

YOUTH ADULT PARTNERSHIPS

Prior to Starting...

- Challenge your stereotypes about youth and/or adults.
- Clearly define roles, responsibilities, and expectations for youth and adults.
- Ensure that one group does not greatly outnumber the other.

Building Effective Youth Adult Partnerships

- Evaluate the structure of the organization: Did youth or adults start the group? Who leads the group? Have both youth and adults always participated?
- Prioritize youth leadership and facilitation and focus on leadership training and skill-building for students.
- Follow a specific process for planning events and projects in your GSA. Make sure responsibilities are clearly designated and expectations are well defined.
- Frequently evaluate group dynamics: Do adult advisors and student leaders both feel supported? Do youth members feel they have the power and control in the group?
- If adults tend to outnumber youth or dominate the GSA, consider forming a separate Genders and Sexualities Teacher's Alliance or faculty group.
- If adult advisors wish to be involved in setting meeting agendas (or are required to by school policy), make sure that a youth leader is also involved in the process.
- If adult advisors have concerns about a particular project, have them voice these by asking questions instead of handing down authoritative decisions.

Youth and Adult Partnership Tips

- **ASK QUESTIONS-** Conflict can easily arise when messages are misconstrued. Communication styles vary from person to person; different communication styles do not imply disrespect or disinterest. Ask questions in order to clarify and keep a common goal in mind to help address conflicts.
- **BE DELIBERATE-** Adults and young people vary widely on content knowledge, development, and willingness to participate. Create a way to hold everyone accountable in the work they do.
- **BE RESPECTFUL-** Everyone comes from different backgrounds and experiences. It is important to respect and recognize what an individual brings to the group.
- **YOUTH TRAINING-** Create learning opportunities for youth to take leadership on important projects. Facilitate growth for young people in a meaningful way such as public speaking, communication, and assertive skills. Build capacities for young people and hold high expectations for youth.
- **BURN OUT-** People have other interests and priorities (friends, families, hobbies, education). Depending heavily on someone can cause them to burn out. Feeling tired, overwhelmed, and overworked is a common reality. Assist youth in recognizing when "no" is an appropriate answer and support their decision.