

GLSEN JUMP-START #3

Evaluation, Continuation, Celebration!



Notes

We have chosen to use gender-neutral pronouns and language in this resource, in order to show respect for our readers who may not identify as "he" or "she." The drawback to this choice is questionable grammar, but we hope that you will overlook it in support of everyone's right to gender self-identification.

The GLSEN Jump-Start #3

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Register with GLSEN!

Registered Groups (GSAs and similar groups) and Individuals (student leaders, advisors, students trying to start GSAs, and so on) receive free information and resources from GLSEN's Student Organizing Department. Resources include educational books, videos and trainings; updates, information and free guides to community and school organizing around LGBT issues across the country; networking opportunities with other youth leaders and teacher advisors; and, free subscriptions to Student Organizing's email listservs, which provide student leaders and teacher advisors with a discussion forum for asking questions, sharing ideas and providing feedback. Register yourself and your GSA today!

Introduction

Welcome and Overview

Welcome to the GLSEN Jump-Start #3: Evaluation, Continuation, Celebration! This edition is intended to be sequential with the two previous Jump-Starts. Jump-Start #3 may be also used, however, as a self-contained resource at the end of the school year, even if you have not already gone through the activities of Jump-Start #1 and Jump-Start #2. This Jump-Start is intended to help your GSA wind down and assess the current school year and begin planning for next year. With a timeframe of 45 minutes to an hour each, the two activities are meant to be used for two meetings close to the end of the year. You should also plan a party with your group, to celebrate the achievements, leaders, volunteers and allies of the past year!

From Merriam-Webster OnLine:

Main Entry: jump-start

Pronunciation: /j&mp-'stärt

Function: transitive verb

Date: 1973

1 : to start (an engine or vehicle) by temporary connection to an external power source (as another vehicle's battery)

2 a : to get off to a speedy start
<advertising can jump-start a political campaign> b : to impart fresh or renewed energy to : ENERGIZE <a plan to jump-start the stagnant economy>
- jump start noun

The activities outlined in the Jump-Start always involve lots of group work—brainstorming, discussing and writing. If you need additional copies of this Jump-Start, or previous and/or future Jump-Starts, all editions are online in the GSAs/Student Resources section of our website (www.glsen.org). We welcome feedback, suggestions and requests if you'd like to see particular topics addressed in future Jump-Starts. Just e-mail us: jumpstart@glSEN.org.

We wish you the best in your work towards creating safer, more respectful and more equitable schools for all.

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Activity 1

Assessing Our Work

Ready...

One of the best ways to learn from and build upon your group's experiences is by taking the time to thoughtfully assess your work together. As the school year begins to wind down, people often look back on the past year and look forward to the next, and it's a perfect opportunity for reflecting on your goals, activities and working relationships. In this activity, we provide you with three models for conducting an assessment process in your group.

Set...

People: entire group - working first as individuals, then in pairs, then as a whole

Tools: loose-leaf paper (4-6 sheets per person), pens (1 per person), large paper (6-8 sheets), markers, tape

Time: 40-60 minutes

Plus: *GSA Wrap-Up*

Go!

Individual Activity: Self-Assessment (5-10 minutes)

Step 1: Begin by distributing two sheets of loose-leaf paper and pens to everyone. If you have enough space, try to sit a little apart from one another so that each of you can really focus on your own thoughts.

Step 2: Take a few minutes to reflect on your own participation in the group. This part is not meant to be shared, unless people wish to do so; it's meant simply to get everyone thinking about the year and how they contributed to it. If you prefer to write down your thoughts as they come to you, in an unstructured way, that's fine; whatever is most useful for you is best. If you need some specific guidelines, however, consider the following questions, or make up your own:

- What have been your roles and responsibilities in the group this year?
- How have you shown your commitment to the group?
- How have you interacted with others in the group?
- How have you communicated your ideas and criticism to the group?
- What has been your greatest contribution to the group, the one of which you're most proud?
- How do you wish you'd contributed differently to the group?
- What has been your biggest challenge in the group?
- What have you learned from participating in the group?
- What have you taught your peers in the group?
- What are some of your personal goals for next year?

Step 3: If you wish to, take a few minutes to share—briefly—your reflections with one another. Sharing should be voluntary. In order to save time for the rest of the activity, people can share just one or two of their thoughts, or any major points or themes that emerged.

Large Group Discussion: Plus/Delta (10-15 minutes)

Step 1: Designate a recorder. The recorder should hang two sheets of large paper on a visible surface. At the top of one sheet, the recorder should write a plus symbol (+), and at the top of the other sheet, a delta symbol (Δ). The plus symbol, as you might have guessed, represents the positive aspects of working in your group, and the successes the group has achieved. The delta, a symbol for change, represents the things you'd like to change about your group, and what the group might do differently.

The Plus/Delta is an assessment tool that helps people to think about their work in a more active and creative way. Instead of saying "This worked" and "This didn't work," you take a step further to think about what needs improvement, what might have worked or how you might have taken a different approach.

