safe schools academy

Course Syllabus: Unpacking the GSA Toolbox

Number of Credits: 1*

Course Instructors: Mark Busch & Dana VanRenterghem

Course Description:

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) are clubs run by and for students. These clubs would not be possible without the advisors who spend time every day with LGBTQ and Allied students. Advisors work behind the scenes with school administrators, facilitating trips, and empowering students to lead these important clubs.

Students need a faculty or staff advisor to start a GSA (school counselor, librarian, teacher, school nurse). This advisor needs to be supportive of LGBTQ students and have time in their busy schedule to attend meetings the students will have throughout the year. Advisors provide a critical role in continuity for an organization as student leaders will change from year to year. As the faculty advisor, your primary role is to empower these students.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify the legal obligations of faculty advisors as outlined by the federal Equal Access Act
- Demonstrate an awareness of the role of Gay-Straight Alliances in building safe and supportive learning environments
- Create a plan to address issues related to trans and racial inclusion of a GSA
- Develop strategies to ensure students are successful and are supported in local GSAs

* Course Requirements:

To receive full credit for the course, participants must complete ALL assignments and respond to specific questions outlined in each assignment. Failure to complete all assignments will result in a disqualification in the course and a failing grade.

Other Course Information:

Getting Started

- After registering for the course, you will be sent an email with the website address, password and course key you need to access your online course, along with login instructions.
- Access each assignment through the course home page. All assignments will be submitted through the Moodle platform on each respective assignment page.
- Please save a backup copy of all course assignments and completed work.

Participation

- You are not required to be present (i.e. online) specific days or times. You will work at your own pace. The course is structured in 3 Weekly Units, however all assignments will not be due until the final day of the course.
- All responses will be posted online. Large documents, files, photographs or PowerPoint presentations may be attached as part of your response by using the "Submit A File" option.
- You may work collaboratively and submit similar responses on all assignments except for quizzes which must be done individually.

Research

GSAs are shown to be a best practice in reducing bullying and ensuring students feel safe and supportive in their schools and communities.

School connectedness for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth: In-school victimization and institutional supports (2010)

Diaz, E. M., Kosciw, J. G., & Greytak, E. A. *The Prevention Researcher,* vol. 17, issue 3

Abstract: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students often face challenges that prevent them from developing a sense of connectedness to school. Many LGBT youth attend schools that are unwelcoming or even overtly hostile. For any student, being victimized at school can negatively impact their sense of school connectedness. This article discusses the school experiences of LGBT youth and its impact on their feelings of school connectedness. Then research findings on the relationships between connectedness, in-school victimization, and school-based supports for LGBT students are discussed. It concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for educators and other community members.

http://www.tpronline.org/article.cfm/School_Connectedness_for_LGBT_Youth

Research update on LGBT youth in Rural Schools – Webinar provided by GLSEN

http://glsen.org/learn/research/media

INTASC Standards that are addressed in this course:

- 2. The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.
- 3. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.

- 4. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills.
- 5. The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
- 6. The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
- 7. The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
- 9. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professional in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.
- 10. The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

Assignment Checklist

Week	Topic/Activity	In Class	Out of Class
	Getting to Know the Class; Additional Readings: Take the time to get to know the class layout, read over the Help section, and review any other materials present in the class to get started. Take your time!		3 hrs
1	**GSAs & Their Role in Your School or Community**		
	Discussion: Introductions – In this activity, participants will have the opportunity to introduce themselves to their cohort, and state why they are	1hr	

	interested in learning more about GSAs. In addition, they are encouraged to build their user profile, so fellow participants can get to know them better.		
	Discussion: What is a GSA? – In this activity, participants will read 2 articles explaining what a GSA is, and why they are important to LGBTQ students. They will also watch 2 videos, created by students about their GSA and complete a quiz about the articles assigned.	1.5 hrs	3hrs
	Discussion: Equal Access Act – In this activity, participants will watch a webinar by the instructor on the Equal Access Act, and then read "The Equal Access Act: Making Difficult (Political) Decisions" by Kathy Collins. Additionally, participants will be asked to complete a quiz over assigned materials.	1.5hrs	3hrs
	Discussion: Rights of LGBTQ Student in High School – In this activity, participants will read articles and handouts from the American Civil Liberties Union on LGBTQ student rights in high school, and the Iowa Safe Schools Law of 2007. They are then assigned a quiz on rights that LGBTQ students have in schools.	1.5hrs	3hrs
2	**Tips & Tricks from the Pros: Avoiding Pitfalls and Celebrating Successes**		
	Discussion: The Importance of Intersectional GSAs – In this activity, participants will read articles and watch a short video on what intersectionality. They will then use the information gained from	1hr	3hrs

