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4 Year-Start Lessons from Activist Camp

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This summer over 60 youth activists convened in San Francisco and Los Angeles for three jam-packed days of anti-oppression organizing and skills building at GSA Network?s youth-led Activist Camps. From workshops to small group discussions to simulations of school board meetings, youth activists learned cool new strategies, made awesome friends, and took away some key lessons to take back to their schools and communities. But if you missed it, don?t worry! We?ve got a rundown of these top **four important lessons for ALL students as you start off the school year**:

1. **Oppression is interconnected.** Youth at Activist Camp learn about ?intersectional oppression? and how the three main systems of power are connected. White supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy are all intertwined and are forces that work around us every day to keep us from realizing our real power and freedom. Youth are able to talk about how these systems play out in their daily lives and how to work against them in their GSAs.
2. **You have rights!** Thanks to years of safe schools lobbying in the state of California, students here have lots of legal protections such as a right not to be harassed or discriminated against in school as well as the newly acquired right of learning about history

lessons that include LGBTQ figures and movements in school. Want to know more about legal rights in California and how to make sure your school is following the law? Check out our Legal Resources page [1].

3. **Strategy is everything**. Many times youth know something isn?t right at their schools but are unsure of how to get adults in power to listen to them or how to get their GSA organized behind a cause. Activist Camp helps youth identify key issues and a strategy or roadmap to get there. Say, for instance, you really want to reduce anti-gay slurs at your school but you just don't know where to start. GSA Network can help your club figure out best approaches to realizing your goal. Visit our Change Your School page [2] to fill out a checklist and a strategy chart for your campaign. You can always invite a GSA Network staff member out to your school to help you identify your issue and campaign as well. Just give us a holler [3]!
4. **We are stronger when we work together.** One of the big takeaways from Activist Camp is the lesson that building coalitions with other student groups can make your voices more amplified and your efforts even stronger. It is much more difficult to turn down a powerful group of student leaders than just one or two activists. Youth at Activist Camp learn that not everyone has to agree on everything in coalitions, but you can work successfully together to reach a common goal. Visit our resource page on Coalition Building [4] to learn more.

These four lessons should start you and your GSA off right for the year. If you want to learn more, visit our resources, invite a GSA Network regional staff member out to your school, or join one of our regional Youth Councils.

Plus don?t forget to apply for Activist Camp next year! In addition to these kick-ass lessons, youth were able to make friends, play on the beach, showcase their talents at our Talent Shows, learn about their identities and go back to schools ready to start campaigns and make change.

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Links:
[1] http://gsanetwork.org/resources/legal-resources
[2] http://gsanetwork.org/get-involved/change-your-school
[3] http://gsanetwork.org/sitevisits.

[4] http://gsanetwork.org/resources/coalition-building