



One of the best ways to increase the number Allies at your school is by building coalitions with other student clubs. Strong alliances with other clubs and student groups can be instrumental in identifying more Allies to LGBT youth.

First things first...

Before you and your team begin the planning process, you should make sure to solidify some important details. *For more on planning an event see pages 3-6 of the Ally Week Manual.*

Get permission

Before you can begin planning an event, you must make sure you receive authorization from your club advisor or school administration. Contact all of the necessary people at least a few weeks in advance in order to prevent any roadblocks.

Date, time and time length

As soon as you have received permission from your school, decide on a date and mark it on a calendar. Look for a time that won't conflict with other events going on in your school. Also determine how much time you have for the event. We recommend that you have at least **1 hour** to run this meeting.

Number of attendees

How many people do you expect to attend? This crucial detail will guide the kinds of activities you decide to plan.

Location

Where can you hold the meeting? Make sure you contact the appropriate people well in advance to secure the space. If there isn't a space available at your school, try contacting a local community center, LGBT center, or public library to see if you can hold the meeting there.

What will the meeting be about?

Now it's time to brainstorm interesting and relevant topics concerning Allies that will make people want to attend the meeting.

Here's a list of some possible meeting topics:

- The intersection of issues and what the groups have in common
- Any current bullying or respect issues in the school
- Current events or news stories involving students and schools
- School or community safety or climate
- School or local anti-bullying or anti-discrimination policies

NOTE: Be sure to read the **Ally Week Organizing Manual**. It had lots of tips to plan a successful Ally Week in your school!

Download the Manual at www.AllyWeek.org/action.



Who should be there?

Begin to think about student clubs or organizations that have something to contribute to a discussion on LGBT allies and safe schools organizing.

Some ideas of clubs to reach out to:

- Cultural/ethnic identity groups
- Civic groups, such as Key Club
- Student Government
- Faith-based clubs
- Environment club
- Human Rights group, such as Amnesty International
- Political groups, like the Young Democrats

Spreading the word

As soon as you come up with a diverse list, send out an invitation to the club leaders and any other contacts a few weeks prior to the meeting. You should send this out over email, Facebook and any other way you think you can get the message out to the most people.

To see a sample letter to clubs, to www.AllyWeek.org/action.

Setting goals

After choosing the topic, now it's time to create a clear set of goals that you want the meeting to accomplish. Come up with a list of **3-5 goals** for the meeting. To come up with this list, ask yourselves the following questions:

- **What outcomes or decisions do you need for the meeting to be a success?**
- **What skills, ideas, or knowledge about being an Ally do you want participants to take away from this meeting?**

For more on making SMART goals, see page 4 of the Ally Week Manual.

How's all this going to work anyway?

The format of your meeting depends on how many people you expect to be there and what kind of discussion you want to have. Below are two suggestions for discussion formats, determined by the number of expected participants.

Round table: For groups of 5-10

For a **round table** discussion format, the participants are engaged in a larger discussion managed by a facilitator.

- In preparation for the discussion, come up with three to five thought-provoking discussion questions to pose to the group about the topic.
- Select one or two facilitators to guide the discussion in a friendly and respectful manner.
- On the day of the meeting, arrange the chairs in the room in a circle so that everyone can see each other.
- Make sure there is someone keeping track of time and taking notes of what is said during the meeting.



Fishbowl! For groups of 10 or more

A **fishbowl** discussion can be a great way to facilitate a valuable conversation with a larger group. Fishbowl discussions consist of a group of people seated in a circle having a conversation (fish) while another group of observers (bowl) listens to them.

- Select one or two facilitators to guide the discussion in a friendly and respectful manner.
- Set up the space before the discussion. If space permits, set up chairs in one inner circle and one outer circle, both facing the center.
- In preparation for the discussion, come up with three to five thought-provoking discussion questions to pose to the group about the topic.
- Divide the participants into two groups. You can do this by counting off. One group will be the Fish first, the other the Bowl.
- The facilitator presents a question to the group in the inner circle, which they discuss for 5-10 minutes. The outer circle of observers does not speak or react, only listens.
- After a few questions are discussed and half the meeting time has passed, switch the groups so that those who observed will now be the Fish in the middle.
- Make sure there is someone keeping track of time and taking notes of what is said during the meeting.

