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## **LET'S CELEBRATE!**

**Gay-Straight Alliances have been forming in schools and colleges across America, bringing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight allied people together to stop bullying, homophobia, transphobia and hate.**

**Now, its time to celebrate their work!**

For decades, GSAs have been working to make their campuses safe places for all students regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Students who start and take part in these student groups are brave. They dare to create a dialogue to improve lives. We believe that courage deserves to be recognized and celebrated.

Please join us as we celebrate the second-ever National Gay Straight Alliance Day!

# ORGANIZING MANUAL

## *First things first...Develop an Organizing Outline:*

### **Sign-Up & Get Connected**

Go to [gsaday.org](http://gsaday.org) and sign-up so you can receive information and updates on this national day of celebration! You can also add your group or organization to our directory by visiting: [gsaday.org/adddirectory/](http://gsaday.org/adddirectory/) which can help you connect with others making your celebration even more fun!

### **Reaching Out & Finding Support**

Planning your National GSA Day celebration will be easier, more effective, and more rewarding if you are working as part of a team. Reach out to others in your school, organization, business, or community to start building a team. If your school has a GSA, or if your organization or business has a department devoted to diversity or LGBTQ issues, try to coordinate with this group.

### **Getting Permission**

Getting permission to hold your celebration activities in your school or workplace is crucial. Talk to teachers, administrators, or supervisors well ahead of time to see if you have administrative and institutional support. For information on how to deal with unsupportive administrators, see “Addressing Resistance”

### **Setting Goals**

When planning your activities for National GSA Day, remember to set viable goals for what you want to accomplish. How many people do you want to reach? What message(s) do you want to emphasize? What change do you want to create in your community?



### **Brainstorming**

With your team, think of as many possible activities and approaches as possible that could help you achieve your goals. Be as creative as you can, but work within your means—keep in mind the amount of time, energy, resources, and risk you are willing or able to put toward planning and executing your activities. (See the Activity Guide for ideas. Pgs. 5-15)

## **Action Plan!**

Once you have as many ideas as possible, evaluate and combine them into a plan of action: What will you do, how, and what will you need to make it happen? Divide tasks among members of your team, and remember to make a timeline for your preparations and stick to it.

## **Be Safe**

Remember that the safety of you and your team is the most important thing to consider. National GSA Day is meant to celebrate the ways GSAs help keep students safe, not to put anyone in harm's way. If your school or work environment is hostile toward LGBTQ issues, keep this in mind in your plans, and be sure to report any harassment or administrative hostility. (See "Addressing Resistance: Reporting Problems" and "Know Your Rights." See pgs. 15 and 23)

## **Share Your Story**

A goal of National GSA Day is to raise awareness about the positive impact GSAs can have on students' lives. Share your experiences (positive and negative), ideas, successes, and challenges: Join the GSA Day Video Campaign (see the Activity Guide), talk and reflect with friends and family, spread the word about GSA Day on Facebook, Twitter, or your blog, or send us an e-mail letting us know how your activities went!

# Activity Guide: How to Participate

## All Adults

Everyone knows or is related to someone who identifies as LGBT or as a straight ally. It could be a sibling, a parent, friend, son or daughter. Regardless of whether you are celebrating this day in support of them, or because you yourself are LGBT, you, as an adult, have an important role to play in this national celebration!

### BE VISIBLE

Let people know why you love and appreciate your GSA and how they can be involved!

- One of the most important things you can do to support GSA Day is to be visible. Young people need to know that there are LGBT and allied adults who support their work in creating safe schools. Friends, family members and co-workers need to know that you value the bond between LGBT people and straight allies.
- Does your company have an LGBT employee resource group? If so, have the group plan a party and make sure that people know it exists
- Have a conversation with friend about the day and tell them why you are involved.
- **Order t-shirts!**
- Make fliers and hand them out at lunch
- Have a panel discussion and invite local high school and college GSA members to participate

### SHOW APPRECIATION

- Do you know a student who is in a GSA? Do you know about a fantastic GSA advisor? Do you have supportive teachers, administrators or community members? Let them know by giving them a card or thank-you note—or even a message on Facebook or email
- Show appreciation for local, state and national organizations that are supporting GSAs by donating to them, whether it be your time, talent or treasure

### ORDER T-SHIRTS

Order a National GSA Day! Specifically designed without a date, proudly wear your shirt year after year to visibly celebrate the day. Check out the **GSA Day website** for more information on ordering t-shirts!

### JOIN THE GSA DAY VIDEO CAMPAIGN

Tell the world about how important it is for LGBT and allied people to come together to fight homophobia, transphobia, bigotry and hate. Mentioning that you're a parent or family member, teacher, counselor, school or

college administrator or school board member will be powerful and you can be as creative or simple as you want! Check out the GSA Day website for more information on the video campaign!

### **CELEBRATE!**

In the midst of planning for this amazing day, don't forget to have fun and really celebrate! You are part of a social justice movement that is laying the groundwork for equality and respect of all people while eliminating racism, homophobia, sexism and hate.