	course materials to answer quiz questions on why it is important for GSAs to run on an intersectional approach.		
	Discussion: Trans Inclusive GSAs – In this activity, participants will read about the Transgender Day of Remembrance, as well as materials on creating inclusive GSAs for transgender and gender non-conforming students. After reading these articles and watching a brief webinar by the course instructor, participants are asked to complete a quiz on creating inclusive GSAs.	1.5hrs	2hrs
	Discussion: Anti-Racist GSAs – In this activity, participants are given reading and activity assignments on creating anti-racist GSA groups. In addition, they will watch a TedX Talk by Peggy McIntosh on race and inclusivity. Participants are then assigned a quiz that requires critical thinking of concepts covered in readings and the video.	1.5hrs	3hrs
	Discussion: Holding the First Meeting – In this activity, participants will read handouts on holding a successful GSA meeting from GLSEN. In addition, they will watch a webinar by the instructor on basics that should be covered during meetings so everyone feels safe and included. After assigned materials are reviewed, participants will complete a quiz on why the first meeting a GSA holds is so important.	1.5hrs	2hrs
3	**<u>Putting it Together – Activities, Fundraising, and More!</u>**		

	Discussion: Day of Silence – In this activity, participants will read about the Day of Silence from GLSEN, as well as watch a webinar from the instructor on the importance of the day, as well as the importance of student activism. After reviewing materials, participants are tasked with planning a Day of Silence for a GSA, and how they would address any pushback from the school.	1hr	2hrs
	Discussion: Fundraising – In this activity, participants will read materials from GLSEN and other organizations on GSA groups organizing action campaigns. They will also watch a webinar by the instructor on GSA fundraising, and why it is often difficult for groups. Participants are then assigned the task of completing a quiz on fundraising for LGBTQ student groups.	1.5hrs	3hrs
	Final Assignment: Create Activity Ideas for Students – In the final assignment, participants will create activity ideas for students based on what they have learned about constructing a GSA that reinforces safe and supportive learning environments.	1.5hrs	3hrs
	Total Class Time	15 hours	30 hours

Coursework

Participants can earn up to 75 points total for the course. The following table depicts the breakdown of points possible for the required coursework

Activity	Points
7 Quizzes (5 points each)	35
3 Discussions (10 points each)	30
Final Implementation Plan/Paper	25
Total	**90**

Grading Scale – Graduate Credit

100-90% (90-81 points)	A
89-80% (80-72 points)	B
79-70% (71-63 points)	C
69-60% (62-54 points)	D
59%-Below (<53 points)	F

Grading Scale - License Renewal Credit

100-80% (90-72 points)	P
79%-Below (<71 points)	NP

Student Requirements

Students are required to:
- Complete all quizzes
- Participate in all discussion forums
- Complete a final implementation plan

Americans with Disabilities Act:
If you are a student with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services, or other accommodations for this class, please see the instructor to discuss your accommodation needs.

Grading Rubrics for Individual Activities

Discussion Forums (30 points possible)

Discussion Forums are asynchronous ways to engage in class discussions. They require you to submit an answer to a question and respond to the posts of other peers. Because they are an integral part of sharing strategies, analyzing research, and sharing ideas, discussion forums in this course comprise a significant percentage of your final grade. It's highly recommended that you read and respond to more than the required two peer postings because greater participation will facilitate a greater depth of understanding. Additionally, it's important to make posts in a timely manner to benefit from peer responses.

Grading Rubric for Discussion Forums		
		Points
Critical Thinking	Makes connections to the other content and real=life that are supported by reference(s) and example(s)	1
	Offers new ideas, connections, or applications	1
	Expresses and justifies personal opinion	1
Assignment Specific Criteria	Addresses all parts of the assignment, cites sources	1

Participation (Responses to at least 2 peer posts)	Responds to other posts (when available)	1
Total Points Possible		5

Final Assignment (25 points possible)

  The final assignment is a critical part of this course. Participants must complete a one-page final assignment. The paper is meant to be a reflection as well as a chance to state what you will use going forward. The rubric below will be used to grade the final assignment, but additional details will be provided within the course.

Grading Rubric for Implementation Plan		
		Points
Critical Thinking	Highlights any new knowledge gained as a result of course.	5
	Offers new ideas, connections, or applications	5
	Expresses and justifies personal opinion	3
	Discusses Overall Implications	2
Assignment Specific Criteria	Addresses all parts of the assignment, cites sources	2
Mechanics	Writing is clear, well developed, and organized, No or few grammar and spelling errors	2
Implementation	Clearly states ideas to use in the future	2
	States resources to be used	2
	Is realistic in their approach – understands limitations may exist	2
Total Points Possible		25