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Oct. 4, 2012 ? yvonna

?Our GSA Statewide Advocacy council trip was amazing :). We split up into legislative and administrative advocacy committees and spoke to different leaders and partner groups. We were all really nervous, but in the end it went really great. The part that touched me the most is when one of the ladies from the School Board Association said, ?Your group coming here and talking to us really made a difference.?"

- Christian Capulin, Modesto, Johansen High School



The September 29th through October 1st weekend was filled with lasting moments of team building and advocacy aprendizaje amongst 22 diverse youth leaders from schools across California selected to be a part of GSA Network's Statewide Advocacy Council (SAC). As a member of SAC, students sharpen their local and statewide advocacy skills, provide input to guide GSA Network's policy development and implementation, and coordinate advocacy-related events such as the annual GSA Advocacy and Youth Leadership Academy (GAYLA) and Queer Youth Advocacy Day (QYAD) in the spring.

Youth leaders like Christian, many of whom are presidents of their GSAs or leaders from other youth-led organizations, spent Saturday and Sunday learning more about each other's work and best practices for building youth power through the development and disciplined practice of telling their activist stories. They worked on how to tell their stories in a constructive way that



links to their local and statewide policy agenda and inspires action among their members.

Monday, students shared their stories with legislators and partner organizations like the California School Boards Association (CSBA) to stress the importance of fully implementing safe schools and smart discipline laws such as the Fair Accurate Inclusive Respectful (FAIR) Education Act and the recently passed Non-Mandatory Suspensions and Expulsions: Alternative Discipline law (Ammiano, AB 1729).

New bill ideas were discussed with legislative staff, and students discovered new administrative entities to build relationships with like the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC).

Before saying goodbye, SAC members generated bill ideas by answering the question, "If I were a legislator, what bills would I want to author?" and formed committees listed below.

GAYLA/QYAD Logistics

Responsible for: Event planning, fundraising, setting up meetings with legislators and orchestrating all the behind-the-scenes magic like Civil Rights March Organizer Bayard Rustin!

1. Caitlin Owens
2. Sage Leibenson
3. Angel Baron
4. Jesus Sanchez
5. Austin Fode
6. Calen Valencia
7. Ricky Martinez

Curriculum Review

Responsible for: revising what will be taught and learned at Spring GAYLA/QYAD and how the event will be structured for maximum effectiveness and enjoyment! The Tom Torlaksons/CDErs of Spring GAYLA/QYAD.

1. Ashli Moody
2. Christian Capulin

3. Kirsten Henrickson



4. Yesenia Padilla

5. Allen Cabanillas
6. Keanan Gotlieb
7. Logan Henderson

Advocacy Agenda

Responsible for: Representing SAC on legislative and administrative advocacy calls with partner organizations. Strategizing around local FAIR implementation campaigns, gathering stories and steering us forward!

1. Jack Davis
2. Julian Araujo
3. Espii Gutierrez
4. Anthony Barros
5. Kimberly Yu
6. Brandon Serpas
7. Sarah Harker
8. Anna Sturla
9. Mario Vasquez

Ultimately SAC members had a great time together, and we thank the Sacramento Youth Hostel and the Sacramento LGBT Center for their hospitality. The 2012-2013 SAC anticipates bringing even more young people to the state's capitol in the spring to participate in the policy making process!

Source URL: <https://gsanetwork.org/news/blog/welcome-2012-13-statewide-advocacy-council/10/04/12>