## **Parents & Families**

Parents and families play a huge role in the lives of young people. Supporting them and their efforts to reduce hate and violence in schools should be applauded. In addition to all the things adults can do, none is more important than supporting your young person's efforts in celebrating this day. Additionally:

- Letting your young person know that you are an ally (or LGBT!)
- Telling them how proud you are of them and their work
- Helping (as needed) to plan the day
- Asking them how the day went and reflecting with them
- Providing support for your young person if they are trying to start a GSA and face resistance from their school or college
- Getting educated on LGBT issues and the importance of GSAs
- Advocating for GSAs with other parents, families and schools

## **Teachers & Counselors**

As the people who work most closely with students on a daily basis, your input, feedback and support will be crucial to students who are planning a day of celebration or trying to use this day as a way to begin forming a GSA. In addition to all the things adults can do, none is more important than supporting student's efforts in celebrating this day. Additionally:

- Getting educated on LGBT issues and the importance of GSAs
- Providing support for your students if they are trying to start a GSA and face resistance from their school or college administration (*which can include connecting students to local, state and national organizations that help students create GSAs*)
- Letting students know that you are an ally (or LGBT!)
- Advocating for GSAs with other teachers and counselors
- Telling students how proud you are of them and their work to create safe schools and helping (as needed) to plan the day

## **Administrators**

School and college administrators and school boards set the tone. Supporting GSAs in your district and at your college can make these institutions safer, more

welcoming places for ALL students. In addition to all the things adults can do, none is more important than supporting student efforts in celebrating this day. Additionally:

- Getting educated on LGBT issues and the importance of GSAs
- Serving as an advocate for students if they are trying to start a GSA and are facing resistance from other school/college administrators or school board members (*which can include connecting students to local, state and national organizations that help students create GSAs*)
- *If you are a school administrator or school board member, learning about the legal rights GSAs have in public schools*
- Letting students know that you are an ally (or LGBT!)
- Advocating for GSAs with other administrators and school board members and making clear to school officials that you encourage their formation
- Telling students how proud you are of them and their work to create safe schools

## **Nonprofit Organizations**

Non-profits that link GSAs, help LGBT youth or are allies of the LGBT community play an important role in GSA Day celebrations! The following information will help you celebrate and make an impact on this important day!

### **BE VISIBLE**

The main goal of GSA Day is celebrate GSAs and connect those who want to start a group with local, state or national organizations that can help. By taking part in this national celebration you are increasing your visibility and reach. In addition to signing on as a supporting organization, here some other important ways to be visible:

- Request a proclamation from your Governor declaring your organization and state's participation in this national event
- Make sure that people know why your organization believes GSAs are important and how you support them through a press release and/or a press conference
- Promote the event on all your social networking sites (Facebook, twitter, etc.)
- Have a panel discussion or a series of town hall meetings throughout the state detailing the importance of GSAs and their benefits to schools

### **SHOW APPRECIATION**

Letting people and other organizations know how much you appreciate them is an important part of celebrating GSA Day. Some ideas on how you can show your appreciation:

- If you send out a press release, be sure to include a thank you to all organizations who support your work
- Sending out a thank you card to donors who fund your work or hosting a get together of major donors and GSAs so they can see the impact their dollars have in organizing GSAs
- Sending thank you cards to all the GSAs in the state and letting them know how much you appreciate their work

### **GET ORGANIZED**

If you're a non-profit organization, and one that particularly focuses on organizing GSAs and helping LGBT students, GSA Day is a time to look inward to determine how well you are connecting with these important student organizations. If you are a non-profit whose sole focus is not GSAs or LGBT students, this is the time to consider how you can better assist their pioneering efforts. Some ideas include:

- Determining what kind of resources you provide GSAs and LGBT students
- Are GSAs and LGBT students more connected because of your efforts?
- How will you utilize GSA Day to further your organizing efforts?
- How many GSAs are in your state—and how many should there be and how do you get there?
- What are your next year's goals for reaching out to LGBT students?
- Develop a strong coalition of support from historically oppressed groups and work together on common issues
- How are you tracking and documenting GSAs in your state, community or region?
- How are students involved in your organization?

### **ORDER T-SHIRTS**

Order a National GSA Day! Specifically designed without a date, proudly wear your shirt year after year to visibly celebrate the day. Check out the [GSA Day website](http://www.gsaday.org) for more information on ordering t-shirts!

### **JOIN THE GSA DAY VIDEO CAMPAIGN**

Tell the world about how important GSAs are and what your organization is doing to help LGBT and allied people to come together to fight homophobia, transphobia, bigotry and hate—you can be as creative or simple as you want! Check out the GSA Day website for more information on the video campaign!

### **CELEBRATE!**

In the midst of planning for this amazing day, don't forget to have fun and really celebrate! You and your friends are part of a growing social justice movement that is laying the groundwork for equality and respect of all

people while eliminating racism, homophobia, sexism and hate. A few ideas:

- Host a GSA Day Kick-Off party the night before at a supportive coffee house or venue
- Invite the Governor or Lt. Governor to come and present a proclamation at the kick-off party
- Send GSA Day gift baskets to GSAs in your area or around your state
- Host a dance
- Host a poetry night or art night in which everyone shares, through poetry or art, what their GSA means to them

## **Businesses**

Businesses that show their support for LGBT people and their allies are making communities safer, stronger and better places to live and grow. Learn more about how your business can show support for equality and safe schools!

### **BE VISIBLE**

By taking part in this national celebration, your business is showing it cares about LGBT students and the bond between LGBT people and straight allies. In addition to signing on as a supporting business, here some other important ways to be visible:

- Encourage your Governor to issue a proclamation to recognize your state's participation in this national event
- Make sure that people know why your business believes GSAs, school safety and equality are important via a press release and/or a press conference (*could be held jointly with a local/state LGBT organization and/or local high school or college GSA*)
- Promote the event on all your social networking sites (*Facebook, twitter, etc.*)
- Encourage employees to take part in GSA Day
- If your company has an LGBT employee resource group, have them plan a party and make sure that people know it exists

### **SHOW APPRECIATION**

Letting GSAs and non-profits who work with GSAs and LGBT students know how much you appreciate them is an important part of celebrating GSA Day. Show appreciation for local, state and national organizations that are supporting GSAs by donating to them, whether it be your time, talent or treasure.

