

# Benefits of GSAs to Individual Students & the School as a Whole

## *Benefits to Individual Students*

- LGBTQ students involved in GSAs reported that the GSA helped them with 3 types of empowerment. The first is empowerment through knowledge - they knew their rights, and how to advocate for them. The second is personal empowerment - they had good self esteem and a sense of agency, which is the realization that you have the power to act to change situations. The third is relational empowerment; they had a sense of belonging to a community and of improving the school for future students (Calzo et al., 2018).
- Students in schools with GSAs indicate the presence of a safer school climate and more supportive teachers/staff. They earn better grades, are less isolated, are less likely to skip school due to fear, feel a greater sense of well-being, and have higher self-esteem (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016; Hannah, 2017; Porta et al., 2017; Calzo et al., 2018).
- GSA membership promotes self-confidence (Sutherland, 2019).
- GSAs represent safety, and the more years a GSA is present in a school, the more the perception of safety among the student body increases (Ioverno et al., 2016).
- LGBTQ+ youth in schools with a GSA experience less bullying and harassment (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016; Porta et al., 2017).
- LGBTQ+ youth in schools with a GSA experience fewer mental health and substance abuse issues and take part in fewer risky behaviors. They are less likely to smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, experience suicidal thoughts or actions, engage in casual sex, and suffer from depression (Poteat et al., 2016; Sinclair & Reece, 2016; Porta et al., 2017).
- Students in a GSA had lower likelihood of risky sexual behavior (Poteat et al., 2016).
- Members of a GSA report feeling unified, perceiving the GSA to be a place of community and connection (Porta et al., 2017; Sutherland, 2019).
- LGBTQ+ students in a school with a GSA feel more connected to the school overall, with a greater sense of belonging and engagement (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016; Hannah, 2017).
- LGBTQ+ youth attending schools with a GSA perceive their schools to be safer and more supportive than LGBTQ+ youth attending schools without a GSA. They are also more likely to report that their school is safe, tolerant, and respectful (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016).
- LGBTQ+ youth in a school with a GSA are more likely to attend college (Porta et al., 2017; Calzo et al., 2018).
- Students in a school with a GSA are more able to find and identify adult allies (Sinclair & Reece, 2016).
- GSAs help adolescents develop the knowledge and agency to counter the heteronormative culture (Sutherland, 2019).
- GSAs are gateways to accessing community resources, including organizations outside of school and supportive adults (Porta et al., 2017).
- A study of LGBTQ college students found that a campus group for sexual minorities was the single largest protective factor in the students' lives. It had the greatest predictive effect on sexual minority identity development, reduced concerns about acceptance, positive identity affirmation, and reduced internalized homonegativity (Brandon-Friedman & Kim, 2016)
- School-based LGBTQ+ support organizations can help students develop self reflection, bravery, leadership, agency, and civic engagement (Porta et al., 2017; Calzo et al., 2018)

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## *Benefits to the School as a Whole*

- The entire school benefits when LGBTQ students are present, doing well academically, and suffering less depression and other mental health benefits, as schools environments reflect the overall well-being of all students.
- The presence of a GSA in a school lowers the number of homophobic bullying instances *regardless of GSA membership* (Ioverno et al., 2016).
- In fact, having a GSA in a school lowers *all* forms of school bullying. Student bodies in schools with GSAs show a greater tolerance of all differences (racial, religious, etc). GSAs help create a more inclusive school environment for the entire school (Ioverno et al., 2016).
- GSAs offer students a safe environment to voice their concerns (Sutherland, 2019).
- GSAs, as part of their advocacy focus, help to educate students, teachers, and staff on LGBTQ-related issues. This education builds support and helps create allies (Sutherland, 2019).
- Schools with GSAs are safer for the entire student body, not just LGBTQ+ students (Sutherland, 2019).
- GSAs serve as a springboard for student civic engagement (Sutherland, 2019).
- GSAs help students learn to feel empowered in the face of injustice (Sinclair & Reece, 2016).
- A supportive LGBTQ environment in a schools leads to improved educational outcomes for the student body as a whole (Porta et al., 2017).
- Students whose high school had a GSA were significantly more likely to be supportive of the LGBTQ community when they were in college (Sinclair & Reece, 2016)

### References

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