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Conducting a School Survey

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Developing a school survey:

- Decide as a GSA how you want to write and conduct the survey. Divide up tasks and set deadlines. If your group is large enough, you may want to form a separate "survey committee."
- Pinpoint the specific issue(s) you would like to learn more about through the survey. For example, you might choose to focus on anti-gay slurs or teacher attitudes toward the GSA. Design several questions relating to each of these issues.
- Be sure to include demographic questions such as gender, race, and grade. This will help you organize your results later.
- Many GSAs have found that including one or two open-ended questions at the end of the survey can be a good way to generate useful and revealing information about people's attitudes. See the included survey questions and results for examples.
- Keep the survey fairly short -- it shouldn't take more than 5-10 minutes to fill out.
- Feel free to use some of the survey questions in this article.

Getting your survey approved:

- Show your GSA advisor a draft of your survey and ask for feedback.
- Find out how other surveys at your school are approved and follow the same process. For example, some surveys get approved by Student Leadership. At some schools, it is wise to get the approval and/or endorse- ment of the principal so that if you run into any trouble with certain teachers giving out the survey you'll have the principal's support behind you. Some schools have simply approached a department chair (e.g. Social Studies or English) to help you distribute the survey through teachers in their department.
- When seeking approval, be able to articulate why you want to conduct a survey, what you hope to get out of it, and how it can benefit the larger school community.
- Develop a feasible plan for conducting the survey. Think about getting a good cross-section of the student population.
- If you don't get approval to conduct the survey in classrooms, consider handing it out at lunch time. Offer an incentive such as candy or cookies so lots of students will be interested in participating, not just those who support the GSA already.

So we gave out a survey - now what?:

- Tally the results. Write up a report. Include the quantitative results for each question as well as the qualitative comments. You can also write a cover letter or introduction that gives background on why the survey was conducted and what major themes were discovered.
- Publish! Make a write up of why you did the survey, the results, quotes from respondents and submit it to your school newspaper or local city/town newspaper.
- Use survey stats to publicize your GSA meetings and raise visibility in your school through announcements, posters, and advertisements. Example: "72% of students surveyed at Alhambra said that things need to change to make LGBTQ students safer here. Now DO SOMETHING! Create change! Come to the next GSA meeting, Wednesday at 3:00 in room 100. And bring a friend."
- Identify some of the major issues with your school environment as indicated by the survey results (ie. teachers don't intervene when homophobic comments are made in the classroom) and design projects to address them (like coordinating an anti-homophobia workshop for teachers... see Outright Vol. I, Issue 1 at gsanetwork.org for more details)
- Consider formulating the results so as to compare answers between grade levels and/or males and females. Miramonte High School organized their survey results this way, and found out some interesting statistics: 100% of females and 78% of males surveyed believed that all people deserved to be treated with respect; 30% of females and 83% of males surveyed said that they used anti-gay comments. Then create bar charts or pie graphs to illustrate the statistics you come up with.
- Think about giving out another survey at a later date to measure if your school climate is changing. See below for a sample survey. Feel free to use any or all of these questions in your own survey.

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Source URL: http://www.gsanetwork.org/resources/gsa-actions-events/conducting-school-survey

Links:
[1] http://www.gsanetwork.org/files/resources/Complete-SchoolSurveyWithSample.pdf