### **JOIN THE GSA DAY VIDEO CAMPAIGN**

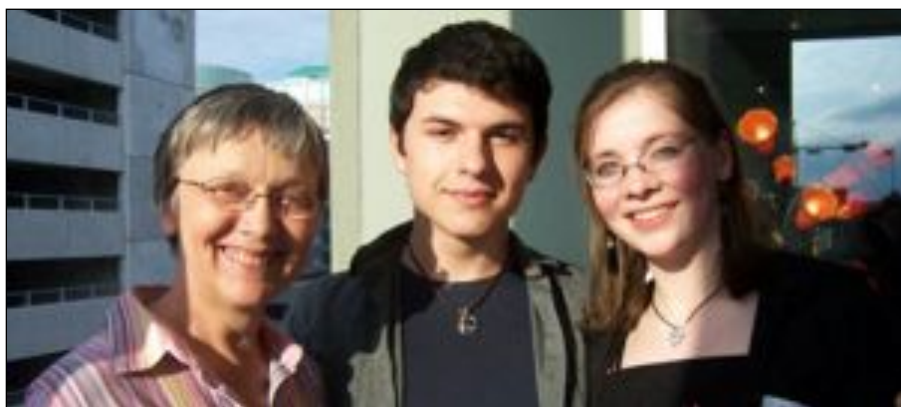
Tell the world about how important it is for LGBT and allied people to come together to fight homophobia, transphobia, bigotry and hate. Talking about

it as a member of the business will stand out and be powerful. You can be as creative as you want! Check out the GSA Day website for more information on the video campaign!

### **CELEBRATE!**

In the midst of planning for this amazing day, don't forget to have fun and really celebrate! You and your friends are part of a growing social justice movement that is laying the groundwork for equality and respect of all people while eliminating racism, homophobia, sexism and hate. A few ideas:

- Attend or sponsor a GSA Day Kick-Off party with a local or state non-profit the night before at a supportive coffee house or venue
- Encourage the Governor or Lt. Governor to come and present a proclamation at the kick-off party



## **Things to Remember Before, During & After:**

### **BEFORE**

- ✓ Sign-Up & Get Connected!
- ✓ Get information & resources
- ✓ Get support & permission
- ✓ Make connections & build a team
- ✓ Set goals
- ✓ Brainstorm
- ✓ Make decisions
- ✓ Form an action plan with a timeline
- ✓ Delegate responsibilities
- ✓ Spread the word
- ✓ Educate
- ✓ Get community support
- ✓ Show appreciation for supporters

### **DURING**

- ✓ Stay safe & know your rights
- ✓ Be visible
- ✓ Be respectful, positive, & informative

### **AFTER**

- ✓ Evaluate & reflect
- ✓ Plan for the future
- ✓ Stay visible
- ✓ Stay connected
- ✓ Share your story

## Throwing a Kick-Off Party!

### Why:

Throwing a GSA Day Kick-Off party is a great way to get attention, generate interest and enthusiasm in your group and your community, and even fundraise.

### Who:

Invite members of your school's GSA and/or those of nearby schools, representatives from supportive organizations and businesses, LGBTQ and allied individuals and families from your community, and supportive teachers, administrators, and public servants.

### When:

The night before the big day! (Or, if that is not feasible, the weekend prior.)

### Where:

Find a venue that is convenient, affordable, friendly and supportive—a coffee shop, business or organization's office, school facility, park, private home, etc.

### What:

Whatever suits your goals and your budget! Serve food (potluck?); sell t-shirts, buttons, or stickers; dance (to the music of LGBTQ & supportive artists?), play games (LGBTQ trivia?), make connections, build networks, and even plan for the future and brainstorm for next year's event.



# Addressing Resistance

## Attitude

Having a positive attitude is so important when dealing with people who are hostile toward your cause or may doubt your integrity. Remember to present an open-minded and flexible position when faced with faculty, administrators, or community members who do not support your cause. Practicing sincerity, maturity, passion, patience, and a willingness to educate and negotiate will not only make people more willing to work with you, but will also help you shape your argument and communication styles for discussing controversial issues in the future. If all else fails, remember that there are many possible ways to celebrate GSA Day and you may have to change your plans if you do not feel safe.

## Communication Strategies

There are several ways to approach an unsupportive administration:

- **Send them a letter** with information about National GSA Day, your plans for the event, and supportive people and groups in your community. Be sure to indicate a willingness to discuss the issue further and to compromise, and thank them for their time and understanding (see “Sample Letter to the Administrator” pg. 18).
- **Request a meeting** with appropriate staff and administrators. Include supportive faculty, students, and community members. Stay calm, listen to their concerns, do your best to answer questions (see “FAQs” pgs. 15-17), and make reasonable compromises if their concerns are valid.
- Remember to **stay calm and respectful**, and **know your rights and facts!**

## Reporting Problems

Research (and use if necessary) your school’s reporting procedures for harassment and discrimination, and know the national and state laws that protect you (see “Know Your Rights”). If you encounter consistent discrimination from your school administration, contact a local, state, or national LGBTQ organization, such as the ACLU or Lambda Legal, for support (see “Resources” pg. 26).

# TOOLKIT

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Knowing how to answer these questions clearly and concisely will help you spread the word and confront opposition to your event.

### What is a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA)?

A gay-straight alliance (GSA) can be defined as a youth-led, school- or community-based group that provides a safe, welcoming, and affirming physical and emotional space for LGBT students, as well as those who are perceived as LGBT, those who are questioning their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, children from LGBT families, and heterosexual students who want to be allies of their LGBT peers.

