
Passing the Torch of Leadership



We've seen it happen many times: A group of passionate 12th graders work to start a GSA at the beginning of their senior year, hold a year's worth of meetings, and then they graduate. The following fall, the GSA struggles to get going and membership is lacking. What went wrong?

Since most high school students are only around for four years, that means the leadership and makeup of a GSA is constantly changing. If you don't intentionally create plans to transition the leadership of a club from year to year, there is a good chance the GSA will fall into inactivity. Here are some ideas on how to pass the torch of leadership from year to year:

- If your GSA has an official leadership team (which is a good idea), consider having a representative from each grade on that team.
- Give younger members of the GSA a chance to facilitate meetings. Create a mentorship program by pairing older students with younger students and have them co-facilitate a discussion or activity together so younger students gain experience leading.
- Begin talking in the spring about who will be leading the club the following year. Don't wait until the end of the school year.
- Make sure that all members of the club are involved in the decision-making process. If it's only the older students who create the agendas and plan events, younger students may not feel as much ownership over the club.
- Does your GSA have conversations about goals? Create a list of short-term and long-term goals for the GSA at your school. If you don't have clear plans for who will continue GSA over the years, it's hard to reach your long-term goals.
- Does your GSA record minutes or document your meetings and activities? Keeping some kind of record of club activities can be really helpful for future leaders to review and see the progress that has been made over the years.
- Network with other clubs at your school to increase and diversify GSA membership. Remember that there is strength in diversity, and be intentional about building up students of color, students with disabilities, and gender diverse students as GSA leaders.
- Consider holding an end-of year ceremony at which graduating seniors symbolically pass the torch on to younger students. Make a torch, baton, or scepter out of papier-mâché. Get creative!
- Get a commitment from your GSA advisor for the following year, too. Consider having co-advisors for your club to create more consistency from staff leadership.



Finally, encourage a student or two from your GSA to apply for GSAFE's Leadership Training Institute! We created LTI to help GSAs transition leadership from one year to another.