

61 PROGRAMMING IDEAS FOR YOUR LGBT/GSA GROUP

IOWA PRIDE NETWORK *programming for your College GSA*

Adapted from the National Youth Advocacy Coalition: www.nyac.org

#1: Start a Safe Zone Program

Encourage teachers and administrators at your school to display safe zone stickers or posters in their offices or classrooms. Displaying the safe zone sign means that you're a safe person to talk to about sexual orientation issues. You can design your own safe zone stickers or you can order them from the [National Youth Advocacy Coalition](http://www.nyac.org) (NYAC).

#2: Start a Condom Availability Program

The research is in. Condom availability programs do not increase sexual activity among students; but they do reduce the spread of HIV. Check out Advocates for Youth's [fact sheet on school condom availability](#) and advocate for a program in your school!

#3: Rock the Vote

www.rockthevote.org

It's the presidential election year, which makes it more crucial than ever to vote. Did you know that only 74% of the voting age population were registered in 1996? Of those only 49% actually voted (FEC). Your vote is your voice when it comes to public policy. Make sure everyone in your group is registered. Download the form from the [Federal Election Commission Web Page](#) or request copies from your state election committee.

#4: Volunteer at Your Local AIDS Service Organization

Organize a group of students to do community service at your local AIDS service organization. You could volunteer at an AIDS hospice, help with a needle exchange program, or help raise funds for local groups.

#5: Start a Newsletter

This is a great way to get members who rarely show up to realize all the good stuff they're missing. And if there isn't enough good stuff, then this forces you to realize that there's nothing to write about! This can also serve as a great way to keep a history of what's gone on in your organization.

#6: Celebrate National Coming Out Day

National Coming Out Day is celebrated every year on October 11th. It serves as a reminder that glbt visibility is an important step on the road to equality. For NCOD resources, contact the Human Rights Campaign's (HRC's) [National Coming Out Project](#). Be creative this year. NCOD festivities at the University of Arizona included a campus drag show and onsite HIV testing in the student center.

#7: Let's Talk About Sex!

Ask a local AIDS service organization to present a workshop on safer sex to your campus or high school group. The University of Virginia LGBTU had Desire, a local HIV/AIDS program; present a workshop on safer sex for men and women, and the turnout was greater than in many meetings before or after!

#8: Attend the Iowa Pride Network's LGBT & Allied Student Day at the Capitol!

The Student Day at the Capitol enables students from across Iowa, to meet with their legislators and tell their stories opinions on why Iowa should adopt safe school policies that protect gay, lesbian, bisexual, & transgender youth.

#9: Trans Talk

From Shady Side Academy Gender Issues Forum

"We brought in my friend, Billy, a senior at the art high school in our city and a professional drag king, to talk about transgender issues and the whole idea behind gender. It was our highest attended meeting ever, and made people a lot more curious and less prejudiced/ignorant about transgender people and gender stereotypes." -Straussey

#10: National HIV Testing Day

Every year the National Association of People with AIDS sponsors National HIV Testing Day in June. The idea is to encourage people who are at risk to take the test. For more information and Testing Day resources, contact [The National Association of People with AIDS](#).

#11 What is ... Gay Jeopardy?

From Sexual Minority Student Alliance, Virginia Commonwealth University

"Our most fun activity involved our take on game shows--gay Jeopardy, gay Win, Lose, or Draw, gay charades, gay dating game. The games would focus on gay answers, gay things to draw, or gay things to act out... The game show meetings drew a lot of people because everyone got to participate and laugh at one another in the name of fun. Planning would be needed to: come up with the answers, things to draw, and things to act out... choose host/hostess/Alex/Pat/Vanna/whatever gather materials needed, like chalk board etc."

#12 Get Proud

Attend a local pride event as a group - march in the Pride Parade under your school's banner. Some areas, like Washington, DC, have a [Youth Pride Day](#). If you live near a Youth Pride Day you should get your group involved with organizing the Pride.

#13 Invite Student Leaders to your Meetings

The President of the senior class is here to serve all the senior class, right? Invite her or him to your meeting so LGBT folks can tell them what their concerns are one-on-one. And while you're at it, encourage someone in your group to run for class or school office. It helps to have someone in charge that supports your issues.

#14 World AIDS Day

From University of South Alabama Alliance for Sexual Diversity

"The activity that stands out the most this year would be our World AIDS Day commemoration. We got other groups involved in planning and the event. We had an information table at the campus that day, and a candle light vigil that night with a band that played before and after. Also, we wrote statistics, personal names, and others that have died from the virus all over the campus in chalk, and made a huge quilt out of chalk in our amphitheater floor." -Sean

World AIDS Day is honored around the world on December 1st. Many communities plan events like non-denominational worship services and candlelight vigils. Get involved in an event happening in your community or plan an event for your school.