The inclusion of straight youth in the group mission and sponsored activities of GSAs is an important distinguishing factor from early support groups for LGBT teens, and recognizes the need for a comprehensive approach to youth safety. This strategy assists LGBT youth in building a diverse network of support, teaches heterosexual youth how to be effective allies to their LGBT peers, and teaches all youth about the effects of discrimination and prejudice. GSA participation also seems to shield youth from the negative influence of verbal and physical violence, alienation, and other forms of oppression based in homophobia and heterosexism.

### How many GSAs exist in the US?

Today there are 3,000+ GSAs around the country<sup>1</sup> although the exact number is hard to determine as not all GSAs register with state or national organizations, such as GLSEN or the National Association of GSA Networks.

### What is National GSA Day?

GSA Day is a time to strengthen the bond between LGBT people and straight allies and in particular recognize and honor student organizations called Gay-Straight Alliances (also known as a GSA). These student led groups work to educate their peers to stop homophobia, transphobia and violence in schools and colleges throughout the country. The day is coordinated and sponsored nationally by Iowa Pride Network (IPN). National GSA Day will be held on February 6, 2013.

This national event serves as a “day of action” for these student groups who employ creative ways to: Be visible; Honor those who have shown dedication in ensuring all students feel safe and supported; and, Prepare for the future. Ultimately, National GSA Day lets lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/news/record/1970.html>

straight allied (LGBTQA) students know that they aren't alone and that their work in creating safe learning environments is important to our schools, our communities and our country.

### **What are the specific goals of National GSA Day?**

The specific goals are to:

- Honor GSAs across America that work to end violence, homophobia, transphobia, and hate in schools and colleges.
- Honor students, teachers and community members that have shown dedication for keeping all students safe, and insuring a quality education for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Raise awareness of the need for GSAs in schools and colleges and how they are a proven, effective tool in combating hostile and unsafe learning environments for all students.
- Encourage GSAs to think about their future and ensure they are sustained
- Help educate students on how to create a GSA, encourage GSAs to network with each other and connect supporters to organizations that work to support GSA organizing
- Increase the visibility of the important bond between LGBT people and their straight friends and family.

### **Who started National GSA Day?**

National GSA Day first began as a statewide Iowa Pride Network event in Iowa in 2006. Then Governor Tom Vilsack declared October 25, 2006, "Iowa Gay-Straight Alliance Day" in honor of the gay-straight alliances (GSAs) around the state that work to end violence and homophobia in Iowa schools and colleges.

For six years, Iowa Pride Network has held "Iowa Gay-Straight Alliance Day" to celebrate student-led groups in high schools and colleges (there are now even some in middle schools) that are working to stop homophobia, transphobia, bullying and hate. Over the years, more and more states have been asking us about how they, too, can host a day to celebrate these courageous groups. At Iowa Pride Network, we wanted to assist other states who wanted to do a similar event—so with this in mind, we launched National Gay-Straight Alliance Day!

### **When is National GSA Day?**

The second National Gay-Straight Alliance Day will be held on Wednesday, February 6, 2013.

### **Why is the event in February?**

The event is designed to serve as a mid-year energizer. Most students are coming back from winter vacations. The winter months can sometimes be dreary. This is one way to keep students energized leading into second semester.

### **Where do National GSA Day events take place?**

For the most part, GSA Day events will take place on middle school, high school and college campuses. However, showing your support and being visible about your commitment to an alliance of LGBT and straight allied people in word or deed is an event in itself and should be celebrated! For example, straight people telling their co-workers they support LGBT equality or LGBT people thanking their straight friends for supporting them over a cup of coffee—all are examples of how and when events can take place!

### **Why do we need National GSA Day?**

Violence and discrimination against LGBT students is the rule—not the exception in American schools. It is a national disgrace that students feel threatened in school simply because of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. While Americans need to know that thousands of students each day go to school or college and endure anti-LGBT violence and harassment, they must also know that GSAs are a tool in helping end violence and that these student groups save lives. See “Arne Duncan Letter” (pgs. 23-24) and “GLSEN GSA Research Brief” (pgs. 24-27).

### **How Can I or my GSA participate?**

There are many ways for organizations and businesses to get involved! (See Organizing Manual pgs. 3-15.) However, we do ask that all students, schools and colleges register on our website.

### **Why does my GSA or I have to Sign-Up in order to participate?**

Signing-up allows sponsors to measure how successful National GSA Day is and helps us plan for the future. You'll also be asked to take part in a voluntary survey to provide us with feedback on how you think the day went. You and/or your GSAs opinions will help determine the direction of this national celebration!

### **What things can I do to create an effective event?**

Coordinate with other individuals or groups in your area to create a plan that suits your circumstances. There are countless ways to be visible and celebrate GSAs. (See the Activity Guide for ideas and strategies. pg. 18)

## PRESS KIT

### Media/Promotional Timeline

|                      |                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ASAP                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Make video</li><li>– Promote event on Facebook, Twitter, website, etc.</li></ul>    |
| 2 months until event | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Promote event on Facebook, Twitter, website, etc.</li></ul>                         |
| 1 month until event  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Promote event on Facebook, Twitter, website, etc.</li><li>– Press release</li></ul> |
| 1 week until event   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Promote event on Facebook, Twitter, website, etc.</li><li>– Press release</li></ul> |
| Day before event     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Kickoff party and/or press conference</li></ul>                                     |

### Join the GSA Day Video Campaign

Tell the world how important GSAs are and what your organization is doing to help LGBT and allied people come together to fight homophobia, transphobia, bigotry, and hate—you can be as creative or simple as you want! We will then post these on the homepage—where people will be able to see your organization's commitment!

