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Iowa Safe Schools Fall 2023 Legislative
Update for Iowa's K-12 Schools:
Suggestions and Resources for
Supporting LGBTQ Students under SF
496 and SF 482

schools

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VIII. Supporting a GSA

SF 496 does not specifically discuss the rights or abilities of GSAs to continue to operate as normal, even those in elementary schools.

GSAs in secondary schools are specifically protected by the [Equal Access Act of 1984](#)(\Downarrow), and must be allowed the same rights and privileges as all other student groups, and the school cannot limit them based on the content of the group being uncomfortable or unpopular.

Elementary schools are not bound by the Equal Access Act, however, in the United States “secondary school” is largely defined as grades 7-12.⁷ This means that in schools that contain grade 6 along with higher grades, the school cannot bar GSAs and/or must allow the GSA the same rights as all other student groups.

Things to think about

- GSAs must be student led in order to be protected by the Equal Access Act. This means that even if your group has a faculty advisor (most do) the activities of the group need to be student initiated and decided upon.
- Is your GSA allowed to advertise to the student body through things like putting posters in the hallways, being included in morning announcements, holding fundraisers, and participating in school events (homecoming parades, activity fairs, etc.)? Rules governing your GSA in these areas should be the same for all other student groups.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can students share their names and pronouns during GSA meetings without the GSA advisor notifying parents and guardians of the students name/pronouns?

A: Since casual discussion and introductions that are typical of GSA meetings are not formal requests for accommodation, no. However, as an added precaution, Iowa Safe Schools suggests establishing rules/norms as a group during the first meeting that ensure all GSA members will respect the language that other members use to talk about themselves. This will allow members to use their name and pronouns without needing to make a “request for an accommodation” since it is the group norm.

Q: Can GSAs meet during the school day (for example: during lunch, study hall, or another open period)?

A: Yes, as long as the same opportunity is available to all other student groups.

⁷ National Center For Education Statistics.

Q: Can the school limit GSA participation to certain grade levels?

A: According to the Equal Access Act, the rules that the school or district issues to the GSA must be the same for all non-curricular student groups.

For more information on GSAs, check out our GSA Guidebook or reach out to Hannah Mitchell at hannah@iowasafeschools.org.

