

How to Start a Gay-Straight Alliance

What is it?

A Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) is a student-run club organized to end anti-gay bias and homophobia in schools and to provide a safe place for students to discuss issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Below is a simple checklist that can aid you in starting your school's first GSA.

Look in your Student Handbook to establish a GSA the same way you would establish any other extra-curricular group or club.

- Find a faculty member to act as the GSA advisor.
- Find an administrator who will serve as a go-between with other teachers, parent groups, and the school board. If administrators are resistant to your idea, make them aware that forming a GSA is protected under the Federal Equal Access Act.
- Announce the new GSA through the school bulletin, flyers and word-of-mouth.
- Contact organizations in support of Gay-Straight Alliances to help your school's GSA set goals, brainstorm activities and develop an action plan. Some helpful links include <http://www.hrw.org>, <http://www.lambda.org>, <http://www.studentprideUSA.org>, <http://www.gsanetwork.org>, <http://www.youth.org>, <http://www.nyacyouth.org>, <http://www.elight.org>.
- Sponsor events like guest speakers, gay theme films, library displays or even organize your own Pride Week that offers panel discussions, educational workshops, and a coming-out fest.
- Contact other schools' GSAs to learn about their sponsored activities. Collaborate with them to form a support network of Gay-Straight Alliances, and work together to brainstorm new ideas to end homophobia and maintain a safe space for the discussion of sexual orientation for ALL students.
- **Don't give up or get discouraged!!!** It may be difficult so be prepared for a possible backlash and try to use it productively to create a safer school environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) students and their heterosexual allies.