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Transitioning Leadership



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Passing the Torch of Leadership

As the school year comes to an end, many GSA leaders worry about what will happen to the GSA club once they are gone. It is important to create a strategy for passing the torch of leadership so that your GSA stays strong for future years. Your long-term goal is to keep your GSA active in the fight against homophobia and transphobia in schools. An effective student club needs strong leadership every year. So, regardless of your club's leadership structure (such as officers, senators, executive committee, etc.), you will have a short-term goal every year of finding a reliable and passionate group of individuals to lead the club. Then, you will need to develop a strategy that looks at the situation within your GSA club and at your school, and plan how to best train new leaders.

Identify Your Resources

What are your strengths? Your challenges? Who is currently involved? Is there a teacher who is continuing as an advisor from this year to next? How many graduating seniors currently lead the GSA? What about younger students in lower grades? Are students generally apathetic at your school about the GSA, or do you have a strong engaged base?

Identify Your Potential Leaders

Look around your GSA meetings. Think about the participants in your events this year, such as Day of Silence. Are there students who will be at school next year who are interested in a GSA leadership role? Maybe there are students in the GSA who would make great leaders, with some coaching and training, but they feel unsure or unaware of their own leadership potential. Remember that EVERY new member can potentially become a leader of your GSA!! Here are some steps for cultivating new leaders:

- Train new members in the rules, history and projects of your GSA.
- Spread out responsibility to all members throughout the school year, not just at the end.
- Take turns facilitating meetings so everyone knows what it feels like to be up front. This will prepare you for a possible leadership role next year!
- Specifically ask younger GSA members to facilitate meetings throughout the year.
- Network, Network, Network! Network with other organizations on and off campus.

Select Your New Leaders Early!

Many GSA clubs are adopting a new strategy of selecting their new leadership in the middle of each school year, rather than at the beginning. The advantage of holding elections at the beginning of Spring semester is that your new leaders can then be trained and mentored by your outgoing leaders. And when the new school year starts in the Fall, your new leaders are already trained and practiced at being leaders, so they can hit the ground running.

Train Your Leaders

Develop a mechanism for your outgoing leaders to train your incoming leaders. Here are some tips:

- Have summer outings to continue the GSA momentum and build connections between older students and younger students
- Have leadership trainings where all resources will be transferred (club constitution, summaries of past events, etc.).
- Invite all GSA leaders to participate in GSA Network events (Youth Council, Queer Youth Advocacy Day, etc.), so that everyone knows what's going on
- Newly elected or potential GSA officers can attend GSA Activist Camp during the summer and become ready to lead!
- Have GSA Network staff come do a training for your new leaders.

Make your own strategy chart to plan how your own GSA will transition your leadership.

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