#15 Entertain Your Campus

From BGALA, University of Memphis

"I think what turned out to be the best thing we did was to bring Jamie Anderson, a lesbian singer and comedian, to campus for a concert. We got a fairly good response from the community, and it allowed us to be more visible. It took a great deal of work and attention to details, but went off without a hitch. I think my biggest piece of advice to someone planning an event like this is to plan far in advance, because everything that can go wrong or change will, and you don't want to be trying to fix everything at the last minute. Also, I learned not to depend on everyone who initially expresses interest in helping organize it; the group who actually did the work was much smaller than the group who said they would." -Katie

#16 Become a Peer Educator!

Peer Educators get trained to give workshops & presentations, and educate fellow students about sexual health issues. There may already be a peer education program in your school or community you can join.

#17 Write Your Members of Congress

Your members of Congress need to hear from you (and hear from you often) about the issues that matter most to you. If you're not sure who represents you in congress, then find out right now using the YouthResource Action Center.

#18 Support Take Back the Night

Recognize the abuse and sexual assaults that affect many of our friends and partners. Take Back the Night happens nationwide in the spring to bring light to the very real problem of sexual violence. The organizers put hours upon hours of work into this event and could use your help. This is a great place to give your group a voice in campus activities because many in the LGBT community are survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence.

#19 Include LGBT in Multiculturalism

Many campuses have multicultural programs and clubs. Make sure your group is recognized in these events. Some schools ask these groups to be present when prospective students are touring or having their orientation. Many queer first-year students would love to see a place they can go to on campus.

#20 Check Out Your School Library

Find out what books in your library address gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues. If your library doesn't have many books on these issues have members of your group identify favorite books and set up a meeting with your school librarian to suggest these titles. Make sure your school library subscribes to The Harvard Gay and Lesbian Review, and other magazines you're interested in. Contact the Iowa Pride Network to apply for a grant to purchase books and magazines that you can place in your school!

#21 Celebrate Black History Month

Find out what events are being planned at your school for Black History Month. Perhaps you can work together with an African American Student group to highlight the accomplishments of African Americans who are SGL or LGBT. For a great list of OUT gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgender people of African descent, visit The Blacklist.

#22 Advocate for a Student Center!

Many colleges and universities have LGBT resource centers, ranging from a bookshelf to a fully staffed and funded center with programs and meetings. Advocate for one in on your campus by researching other cultural centers in your colleges and checking out The National Consortium of Directors of Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Resources in Higher Education.

#23 Attend School Board Meetings

Yes, this is an activity for high school groups and college groups. School board meetings are open to the public. Plan an outing to a school board meeting in your area. If your school board has a youth representative, consider nominating someone for your group for this position. If they don't have a vehicle for youth-involvement, consider having someone (over age 18) from your GSA run for a school board seat.

#24 Talk about Body Image

Low self esteem and eating disorders are an issue among queer youth. Have a meeting that examines images of gay men and lesbians in the media, queer publications, and queer culture. What do the people portrayed in these journals look like? What race are they? What kind of shape are they in? And how does it affect how we see ourselves?

#25 Go to a College Conference

Attend the Queer Iowa Student Conference held in October!

#26 Check Out NYAC's and Iowa Pride Network's Conferences

The National Youth Advocacy Coalition and the Iowa Pride Network have several outstanding regional conferences. NYAC has one national summit that youth activists and the Iowa Pride Network have a yearly GSA Conference, Leadership Training and sponsor the Queer Iowa Student Conference (QISC). Each of these conferences include many young people in high school and college who attend. Be sure to check out their web pages for information.

#27 Examine Your School's Policies

Does your school have policies to protect students from harassment and discrimination? Does your school protect LGBT teachers from discrimination? Find out what policies your school has on the books and see if you can make them better. If your school doesn't have a discrimination policy, go to the GLBT Youth in Iowa Schools Task Force or Iowa Pride Network's websites to find out more information about how to add it to your school's/colleges equal opportunity policy and to see what other schools and colleges already include it.