### Blog, Post, and Tweet about GSA Day

Help spread the word by blogging about the event, posting it on your Facebook page, and tweeting about your plans using #gsaday. Highlight your involvement on your website and encourage people to sign-up using the National GSA Day logo!

### Hold a Press Conference and/or Throw a GSA Day Kick-Off Party

One of the best ways to celebrate is to throw a party! Invite GSAs from the area to come to an LGBT friendly coffee house or other venue, such as your organization's headquarters. Get cake and balloons donated and invite the press to attend. You could even hold your press conference at the party and have students speak as to why they are so proud of their GSAs and why their work to end bullying should be celebrated!

## Obtaining a Proclamation from Your Governor

Getting the governor of your state to make a proclamation in support of National GSA Day will send a strong message that your state government values the safety of all students and recognizes the work that GSAs do to make schools safe and accepting. Start early—request a proclamation at least two months in advance.

### *Sample Letter to the Governor*

[DATE]

Dear Governor [NAME],

I am writing to ask that you consider making a proclamation expressing your support for [YOUR STATE] students' participation in National Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Day.

GSA Day is a time to strengthen the bond between LGBT people and straight allies and in particular recognize and honor student organizations called Gay-Straight Alliances. These student-led groups work to educate their peers to stop homophobia, transphobia, and violence in schools and colleges throughout the country. This day will serve as a "day of action" for these student groups to employ creative ways to be visible, honor those who have shown dedication in ensuring all students feel safe and supported, and prepare for the future. On February 6, 2013, students will be [DESCRIBE PLANNED ACTIVITY/EVENT].

GSA Day in [YOUR STATE] is particularly relevant because [BRIEF EXPLANATION]. We hope that you will join the following groups in supporting the event: [NAMES OF OTHER SUPPORTING CLUBS OR ORGANIZATIONS]. GSA Day is an opportunity for students to take the initiative to let lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight allied (LGBTQA) students know that they aren't alone and that their work in creating safe learning environments is important to our schools, our communities and our country. While participating in this event, students will gain [POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF PARTICIPATION]. For additional information about GSA Day, please contact me or visit **gsaday.org**.

I look forward to hearing from your office in the near future.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

[SPONSORING CLUB/ORGANIZATION]

[YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION]

## Obtaining a Proclamation from Your Governor

Having language for the Governor's office to use can help speed up the process and help staff have a better understanding of what you're looking for.

### *Sample Proclamation*

## NATIONAL GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE DAY PROCLAMATION

- Whereas,** [Your organization] was founded in [Year you were founded] to help [Your state]'s lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) high school and college students build successful futures; and
- Whereas,** The foundation of any successful future is a quality education; and
- Whereas,** A healthy, safe and affirming learning environment is often out of reach for many of [Your state]'s LGBT students as they face hostility and unsafe environments daily; and
- Whereas,** This hostile learning environment has a direct impact on [Your state] LGBT students' ability to learn their academic performance as they pursue their educational aspirations; and
- Whereas,** All students should have access to a safe and accepting learning environment, including those that are or are perceived to be LGBT; and
- Whereas,** Gay-Straight Alliances, student run organizations that seek to end violence, harassment, discrimination and isolation of LGBT and Allied students are an effective way to work to keep schools safe and increase the academic performance of LGBT students; and
- Whereas,** [Your state] has over [Enter the number of how many GSAs your state has] Gay-Straight Alliances in [Your state]'s high schools and colleges, that have helped provide resources and support and have provided a voice for thousands of LGBT students throughout [Your state]:

Now, Therefore, I [Governor's Name], Governor of the State of [Your state], Do Hereby Proclaim Wednesday, February 6th, As [Your state]'s day to recognize

### NATIONAL GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE DAY

in honor of the students, teachers, community members and organizations in [Your state] who have shown their dedication for keeping all students safe, and insuring a quality education for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

## Getting Publicity

It is important that your community is aware that you are celebrating GSA Day and why. One of the goals of GSA Day is to draw attention to the great work done by GSAs and their role in creating safe schools. A great way to make people aware of the facts about GSAs and GSA Day (and increase participation in your celebration) is to generate press coverage by sending a press release to local media. You can also write an op-ed for your local newspaper about the importance of GSAs to create public interest.

## Sample Press Release

### *One Month Before Event*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
[DATE]

CONTACT:  
[NAME]  
[ORGANIZATION]  
[CONTACT INFORMATION]

### **[ORGANIZATION] PLANS CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE DAY**

[CITY, STATE] – [ORGANIZATION] will be [DESCRIBE PLANNED ACTIVITY/EVENT] in celebration of National Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Day on February 6, 2013. GSA Day will be a time to strengthen the bond between LGBT people and straight allies, and in particular recognize and honor student organizations called Gay-Straight Alliances. These student-led groups work to educate their peers to stop homophobia, transphobia, and violence in schools and colleges throughout the country. This day will serve as a “day of action” for these student groups and their supporters to employ creative ways to be visible, honor those who have shown dedication in ensuring all students feel safe and supported, and prepare for the future. [Include DATES, TIMES, & LOCATIONS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES].

GSA Day in [YOUR AREA] is particularly relevant because [BRIEF EXPLANATION]. [YOUR GROUP] will join the following groups in supporting and celebrating the event: [NAMES OF OTHER SUPPORTING CLUBS OR ORGANIZATIONS]. GSA Day is an opportunity for students, community members, and organizations to take the initiative to let lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight allied (LGBTQA) students know that they are not alone and that their work in creating safe learning environments is important to our schools, our communities and our country.

