

Hasina Juma

Leveling up your GSA Game

2018 Alberta GSA Conference

1. Identify the knowledge gaps and fill them

As a GSA, reflect on your own individual experiences and think about the information and/or resources you wish you had when you were figuring out your sexual orientation. Once you have a list of items, check if other GSAs, Pride Centers, LGBTQ2+ not-for-profits, or advocacy associations have these resources. If not, prioritize the items and chose which gaps your GSA would like to fill.

For example, Hasina didn't find many resources for bisexuals and none catered to bisexual people of colour. She decided to fill this gap by creating a digital platform that provides information using infographics, videos, memes, and blog posts.

2. Seek to understand other people's sexual orientation

When you see someone who has a different sexual orientation than you, try and understand what that identity means to them. You don't need to get it completely, but you do need to respect it as a valid and credible sexual orientation. Find commonalities between individuals. Ask questions from a place of curiosity and ask how the other person would like to be supported.

3. Not everyone's first step is to attend a GSA meeting

Different people embrace their sexual orientation in different ways. Some people's first step may not be to attend a GSA meeting especially if they feel ashamed or embarrassed by their sexual orientation. Have a variety of options where people can choose which method works for them. Examples include placing information on your school's website, school newsletter, or in a brochure that people can read at home, having an email address where people can write in and ask questions, or having options for people to informally meet for lunch with GSA members.

Contact Information

Website: HasinaJuma.com

FB/IG: [@HasinaJuma99](https://www.facebook.com/HasinaJuma99)

Email:
Hasina@HasinaJuma.com

Providing resources, support + tools for bisexual people of colour and their families

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4. Not everyone is in the know about the LGBTQ2+ community

As a member of your GSA, you most likely have an in-depth knowledge of the LGBTQ2+ community, the challenges we face, and are an active member in helping to change the future. Not everyone shares this level of knowledge.

Sometimes there is real value in creating basic resources such as a list of websites that provide information about the LGBTQ2+ community or providing information on how to embrace one's sexual orientation. The great thing is that you don't need to create all the resources yourself as you can use existing resources from other GSAs and/or LGBTQ2+ organizations.

5. Invisible followers are noticing your work

You simply never know how many people are reading the information on the school bulletin board or who are simply observing your GSA events from the sidelines. You don't know the full impact that your work is having on shifting your fellow students attitudes simply by having a GSA in your school.

Speak your truth with love and compassion. Continue doing your advocacy work from your heart because you are leaving your school community in a better place than how you found it.

6. Rise up together

It totally pays off to work together with other GSA's and/or LGBTQ2+ organizations in your cities to amplify the impact of work in your schools. Work together with others who have like minded goals. One of the secrets to creating great partnerships is ensuring that both sides benefit in some way.

- Is there a way you can let allies in your school know that they are welcome in your GSA and that we need them to help amplify our impact?
- Is there a way to share ideas, information, and resources amongst GSAs? Could this sharing of information be done between school principals or between school districts that are present in one area?

7. Advocacy work big or small ignites real change in your community

For the LGBTQ2+ community to continue moving forward, we need all acts of courage. Maybe your advocacy work means sharing your sexual orientation with your parents or highlighting the LGBTQ2+ perspective in a class assignment. Advocacy big or small is valid and needed. Don't forget to have some fun while doing it.