Facilitation Tips

What is a facilitator?

A facilitator is the person who will support and manage the discussion. A facilitator is an objective participant who is there to keep the conversation going rather than offer their own ideas and opinions. Facilitators encourage everyone's participation and enable the group to have a valuable conversation.

Choosing a facilitator

A facilitator should be a person who is comfortable with taking on a leadership role and managing different voices and opinions. Perhaps this person could be the GSA president, advisor or a willing GSA club member or participant. Facilitator roles should be solidified during the planning process, not the day of the meeting.

Notes for a facilitator:

- Be objective! Try your best *not* to inject your opinions into the discussion. Your role is to be a neutral leader, not a participant.
- Make sure that everyone has the chance to speak. If someone is dominating the conversation, politely ask them to step back. If you notice someone not speaking at all, encourage them by asking them to step up a bit.
- Make sure that all participants are being respectful of each other's ideas. If you notice otherwise, address it openly and considerately.

Breaking the Ice

Ice breakers are a fun way to get participants energized for the meeting. For some cool ice breaker activities, check out **Part 1 of the GLSEN Jump- Start Guide at www.glsen.org/jumpstart**.



Making a meeting agenda

Since you know the meeting's topic, goals, estimated number of participants and time length, now it's time to create a **meeting agenda**.

To create an agenda, work with your group to decide what content you want the meeting to have. Then, figure out the amount of time each activity section will take. The agenda can be as detailed or loose as you would like.

Example meeting agenda for a **fishbowl discussion**:

October 18, 2010

Time: 45 minutes

Being an Ally

- I. GSA Welcome (5 mins)
 - a. Talk about what Ally week is and why we organized meeting.
 - b. Explain how the meeting will be run
- II. Introductions (5 mins)
 - a. Everyone in the room says their name, club they're affiliated with, and one word about how they're feeling
- III. Fishbowl conversation- Group A (10 mins)
- IV. Fishbowl conversation- Group B (10 mins)
- V. Debrief discussion about what was discovered during fishbowls (15 mins)

Example agenda for a **round table discussion**:

October 18, 2010

How can we be allies?

Time: 1 hour

- I. GSA Welcome (10 mins)
 - a. Talk about what Ally Week is and why we organized meeting
 - b. Explain meeting agenda
- II. Community Norms (5 mins)
 - a. Present the community norms* to the group.
- III. Icebreaker (5 mins)
 - a. Name-Game
- IV. Roundtable discussion (30 mins)
- V. Closing Remarks (10 mins)

NOTE: *Community Norms are the responsibilities that all participants agree to uphold during the meeting. They help to maintain a respectful environment where all members can fully and safely participate.



Gathering materials

Are there any materials (computer, projector, screen, stickers, chart paper, markers) that you need for the meeting? Do you want to serve snacks? Contact the necessary people in order to insure that you obtain the items you need.

Make sure you have a **sign-in sheet** so you can keep track of everyone who attended. There's a sign in sheet you can print and use at the end of this document.

After the meeting: What's next?

So now that you've had a successful meeting, it's time to follow-up with the attendees! A strong coalition is maintained through timely and thoughtful communication.

What to do for follow-up:

- A day or two after the meeting, send an email or message to all attendees thanking them for their participation. Include the notes from the discussion.
- Make sure to remind participants of any decisions or future plans that were made in the meeting.
- For the members who indicated they want to be part of the GSA, invite them to your next GSA meeting.
- If you have an upcoming event, make sure to invite your new Allies.
- You could start a buddy system, where each member of the GSA establishes a relationship with one or two participants. This type of dedicated follow-up can keep people coming back!



Are you interested in being in the GSA?

Name

Email

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