#28 Safer Sex Info

From GW Pride, George Washington University

"We assembled safer sex packets (condoms, dental dams, female condoms, safer sex materials...). Most of these materials we got donated from local organizations. We did this part during one of our evening meetings and served pizza. The members loved it because it was a social activity as well as educational. The next day we went to a local High School and made packets available as schools let out... we found that although many of the students had learned how to use safer sex materials none of them were using them yet they were still having sex... it gave us an opportunity to go out into the community and become active! This program turned out to be very rewarding for many of our members, as it seemed to have an aspect that satisfied everyone!" -Joshua

#29 Get Cyber-Active

We all know how valuable it is for queer youth to have access to the Internet. But can students access this website from your school's computer lab or school library? Many schools are using filtering software which blocks access to certain sites. Find out if your school censors the net, and which sites they are blocking. Make sure your school administrator or librarian understands the importance of having access to websites like YouthResource and Iowa Pride Network.

#30 Start a Resource Page

Don't stop with just health care professionals. Also make a list of LGBT-friendly stores, clubs, coffeehouses, classes, and organizations in your community. Check out the University of Virginia's LGBTU online helpline website for ideas.

#31 Gay & Lesbian History Month

October is Gay & Lesbian History Month. It's the perfect time to learn more about the history of the glbt movement in your community. For ideas on what you can do for history month, contact GLAAD or GLSEN. GLAAD also sponsors an essay writing contest you can participate in.

#32 Host an HIV Positive Panel

Many AIDS service organizations will have a speakers bureau of HIV positive people willing to talk to high schools and colleges about living with HIV. Invite one of these groups to speak to your high school and college.

#33 Join a Listserv

Get active online by subscribing to a listserv! Register with the Iowa Pride Network: www.iowapridenetwork.org

#33 Develop an LGBT Studies Program

If you're one of the lucky ones who already have such a program, great! If you're not, feel out progressive professors for possibilities of starting one. In the more conservative schools, try to get LGBT Studies added as a concentration in the more supportive majors.

#34 Organize a Hate Crimes Awareness Vigil

From Rochester Institute of Technology Gay Alliance

"We held a candle light vigil in remembrance of Mathew Shepard in our student union during the fall and invited several people to come and speak at the vigil about violence against gay and lesbian people. Many students and faculty, both straight and gay, showed up in support of the vigil. We asked the director of the women's center here on campus who also happens to be lesbian to speak. She did an excellent job and I don't think anyone walked away without a sense of pride. Her message was very plain and simple: "we will not capitulate to violence and fear, and hatred and violence can only be eliminated by joining our voices in unity." -Brad

#35 Women's History Month

Women's history month is in March, and the perfect time to celebrate the historic connections between the women's movement and the lgbt movement. Maybe you can team up with your campus women's group to plan an event which recognizes the accomplishments of lesbian and bisexual women.

#36 Work with A Community Youth Group

Team up with a youth group in your area to put on a dance or a panel. This will expand your outreach and get you plugged into some great resources and networks. Check out the Iowa Pride Network's Regional High School GSA Coalitions.

#37 Join an AIDS Advocacy Organization

Join a national AIDS advocacy organization, such as AIDS Action, AIDS Policy Center for Children Youth & Families or the AIDS Project of Central Iowa. You can help students in your GSA keep up to date on important AIDS policy issues, and make your voice heard at the federal level.

#38 Link with Other School's LGBT Organizations

Join the Iowa Pride Network's High School and College Coalitions and attend the monthly meetings! Check out the dates and times at www.iowapridenetwork.org.

#39 Make a ZINE

From Eagles Center, Central High School, LA Unified School District

"One of the best activities that a student youth group ever did with me was a yearbook called EAGLES Zine. This was during my stint as volunteer at EAGLES Center, the original gay/lesbian dropout program sponsored by Los Angeles Unified School District. (There are now four such programs in LAUSD). The idea of the yearbook was that these students, by dropping out, had

missed out on the yearbook in their home schools. Or they felt they couldn't be out and themselves in their home-school yearbook. There's an emotional thing around the yearbook, same as the prom.

Ours was an inexpensive but artistic desk-top production job, with the entire class (42 students) participating. They learned, basically, how to design and publish a book. Each student could design their own personal page, write something for it, choose graphics for it...and do a photograph of themselves. Students did all the photography. Those who weren't computer-literate (this included most of them, actually) got to learn how to operate the school's little Mac computer, create files, use the graphics program, etc."

-Patricia Nell Warren, Member, Human Relations Education Commission, LAUSDI Formerly member, Gay and Lesbian Education Commission, LAUSD

#40 Celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month

September is National Hispanic Heritage Month. Plan an event with your school latino/latina group. Visit Ambiente Joven to get you started.

#41 Meet with LGBT Faculty/Staff

James Madison University's Harmony has held a couple of Coming Out for Faculty/Staff events where queer students and faculty can meet up. Granted, there are a lot of closeted faculty members who won't show up, but those you do meet there can be very good campus connections.

