽ to hear fewer homophobic comments and to say staff intervene more often,
- ▽ to report homophobic incidents to staff and their parents, and
- ▽ to feel attached to their school.

LGBTQ students who believed their schools have anti-homophobia policies were much less likely than other LGBTQ students...

- ▽ to have had lies and rumours spread about them at school or on the Internet,
- ▽ to have had property stolen or damaged,
- ▽ to feel unsafe at school, and
- ▽ to have been verbally or physically harassed.
- ▽ The results were similar for students who believed that their school districts had such policies.

The survey itself was a fifty-four item questionnaire made available online and in print, and consisting mostly of multiple-choice questions of three kinds: demographic (e.g., age, province, gender and sexual identity), experiences (e.g., hearing gay used as insult, being verbally harassed), and institutional responses (e.g., staff intervention, inclusive safe-school policies). Quantitative data were tested for statistical significance through bivariate analysis that compared the responses of various groups of students (e.g., LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ, LGB and transgender, current versus past)

Bibliography

- ▽ This Gay Straight Alliance Manual is a compiled/written resource by: *Aaron Stevens* (2011)
- ▽ Websites which information was compiled and/or adapted from:
 - *gsanetwork.org*
 - *www.glsen.org*
 - *youthproject.ns.ca*
- ▽ Movie Descriptions Courtesy of:
 - Internet Movie Database *www.imdb.com*
- ▽ Book Descriptions Courtesy of:
 - Google Books *www.books.google.ca*
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