
Putting Ability First



In order to make sure that you are open and welcoming to students of all abilities, it's important that you approach your GSA with a "universal design" mindset. Your responsibility is to include every person who wants to join. What barriers exist to students that might keep them out of your space? Closely examine the physical space you inhabit, your methods of communication, and the language or attitudes the students in your GSA have. People with disabilities and neuroatypical people may have different needs than other students. Thinking ahead will help everyone be able to access the space you have created. Critically ask yourself questions about the following things:

Physical Space

- Is the room your GSA meets in accessible to those in wheelchairs?
- Is it close to an accessible restroom?
- Does sound carry well and is the room relatively quiet?

Activities

- If your GSA goes on field trips, will everyone be able to participate?
- Are all of your icebreakers adaptable so that everyone can do them?
- Do your materials contain colors* that some people might not be able to see? Do the videos you watch contain captions?

Language

- Does anyone in your GSA use ableist** or hurtful language?
- Does any humor that your GSA uses stem from ableism?
- Do you take the time to explain any acronyms, jargon, or cutting-edge terms that some students may not have heard before?

How to incorporate ability into your GSA:

- **Include queer people with disabilities in your materials.** Representation matters! Choose a day to focus on a queer person who is neuroatypical or has a disability and their life. Eli Clare, Alison Kafer, and Mia Mingus are all excellent people to begin with.
- **Actively challenge ableism.** Host an awareness campaign surrounding the stigma of disability, or how certain words hurt neuroatypical people. Actively interrupt oppressive language and behaviors of other students.
- **Collaborate and form coalitions with organizations at your school that focus on ability.**

**95% of people with colorblindness are red/green colorblind. Don't print on red or green paper!*

***Words like lame, retard, crazy, cripple, psycho, and spaz are considered offensive to many people.*