

Why are GSA (Gender-Sexuality Alliances), Rainbow or Diversity clubs important in our schools...?

Research of GSA clubs carried out by Egale Canada (2011) and McCreary Centre shows that, in schools which have a GSA, *all* students:

- perceive their school to be a safer, more inclusive place
- know they have at least one or two adults who are allies whom they can talk to about gender issues or LGBTQ2S+ matters
- indicated that they felt their schools were supportive of the LGBTQ2S+ community and their school climate was less homophobic/transphobic.

Also students:

- indicated that just knowing of the GSA's existence (i.e., from a poster/bulletin) was enough to let them know that someone cared.
- involved in GSAs showed increased academic achievement, improved attendance, a sense of empowerment, increased hope for the future, new friendships, higher self-esteem, visibility, and acceptance, and better relationships with peers, teachers, and family members.

GSA clubs also:

- provide safe spaces to focus on support and activities
- give official acceptance and visible school-wide presence
- provide allies and normalization with the school community
- strive to be inclusive across intersections of oppression (gender, race, class, sex, ability, gender identity, Indigenous).

It is also important to note that LGBTQ2S+ students in schools and districts with specific LGBTQ2S+ policies reported significantly fewer incidents of harassment due to sexual orientation.

~ from Creating and Sustaining a GSA – Pridenet Education

Elementary Rainbow/Diversity (or other-named) Club - Checklist

Ready...

- Consider if the purpose of the club is to provide a Safe Space, Educate or Advocate. Or all three. Don't forget to Celebrate, of course...!
- Consider who your membership might be. Do you have a sense of some students already who might be interested or at least will appreciate having this club in the school?
- Discuss your idea with your school administration
- Share your idea with your staff to gather input and feedback

- Reflect on the needs you anticipate and/or know of students
- Consider approaching students who might be interested to help lead the creation of a club
- Choose a space where meetings can be held on a regular basis. What spaces do students feel safe in? The library? Music Room? A classroom?
- Connect with your school SOGI Lead, the District SOGI Lead, Foundry LGBTQ2S+ Specialist for support, ideas, co-facilitation, etc.

Set...

- Announce the creation of a Rainbow Club to the school. Create a bulletin board with words and images that suggest the themes of the club. Meeting days/times. Location.
- Provide a brief written description that educators can share with students explaining the club <..\..\OneDrive - School District 72\Desktop\What is a Rainbow Club.docx>
- Provide a brief written description/ explanation of the club for any families, community members who express interest <..\..\OneDrive - School District 72\Desktop\Why Gender Sexuality Alliances are Important in Our Schools.docx>
- Share links from SD72 website for:
 - o SOGI Q&A - <https://www.sd72.bc.ca/studentsparents/SOGI-123/Pages/default.aspx>
 - o Policy – <https://www.sd72.bc.ca/Board/policiesbylaws/Governance%20Policies/Diversity,%20Equity%20and%20Equity.pdf>
 - o Procedures - <https://www.sd72.bc.ca/about/operationalprocedures/Operational%20Procedures/OP%20131%20Sexual%20Orientation%20and%20Gender%20Identity.pdf>

Go...

- Advertise. With posters, announcements, staff sharing.
- First meeting. Introductions (and pronouns). Brief explanation of purpose, goals of club. Ask students why they're interested to participate. What are their hopes for the club?
- Explain ground rules for the group (privacy/confidentiality, respect, positive assumptions, etc.)
- Have snacks 😊
- Outline some possible activities. Tons of ideas here:
 - o [ready set respectFINAL RGB WEB – ACE EDITED 2-17-16 v4 PDFX \(glsen.org\)](#)
 - o [PD-80-15cPrismToolkitBooklet Web.pdf \(teachers.ab.ca\)](#)
 - o En Francais: [PD-80-15cF for web.pdf \(teachers.ab.ca\)](#)
 - o En Francais: [Microsoft Word - Liste de ressources SOGI \(vidéos, plans de leçon\). 18.07.12docx.docx \(squarespace.com\)](#)
- Brainstorm with students possible activities, priorities, etc. Such as:
 - o Team building
 - o Ice-breakers & games
 - o Read stories
 - o Watch videos
 - o Walk the school to see who is represented, who is not, consider how the club can support the school to become more inclusive

- Suggestions for GSA's here. It's more middle/secondary but can be tailored to elementary. [GSA Booklet 2012.pdf \(bctf.ca\)](#)

Beyond the Rainbow Club – Creating a More Inclusive School

- At a staff meeting, discuss how classrooms are arranged to promote diversity and inclusion. How are classroom libraries organized? What messages are on the walls? Who is represented? Who is missing? Is inclusive language used?
- Encourage staff to discuss the meaning of the rainbow sticker. That it does not simply mean 'I support LGBTQ2S+'. It means I am an advocate. I create a safe space. I am approachable. I will help you and if I can't, I'll find someone who can. I celebrate LGBTQ2S+.
- SOGI Inclusive Classroom Checklist here: [Microsoft Word - SOGIInclusiveChecklist Final.docx \(squarespace.com\)](#)
- Clarify how students know of the all-gender bathroom
- Do a school-wide walk. Will all your students see themselves represented in pictures, promotions, displays, etc.? Who is represented? Who is missing?
- Consider how class composition is approached. Do we create classes to have a balance of boys and girls or according to behaviours, needs, etc.

Ideas for Diversity bulletin board

-no bullying sign/symbol, rainbows, pride flags, pictures of people who are not gender-stereotyped, all about me/identity, book covers (10 000 Dresses, etc.), celebrities who are out, information about Rainbow Club meetings, poster with links to relevant SD72 documents (SOGI Q&A, Procedures, Policy – see above), etc....