#42 Get Connected with Other Student Groups Online

Join a webbing for gay straight alliances or campus groups, and be sure to list your campus group or GSA with the Iowa Pride Network.

#43 Join HRC Action Network

Go to HRC's website to sign up for Action Alerts. These keep you up to date about what's going on in your voting area and nationwide. They also let you send faxes and e-mails to your representatives on Capitol Hill telling them what you think about legislation they're supporting or fighting against.

#44 Join Advocates for Youth's Alert Network

To stay on top of federal and state issues that affect GLBT Youth as well as adolescent sexual and reproductive health, you can subscribe to the Advocates Alert Network.

#45 Work with Local Groups

Many areas have local PFLAG's (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and community LGBT groups. To help your campus group branch out to the surrounding community, offer to co-host a community event.

#46 Check Out Local PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)

If your community doesn't have one, try to set one up with a supportive parent in the community. Go to www.pflag.org for more information. PFLAG parents are often willing to help campus LGBT groups with events and tabling. It could be a very beneficial connection for both your group and PFLAG's.

#47 Host an Activist

Bringing an inspirational speaker to your campus can motivate activism on your campus for months to come. The University of Virginia brought Urvashi Vaid from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force to speak to their organization around the Day of Silence Project, and the turnout was incredible and inspired many newspaper articles and dialogues about queer activism.

#48 Gay Bingo

Hold a gay bingo night - have a drag queen announce the numbers and maybe raise a little money for your campus group while you're having a great time!

#49 Form an LGBT Book Club

Form a book club in your campus LGBT group. If this doesn't appeal to students, which could happen because books can be too costly for many, then suggest a book swap. This is a great way to start off a semester - just be open to diverse book ideas!

#50 Increase Number of LGBT Classes

Some of you may have no LGBT classes on campus and some may have only a few. If you know any department heads or professors who can help your cause this could really help. Look for options during the summer sessions during which many colleges allow classes not listed in the program book to be taught.

#51 Start a Panel Discussion Program

"James Madison University's queer group, Harmony, has done panels in classrooms and dorms for several years now. This has been a great activity for us. Not only does it help LGBT students to talk more openly about sometimes difficult things to large groups, but it also has huge potential for opening a lot of minds for fellow peers attending the discussion." -Jennie

#52 Find Out About ROTC and Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Many campuses already include sexual orientation in their nondiscrimination policies. Sometimes, though, the ROTC's on campus go by their own rules. Campuses have differed on how to deal with this problem. Check out what your campus's solution is and let them know how you feel.

#53 Blitz the Campus with Awareness

A good way to raise awareness about a certain issue is to do a blitz on campus. This can go from posting hundreds of names of hate crimes victims campus wide on eye catching paper to handing out information directly. Make sure to pick an issue that connects with students and that may serve to better your group's visibility on campus.

#54 Write a Letter to the Editor

Write your student paper about things going on affecting the LGBT community on campus. Most newspapers follow the whims of their writers and editors, so connecting with someone on staff could prove very beneficial.

#55 Build A Web Page for your Group

Make sure you get the word out and keep people posted about current events for prospective students, the local community, and current members of your organization by building a web page for your group! Check out your campus server for details.

#56 Day of Silence

[The Day of Silence](#) was founded in 1996 at the University of Virginia and grew quickly on college and high school campuses over the next several years. Last year, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and the United States Student Association (USSA) sponsored the Day, which has grown from having about 150 students participate in 1996, to having almost 2,000 schools participate in 2002. GLSEN organized a student leadership team in January of 2002 to help high school students all over the country with planning the day, and working with their administration to get more support. www.dayofsilence.org.

#57 Attend the Governor's Conference on LGBT Youth

The Governor's Conference is the first of it's kind in the nation and focuses on making schools safe for LGBT and Allied students in Iowa! (Usually held in February)

#58 Apply for the Iowa Pride Network Award for best High School or College LGBT Group

This award recognizes Iowa's best GSA at the annual Matthew Shepard Scholarship Awards Dinner held in June. Past award High School Award winners are: (2005) Dubuque Senior High School (2006) Cedar Falls High School. Past College Award winners are: (2005) University of Iowa (2006) Wartburg College.

#59 Attend the Annual Matthew Shepard Scholarship Awards Dinner in June!

#60 Write for "The Voice" Magazine

The Voice is Iowa's very own magazine published and produced by Iowa's LGBTQA students!

#61 Apply for a High School or College Grant to support your GSA's work!

The College and High School Grant Program is made available by the Iowa Pride Network to assist Iowa GSA's in creating better programming and activities.