For additional information, visit **gsaday.org** or contact [YOUR NAME & CONTACT INFORMATION]

###

**Sample Press Release**  
**One Week Before Event**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
[DATE]

CONTACT:  
[NAME]  
[ORGANIZATION]  
[CONTACT INFORMATION]

**NATIONAL GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE DAY: FEBRUARY 6**

On February 6, 2013, LGBT & allied students, adults, and organizations across the country are encouraged to celebrate National Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Day. GSA Day will be a time to strengthen the bond between LGBT people and straight allies, and in particular recognize and honor student organizations called Gay-Straight Alliances. These student-led groups work to educate their peers to stop homophobia, transphobia, and violence in schools and colleges throughout the country. Sponsors of the event hope that this day will serve as a “day of action” for these student groups to employ creative ways to be visible, honor those who have shown dedication in ensuring all students feel safe and supported, and prepare for the future.

[INCLUDE ANY CURRENT EVENTS THAT HELP DEMONSTRATE RELEVANCE]

Recent studies have shown that the presence of an active GSA significantly reduces the incidence of bullying, harassment, use of homophobic language, and LGBT youth isolation and suicide in schools and colleges.

Support for National GSA Day has steadily grown since the event’s announcement in June. [#] organizations in [#] states have pledged their support for the event, and [#] GSAs in [#] states have registered their participation. Among the organizations joining [the Iowa Pride Network/your organization] in sponsoring National GSA Day are Campus Pride, the Make It Better Project, the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the National GSA Network and [OTHER ORGS]. [CELEBRITIES/POLITICIANS] have also publicly expressed their support.

GSA Day will be an opportunity for students and supportive community members and organizations to take the initiative to let lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight allied (LGBTQA) students know that they are not alone and that their work in creating safe learning environments is important to our schools, our communities and our country. Community members and organizations of all backgrounds are encouraged to organize and participate in local events for [FEBRUARY’S/NEXT WEEK’S/NEXT MONTH’S] celebration.

# # #

## Talking Points

A GSA student organization's purpose is to create safer learning environments for all students. GSAs are important in reducing violence and homophobia in our schools, colleges and communities. As statistics above show, GSAs are clearly needed now more than ever:

- More than 85% verbally harassed, but with GSA, 10-25% less likely
- Almost 20% physically assaulted, but with GSA 23% less likely
- 30% miss at least one day because they feel unsafe, but with GSA 15-23% less likely

Goals of GSA Day:

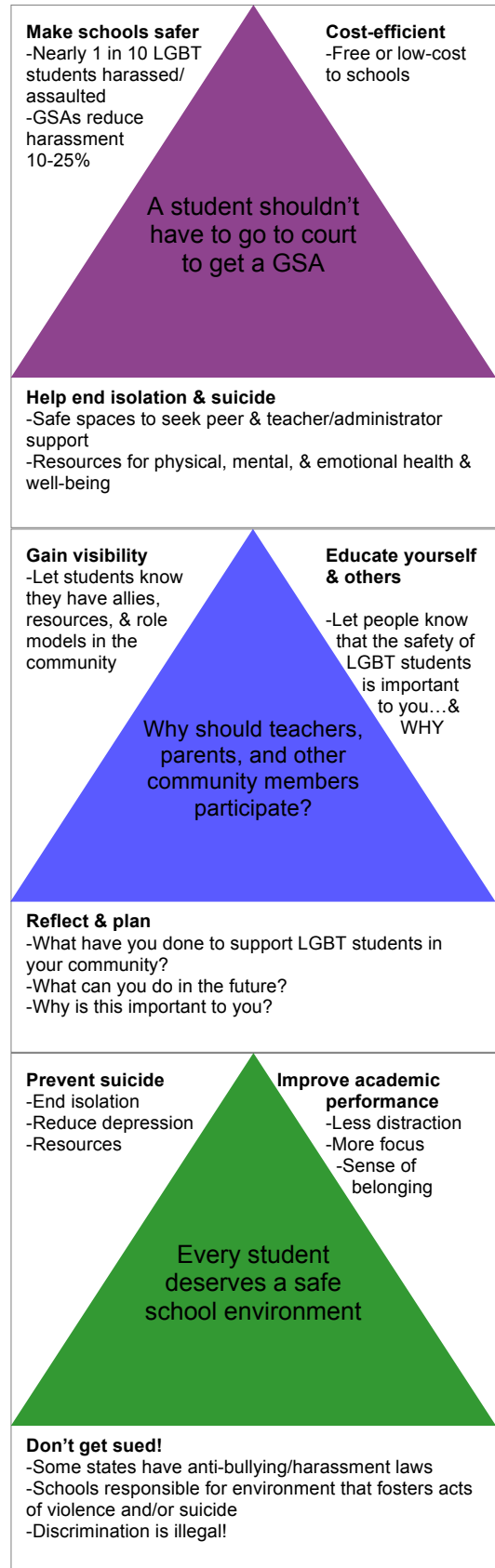
- Honor GSAs across America that work to end violence, homophobia, transphobia, and hate in schools and colleges.
- Honor supportive and proactive students, teachers and community members that have shown dedication for keeping all students safe, and insuring a quality education for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Raise awareness of the need for GSAs in schools and colleges and how they are a proven, effective tool in combating hostile and unsafe learning environments for all students.
- Encourage GSAs to think about their future and ensure they are sustained
- Help educate students on how to create a GSA, encourage GSAs to network with each other and connect supporters to organizations that work to support GSA organizing
- Increase the visibility of the important bond between LGBT people and their straight friends and family

Today there are 5,000+ GSAs around the country

*[any current events that demonstrate a need for better visibility for GSAs]*

On June 7, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan sent a "Dear Colleague" letter to public K-12 educators reminding them that under the Equal Access Act, GSAs in public schools have a right to exist and be treated equally to other student organizations.