Step 2: First, everyone should take turns identifying what they liked about working in the group, and the initiatives they considered successful. The recorder should list everyone's "plusses" on the Plus sheet. Then, everyone should take turns identifying the aspects of the group or the group's work that they'd like to change, and how the work could be done differently. The recorder should list everyone's "deltas" on the Delta sheet.

Step 3: Take a few minutes to absorb and affirm everyone's comments. This is not the time to debate people's opinions; regardless of whether you agree or disagree with everything that's said, it's all useful feedback.

Pairs Discussion: S.W.O.T. Analysis (10-15 minutes)

Step 1: Get into pairs, and distribute four sheets of loose-leaf paper and a pen to each pair. One person in the pair can do all of the writing, or each person in the pair can take a turn at writing. This next part of the activity is called a S.W.O.T. analysis. "S.W.O.T." is an acronym that stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Many groups, from small community-based organizations to large corporations, use the S.W.O.T. analysis as a tool for describing the "landscapes"—what's going on, what the current circumstances look like within their group and outside of their group.

Step 2: Write "Strengths" at the top of the first sheet of paper, "Weaknesses" at the top of the second, "Opportunities" at the top of the third, and "Threats" at the top of the fourth. Discuss each of the four parts using the following ideas to help stimulate your thinking, and write down whatever comes to mind.

Strengths: What strengths does your group have? (For example: empowered leaders, active members, a strong ally network, visibility in the school)

Weaknesses: What weaknesses does your GSA have? (For example: low attendance at meetings, overburdened leaders, poor relationship with school staff, lack of funds)

Opportunities: What opportunities are currently available to your group, or expected in the future? (For example: new supportive teacher, growing student interest, growing community awareness, groups forming at nearby schools)

Threats: What threats to your group exist in your school community? (For example: GSA known only as a "gay" group, vocal student, staff or community opposition, lack of official school club status = lack of access to space and resources)

Large Group Discussion: Sharing Our S.W.O.T.s (10-15 minutes)

Step 1: Reconvene as an entire group. The recorder should hang four sheets of large paper on a visible surface, labeling them as each pair did its loose-leaf sheets. The pairs should take turns contributing their conclusions, and the recorder should write each pair's ideas on the large sheets. After everyone's ideas have been recorded, take a few minutes to discuss them, identifying common or similar ideas. The recorder should put a mark next to those ideas to highlight them.

Large Group Discussion: Assessing Our Assessment (5 minutes)

Take the final few minutes to go around and get everyone's feedback about the activities you've just completed. Did you find them to be useful? How might you build assessment activities into your work throughout the year?

Be sure to keep the Plus/Delta sheets and the S.W.O.T. sheets in a safe place, so that the group can revisit them when you gather in the fall (or over the summer—see Activity 2 for ideas on how to stay connected).

Consider This...

Remember, the purpose of this activity is to get open and honest feedback from everyone about their participation in the group, and the group's work as a whole. People will most likely have different takes on what happened, and different ideas about how to make changes, but it's important not to judge, accuse or get defensive.

Keep in mind that the assessment tools presented in this activity are not only for the end of the year! You can use any or all of them to evaluate meetings, activities, projects and/or campaigns you undertake throughout the year.

Imagine how much more meaningful all of your efforts will be to you and future groups if you keep a record of your work for the year. The "Our GSA Journal" document included in this mailing will help you to do just that!

Activity 2

Staying Connected, Informed and Involved

Ready...

We've heard from lots of student organizers that they're continually frustrated by the feeling of "starting from scratch" every autumn. While new members and new leaders are inevitable—and desirable!—the summer vacation months don't have to mean a complete hiatus for your group. In fact, the summer can provide a perfect opportunity to stay active by doing all of the things you didn't have time to do during the school year, such as reading LGBT resources, tracking LGBT news or just hanging out and supporting one another.

Set...

People: entire group, working first in smaller groups, then as a whole

Tools: large paper (6-8 sheets), markers (just a few), tape

Time: 45-60 minutes

Go!

Small Group Brainstorm: Identifying Ways to Stay Active (10-15 minutes)

Step 1: Divide into three groups. Each group should get a sheet of paper and a marker, and designate a recorder. Group 1 should write "Staying Connected" at the top of its sheet, Group 2 should write "Staying Informed" at the top of its sheet, and Group 3 should write "Staying Involved" at the top of its sheet.

