



10 Steps to Growing Your GSA

Change happens in small groups. Your GSA is one of those small groups that can shift the whole ecosystem of your school.

1. LEARN THE LANDSCAPE

Every ecosystem has its own patterns. Check your Student Handbook or district website to understand how clubs grow at your school. You might need permission from an administrator, a teacher advisor, or a written constitution. Work with the system while you're changing it.

2. FIND YOUR PEOPLE (STARTING WITH AN ADVISOR)

Look for a teacher, counselor, nurse, or librarian who has shown up as an ally around sexual orientation and gender issues. This person will be your bridge to the adult world when you need it.

Small is good practice: Consider finding co-advisors. Two supportive adults are better than one, and they can hold each other up when things get challenging.

3. MOVE WITH TRANSPARENCY

Tell administrators what you're doing right away. Bring them into the process rather than surprising them. Having an administrator who understands your vision can open doors with teachers, parents, and the school board. If they resist, remind them gently that GSAs are legally protected—but lead with relationship, not rules.

4. CONNECT WITH COUNSELORS

School counselors and social workers are often bridges to students who need community but don't know how to find it. Let them know you're creating this space—they might know exactly who needs to hear about it.

5. CREATE SACRED SPACE

Choose a meeting place that feels both accessible and safe. Your advisor's classroom or a library meeting room work well. Make it easy to find—rainbow signs and welcoming posters

are like lighthouses for our people. The space should say “you belong here” before anyone even walks in.

6. SPREAD THE WORD (AND SHARE FOOD!)

Figure out how information moves through your school: bulletin announcements, flyers, social media, word-of-mouth. Use all the channels. And here’s ancient wisdom: food builds community. When you tell people there will be snacks, they come. When they come for food, they stay for connection.

If your flyers get torn down, keep putting them up. Your persistence tells the school you’re serious about creating safety for all students. Sometimes advertising your GSA—using words like gay and transgender—educates people and makes students feel safer, even if they never come to a meeting.

7. HOLD YOUR FIRST GATHERING

Start with story. Ask people why this group matters to them. What do they hope for? What do they want to see change? How can this club create lasting transformation at your school?

Begin every meeting the same way: name, year, and pronouns. This simple practice creates belonging and lets everyone practice being seen as they are.

8. BUILD THE CONTAINER TOGETHER

Community agreements create conditions where everyone can show up authentically. Many GSAs agree not to make assumptions about anyone’s sexual orientation or gender identity. Let people define themselves. Let the space hold all of who you are.

9. DREAM FORWARD TOGETHER

Make an action plan, but remember stay flexible as you grow. Brainstorm activities that excite you. Set goals that feel both ambitious and doable. Plan events and campaigns. (Check out @gsanetwork on Instagram for inspiration from other young organizers doing this work.)

10. JOIN THE NETWORK

Register your GSA with GSA Network using our registration link. You’re not doing this work alone. There are thousands of GSAs across the country, and when you register, you become part of a movement that’s bigger than any one school.

Visit our National Directory to find your state’s GSA network and connect with organizers near you.

Remember: You don't have to be perfect to start. You don't have to have it all figured out. You just have to begin where you are, with what you have, with whoever shows up. Small groups can change everything. Your GSA is proof.

The work you're doing matters. You matter. Keep going.

Need more support?

Reach out to us at info@gsanetwork.org for technical assistance.