# MEDIA TRIANGLES



# Support for GSAs

## Arne Duncan Letter

On June 14, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan sent a “Dear Colleague” letter to public K-12 and postsecondary educators reminding them that under the Equal Access Act, GSAs have a right to exist and be treated equally to other student organizations. [Click here](#) to view the entire letter.

Harassment and bullying are serious problems in our schools, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students are the targets of disproportionate shares of these problems ...

High levels of harassment and bullying correlate with poorer educational outcomes, lower future aspirations, frequent school absenteeism, and lower grade-point averages. Recent tragedies involving LGBT students and students perceived to be LGBT only underscore the need for safer schools.

Gay-straight alliances (GSAs) and similar student-initiated groups addressing LGBT issues can play an important role in promoting safer schools and creating more welcoming learning environments.

## GLSEN GSA Research Brief

The following is a summarization of a study conducted by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) analyzing the effectiveness of GSAs in enhancing student safety and creating a safe and accepting environment conducive to learning. [Click here](#) to view the entire brief.

LGBT students in schools with GSAs are less likely to hear biased language, such as homophobic remarks, are less likely to feel unsafe in school because of their sexual orientation and gender expression, and are less likely to miss days of school because they are afraid to go. In addition, GSAs may play an important role in helping students identify staff who may be supportive and to whom they can report any incidents of victimization. The presence of a GSA may offer evidence of a school’s commitment to LGBT students and their allies, creating a source of perceived support for students even if they are not actively engaged with the GSA themselves. The presence of GSAs may also help to improve the school experiences of LGBT students, by increasing access to education and having a positive impact on LGBT students’ academic achievement and aspirations.

School communities should support the formation of GSAs so that all students can learn and pursue an education in a positive and supportive school climate. It is also important to note that GSAs are only one part of what helps to make schools safer for LGBT students and their allies.

As part of a comprehensive safe schools initiative, GSAs can create positive changes in school climate that endure over time, outlasting changes in the student body, faculty or administration.

## National GSA Day Media

The first-ever National GSA Day on January 25, 2012 earned nationwide press coverage from prominent media outlets and LGBT organizations.

### *Let's Celebrate Gay-Straight Alliances!*

Huffington Post, Hayley Gorenburg

Gay-straight alliances are student-powered, school-based noncurricular groups associated with **healthier school environments, tolerance, and understanding**. GSAs are also associated with decreased harassment, which is associated with better school engagement and achievement.

Today, on the first National GSA Day, let's move beyond the requirements of a venerable old law. Let's establish, celebrate, and renew climates that respect all our youth and help keep them learning and flourishing in every school.

### *A Special Message on National Gay-Straight Alliance Day*

The White House, Gautam Raghavan

On the first-ever National Gay-Straight Alliance Day, I want to say thank you to all of the student leaders and faculty advisors who are doing the courageous work of making campuses safe places that are free of bullying and harassment.

This day is an opportunity to recognize the importance of Gay-Straight Alliances in schools across America. On behalf of President Obama, I want to thank you for your hard work, your leadership, and your courage. Your work makes a difference – so keep it up.

- Secretary of Education Arne Duncan video transcript

### *First National Gay-Straight Alliance Day Set for January 25*

GSA Network

"Through Gay-Straight Alliance clubs, student leaders across the country are making their schools and communities safer for all young people, and we're proud to see their courageous leadership nationally recognized," remarked Carolyn Laub, Executive Director of GSA Network.

### *LGBT And Ally Groups Observe National GSA Day*

GLAAD

"GSAs regularly demonstrate how students can transform their own school community based upon the principle of respect for difference. Even with the

documented benefits of having a GSA in school, some school districts have tried to prevent students from establishing these student clubs. Not only does the school send the wrong message to students, but it is also illegal as outlined under the Federal Equal Access Act."

### ***Celebrating National Gay Straight Alliance Day***

Think Progress, Jerome Hunt

LGBT Progress and ThinkProgress are glad to be among the partner organizations that are supporting this day and the work that GSAs are doing all across this nation. For decades, GSAs have been creating safe spaces for all students regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity and have **helped** make schools safer for LGBT students.

GSAs also foster a positive school environment and allowing LGBT to students identify supportive teachers, administrators, and staff, who can positively impact their academic achievements and school experiences.

### ***Franken Tells GSAs He Needs Votes for Anti-Discrimination Measure***

The Advocate, Nick Visser

"National GSA Day is a time to celebrate the contributions made by Gay Straight Alliance clubs all over the country," said Franken in a statement sent to The Advocate. "GSA clubs make schools safer and provide a supportive community for LGBT students, who are bullied far more frequently than other students."

### ***First National GSA Day to be held in Springfield***

The Rainbow Times

"GSA Day is a time to strengthen the bond between LGBT youth and their straight allies, and also honor these student organizations for what they accomplish," states LGBT Coalition Board Member and event coordinator Emily Scagel. "This day will let students know that they are not alone, and that their work is incredibly beneficial in creating safe environments in schools."

"In light of the many recent suicides in our area, this brave work deserves to be recognized and celebrated," Scagel continued. "This is a crucial step in ending the bullying that is brought about by homophobia and transphobia."

Lynne Conchieri, GSA advisor for the High School of Commerce, knows firsthand how positive an impact GSA clubs have on the students. "Our GSA offers our members unconditional acceptance, friendship, and support. This has created a safe community where all members feel valued and respected."