Step 2: Each group should now brainstorm a list of all of the ways that members of the entire group might fulfill the goal on their sheet. Write down everything that comes to mind, even ideas that don't seem feasible. Consider the following examples:

Staying Connected: How can we ensure that we stay in touch over the summer? For example: set up a "safe contacts" phone tree, email distribution list and/or pen pal system; subscribe to GLSEN's GSATalk and AdvisorTalk email listservs; gather for food/coffee/activities to "check in" with one another

Staying Informed: How can we stay clued-in to LGBT and safe schools news? For example: subscribe to Fenceberry LGBT news email listserv (see the "Consider This" box for subscription information); read GLSEN's website for safe schools news, information and new resources; read other LGBT and/or student activism web resources or subscribe to LGBT and/or youth organizations' newsletters

Staying Involved: How can we use our organizing experience and build new skills? For example: volunteer, intern or work at a local advocacy organization or service agency for LGBT people and/or youth; attend community events, conferences and trainings; organize for Pride; subscribe to GLSEN's Safe Schools Action Network

Large Group Discussion: What We'll Do On Our Summer Vacation (15-20 minutes)

Step 1: Reconvene as a large group and designate a recorder. The recorder should hang the three brainstorm lists side-by-side on a visible surface. Take a few minutes for everyone to read and think about the lists as a whole.

Step 2: Beginning with the "Staying Connected" list, discuss people's ideas. How might you put them into action, and how can you divide up specific responsibilities so that no one feels overburdened, everyone's doing something they will be able to accomplish and enjoy, and everyone feels a sense of involvement and accountability to the group? Similarly, discuss the ideas on the "Staying Informed" and "Staying Involved" lists. The recorder should write down people's names next to the tasks they've agreed to do.

Step 3: Someone should agree to write or type up a final list of projects and specific tasks with the names and contact information of those responsible for them. Revisit this list at your next meeting, so that people have the opportunity to make any changes that may have occurred to them after further consideration. Everyone should have their own copy to refer to over the summer.

Large Group Brainstorm: Preparing for Next Year (20-25 minutes)

It's often difficult to predict what your group will look like in the fall, since new students may join and current members may decide not to return. Of course, if current members don't return, it's important to find out why so that you can make any necessary improvements to the group's structure and/or activities. Even though you may wish to leave specific decisions open until new members can provide their input, you can certainly begin to think about, discuss and plan your work for next year. Use the results of your assessment to help guide your ideas.

Step 1: The recorder (or a new recorder if you'd like to give the other recorder a break) should hang three new sheets of paper side-by-side. The recorder should label the first sheet "Goals," the second sheet "Activities" and the third sheet "People."

Goals: What are some broad goals you can set for next year? Will you be continuing initiatives you began this year, or starting something new? What kind(s) of work do you want the group to focus on next year? Be sure to distinguish between internal goals for your group, such as "building trust and cooperation in the group" or "using meeting time more efficiently," and

external goals, such as "raising our group's visibility in the school" or "getting more LGBT resources in the library."

Activities: Based on your experiences this year and your broad goals for next year, what are some activities you'd like the group to do? What worked and didn't work this year? What did you really want to do but didn't have enough time to do? "Activities" can include anything from what your group does during its meeting time, to events your group plans for the larger school community, to ongoing tasks that specific members of your group do on their own time to further the goals of the group.

People: What kinds of relationships with people does your group hope to build next year? What are some ideas for finding new members? What do you want the leadership of your group to look like? With which other school groups or individuals does your group want to connect and/or work? Whom do you need as an ally in order to accomplish your goals?

Step 2: Using the information you gathered in your assessment and the above prompts, brainstorm a "wish list" for each of the three themes. Try to put at least 5 ideas on each list. The recorder should write everything down as it was stated.

Step 3: Next, instead of going the usual route of narrowing down the lists and making decisions about them, you're just going to let the ideas percolate for a while. As with the "Staying ..." sheets, someone should volunteer to type up the three lists and make copies for everyone to read over the summer. If you are able to meet as a group during the summer, make some space in your meeting for revisiting these ideas, adding to them, or changing them, but don't omit anything until you've opened up the conversation to new members in the fall. In addition, each member of the group should agree to spend some time over the summer thinking about next year's work, and making any additions they need to the brainstorm lists.

Consider This...

The Fenceberry email listserv is a free comprehensive digest of news articles pertaining to LGBT people and issues. They print full-text articles from local, state, national and international print and radio news sources. It is a lot of email to receive, but by far the best way to stay informed about news affecting the global LGBT community. To subscribe, send a message requesting a subscription to either of the following email addresses: fenceberry@cox.net or fenceberry@aol.com.

To subscribe to GLSEN's GSATalk and AdvisorTalk listservs:

Please register online @ www.glsen.org under the "Students/GSAs" section.

To receive the list in Digest Format (multiple posts sent in one email at the end of each day), simply send an email to LISTSERV@LISTSERV.GLSEN.ORG with "SET GSATALK DIGEST" in the message body (without ""). You must leave the "subject" line empty.

To learn more about GLSEN trainings and events, click on the "Events" link at the top of the page in GLSEN's website. Also, continue to check out the "Students and GSAs" section for information about youth-specific events.

To subscribe to GLSEN's Safe Schools Action Network, which will send you alerts about legislation or events affecting LGBT students in your state or at the federal level, and opportunities for you to take action in response to those alerts, click on the "Action Center" link at the top of the page in GLSEN's website.