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LGBT Youth Conference Prepares Hundreds of Students to Change their Schools

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Gay-Straight Alliance Network's 9th annual Youth Empowerment Summit focuses on educational opportunities for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec. 14? Hundreds of California students have joined together today with the goal of ensuring all youth, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, have the opportunity to succeed in school. The 9th annual Youth Empowerment Summit (YES), hosted by the Gay-Straight Alliance Network of California and planned and led by youth, drew high school and middle school students from across the state for a day of skills-building workshops, a resource fair, and a keynote youth panel discussing educational justice.

"An extension of the Gay-Straight Alliance movement seen on campuses, the Youth Empowerment Summit opens a dialogue around the pervasive concerns of all LGBTQIA youth: justice and advocacy," said Lara Loesel, a 17-year-old Oak Ridge High School student who helped organize the GSA Network event. "YES is an opportunity for queer youth like myself to harness our power and to inspire the changes we desperately need in our schools."

The 2013 Youth Empowerment Summit covered issues ranging from starting a GSA to implementing California's School Success and Opportunity Act, the new law going into effect on January 1st. This law ensures transgender youth have the same opportunity to fully participate in school and graduate as their peers.

"Whether it's starting GSA clubs on their campuses, passing and implementing laws like the School Success and Opportunity Act, or coming to conferences like the Youth Empowerment Summit, GSA student leaders are determined to keep pushing until all young people have the chance to succeed," said Carolyn Laub, Founder and Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network, which operates the GSA Network of California.

Youth and adult allies chose from 45 workshops, including: "LGBTQ Students: Know Your Rights;" "LGBT Sports: Locker Room to Olympics;" and "How to Have a Kick-Ass GSA." The keynote panel featured youth voices discussing educational justice for youth of color, LGBT

youth, low-income youth, and youth with disabilities. Last year's Youth Empowerment Summit drew over 700 participants.

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About 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. GSA Network operates the GSA Network of California and the National Association of GSA Networks, which unites 37 statewide networks of GSA clubs. In California alone, GSA Network has brought GSA clubs to 61% of public high schools, impacting more than 1.2 million students at over 940 schools. GSA Network's youth advocates have played a key role in changing laws and policies that impact youth at the local and state level.

Press Release

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