## ***On National GSA Day, Tell Congress to Stand Up for LGBT Students***

ACLU Washington Legislative Office, Ian S. Thompson

GSAs are student-run extracurricular clubs that bring together LGBT and straight students to support each other, promote acceptance and are common in public school districts throughout the nation. They are crucial to providing a safe, supportive environment for LGBT students to educate the school community about homophobia, gender identity and sexual orientation issues.

**National GSA Day** is also a powerful reminder of the challenges that continue to confront LGBT students nationwide.

## ***First National Gay-Straight Alliance Day Set for January 25, 2012***

GLSEN

“GLSEN is proud to work with the thousands of GSAs across the country, Iowa Pride Network and fellow National GSA Day partners to recognize the tremendous impact these student clubs have on creating safe and affirming learning environments for all students,” said GLSEN Executive Director Dr. Eliza Byard.

## **How Much Did We Do?**

In its inaugural year, National GSA Day experienced incredible support from organizations nationwide in advancing the celebration.

- Over 10,000 middle school, high school, and college students involved
- Over 100 middle school, high school, and college GSAs in 21 states participated
- 23 states received earned media surrounding National GSA Day and reported an increase in students expressing an interest in starting a GSA or sustaining existing student-run GSAs
- All partners tweeted, blogged, and used Facebook to talk about the day, increasing traffic to the gsaday.org website, Facebook, and Twitter pages
- U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, produced a two-minute video message thanking young people and schools for forming GSAs
  - The video was featured on the White House’s blog, on the GSA Day website, and in other media

## **National Partners**

The following nine national organizations sponsored National GSA Day:

### **Campus Pride**

Campus Pride represents the only national nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization for student leaders and campus groups working to create a safer college environment for LGBT students.

### **Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students.

### **Gay-Straight Alliance Network**

Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA Network) is a national youth leadership organization that empowers youth activists to fight homophobia and transphobia in schools by training student leaders and supporting student-led Gay-Straight Alliance clubs throughout the country.

### **Make it Better Project**

GSA Network launched the Make It Better Project to let students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and adult allies know that there are concrete actions they can take right now to make schools safer for all students.

### **The Matthew Shepard Foundation**

The Matthew Shepard Foundation was founded by Dennis and Judy Shepard in memory of their 21-year old son, Matthew, who was murdered in an anti-gay hate crime in Wyoming in October 1998.

### **The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)**

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) amplifies the voice of the LGBT community by empowering real people to share their stories, holding the media accountable for the words and images they present, and helping grassroots organizations communicate effectively.

### **Think Progress (Center for American Progress)**

LGBT Progress, housed at the Center for American Progress, works to expand LGBT legal, social, and economic equality through timely policy analysis, and rapid-response communications.

### **Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**

PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is the original ally organization. Made up of parents, families, friends, and straight allies uniting with LGBT people, PFLAG is committed to advancing equality through its mission of support, education and advocacy.

## **The Trevor Project**

The Trevor Project is here for young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning people to help whenever you or a friend might need to talk to someone, or if you are considering suicide. With lifesaving programs and information, The Trevor Project works every day to make the future better for all LGBTQ youth.

## **State Organizations**

The following 29 state organizations sponsored National GSA Day:

- **Arizona – Wingspan**
- **Arkansas – Northwest Arkansas Center for Equality & Center for Artistic Revolution**
- **California – GSA Network**
- **Colorado – One Colorado**
- **Connecticut – True Colors: Sexual Minority Youth and Family Services**
- **Georgia – Georgia Equality & Georgia Safe Schools Coalition**
- **Idaho – The Community Center**
- **Illinois – Equality Illinois**
- **Iowa – Iowa Pride Network & Eychaner Foundation**
- **Kentucky – Kentucky Equality Federation**
- **Louisiana – Metropolitan Community Church of Baton Rouge, Capital City Alliance, & Equality Louisiana**
- **Massachusetts – LGBT Coalition of Western Massachusetts**
- **Minnesota – OutFront Minnesota**
- **Missouri – Growing American Youth**
- **Nebraska – Rainbow Outreach Center**
- **New Mexico – New Mexico GSA Network**
- **Ohio – LGBT Community Center of Greater Cleveland & Kaleidoscope Youth Center**
- **Oregon – Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition & PFLAG Oregon State Council**
- **Pennsylvania – Mazzoni Center**
- **Rhode Island – Youth Pride, Inc.**
- **Washington – Washington State GSA Network & GLSEN Washington State**
- **Wisconsin – Gay-Straight Alliance For Safe Schools**

## **Corporate Organizations**

The following corporations sponsored National GSA Day:

- **Orbitz®**
- **The Principal Financial Group®**
- **USA Television Network®**
- **Bark Bark® (brand agency)**

# Resources

The following national organizations can provide you with ideas, information, and support in discussing LGBTQA issues, forming or improving your GSA, and dealing with discrimination and resistance. For local and state and national resources, visit [our website](#).

## **American Civil Liberties Union**

The ACLU is our nation's guardian of liberty, working daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and laws of the United States guarantee everyone in this country. <http://www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights/youth-schools>

## **Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. <http://www.glsen.org/>

## **Campus Pride**

Campus Pride represents the only national nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization for student leaders and campus groups working to create a safer college environment for LGBT students. The organization is a volunteer-driven network "for" and "by" student leaders. The primary objective of Campus Pride is to develop necessary resources, programs and services to support LGBT and ally students on college campuses across the United States.

<http://www.campuspride.org>

## **Lambda Legal Defense & Education**

Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work.

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/>