

# MODULE ONE KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

## Guiding question/s:

What are my rights in school?  
How can I advocate for change in my school?

## Broad student understandings:

- I can make my school a more supportive place for its students. Learning about the history of and current issues in LGBTQ+ advocacy can help me learn to be an advocate in my school.
- I need to know my rights so I know how I am supposed to be treated, and what rights I still must fight for.

## Specific learning goals:

- Consider the challenges that students face in school.
- Begin planning a project that addresses one issue that students face in school.
- Understand the rights students have in schools.
- Explain students' rights in an accessible way.
- Consider and respond to opposing views.

## Prep — Sessions 1 and 2:

- Printouts or index cards for student entry & exit activities
- Large post-it, whiteboard, or Smartboard for writing prompts
- Copies of the **Student Rights Report Card** from the Appendix, page 54, or as an [online quiz](#)
- Copies of **Know Your Rights Resources**, or links for students using computers
- Copies of **Brick by Brick Project** handout, Appendix page 56
- Optional: Student notebooks or binders where they will keep their work throughout Brick by Brick

## Know your rights resources

\* **Note:** These resources were selected following an NWLC survey gathering student input on what rights they wanted to learn about in their schools. Distributed by D.C. LGBTQ+ youth organization SMYAL to GSAs nationwide, this list reflects the key issues in which students expressed the most interest.

- NWLC toolkits and reports
  - [Unfair Discipline](#)
  - [Mental Health](#)
  - [Harassment](#)
  - [Dress Codes](#)
  - [Pregnant and Parenting Students](#)
- [ACLU students' rights resources](#)
  - [Harassment](#)
  - [My School My Rights \(CA-specific, but good reference point\)](#)
- Southern Poverty Law Center
  - [LGBTQ Rights](#)

# SESSION 1

## Objective

Identify challenges students face in their schools and pick topics for their projects.

Students reflect on and individually/private respond to the prompt:

**What are some challenges students face in your school?  
List as many as you can think of.**

The prompt should be posted in text large enough for students to see and repeated out loud for the students. You can also include the questions on a handout with space provided for answers.

## Entry Activity & Group Brainstorm (15 minutes)

Let the students know this is a safe space and time to talk about challenges students face in their schools. Remind students not to share anything involving another student without permission. Affirm group norms or ground rules for your program to create a space that is conducive to learning and group sharing.

Lead a brainstorm of challenges that students face in schools. Be sure to write down each response on a large post-it, whiteboard, or Smartboard. Remember that the challenges students face in schools will be affected and compounded by current events, such as important issues in the community and pandemic-related trauma, including school shutdowns. Allow space for students to discuss what has been challenging for them personally. Since students bring their whole selves to school, their personal challenges are also the school's challenges.

Discuss whether there are any common themes in what the students share (such as harassment/bullying, lack of mental health support, discrimination, harsh discipline, etc.).

## Student Rights Report Card (20 minutes)

Use the **Student Rights Report Card** activity (Appendix page 54, also available as an [online quiz](#)) to help students examine whether their schools respect students' rights. Share that students do have legal rights in school, which the group will be learning more about. Students will take the first step in thinking about how to make schools better, by identifying the ways in which they are falling short.

Individually or in small groups, have students complete the **Student Rights Report Card**. Review as a whole group to find common points of agreement or disagreement. If students go to different schools, discuss responses to find similarities and differences between them.



**Topic  
Selections  
(15 minutes)**

Explain that in this program, students will have the opportunity to advocate for change in their schools, and that they should choose a topic they care about or find interesting because they will be working on it throughout the program.

Give students time to talk, as a whole group or in small groups, about the challenges they identified in the brainstorm or in the **Student Rights Report Card**. Ask students to choose one challenge facing students as one that they would like to spend time working to change. Students can make this choice as individuals or in small groups, depending on the size of your student group and how much student interest overlaps.

Invite individuals/groups to share what topics they will be working on with the whole group as they are comfortable, or just with you if not. Keep a record of which students want to work on which topics to refer back to throughout the program. If your students are keeping notebooks or binders, ask them to write their choices and save their papers there. The topics students choose may also inform which “Know Your Rights” materials you will prepare for the students in the next session.

**Summarization  
& Exit  
Activity  
(10 minutes)**

Take some time to ask students what they think it means to be an advocate or to advocate and go through some examples. You can generally define *advocacy* as the process of supporting or defending a cause or group, and *activism* as taking direct action to achieve a political or social goal. Advocacy and activism can both take many different forms—from big social movements to smaller personal actions. Putting the definitions on a Smartboard or whiteboard as you discuss may be helpful.

Tell students that in this program, they will be working as advocates on the issues they have chosen and will learn to be effective advocates by studying the history and present of LGBTQ+ advocacy led by people of color. For example, one study found that LGB people are more likely to be involved in social justice movements than non-LGB people. LGBTQ+ people have always been movement leaders and can set an example for how to be an advocate.

You can also explain that advocacy may be more important than ever. At the time of this publication, anti-trans advocates have been fighting hard across the country for trans students to be denied fair access to education and athletics—focusing on this even during a pandemic. While students, especially LGBTQ+ students, may have felt powerless during

## Notes & Extension Opportunities

the pandemic and all the discrimination that happened throughout, this program is a chance for them to start feeling powerful again.

To wrap up, have students finish and turn in a slip of paper answering the question:

**What is something you want to learn about being an advocate?**

Use the responses to modify or highlight relevant material throughout the program as needed.

The brainstorming discussions in this session could easily last more than one session--extend as appropriate for your group of students.

Optional extension opportunities:

**No-tech:** Have students draft a **progress report** to their school to accompany the **Student Rights Report Card**. In this progress report, note why the school received the grade it did, and what specifically it needs to do to improve. The purpose is not to “send” the progress report, but to guide students in identifying the specific reasons the school received the grade it did, and the things the school needs to do to change.

**No-tech:** Have students role-play a report card conference, with one student representing the evaluator, and the other representing the school. Have the evaluator explain why the school got the grade it did and what it needs to do to improve. Have the “school representative” explain some possible reasons why the school has not acted yet. Have the goal to be to address some of the challenges and propose a path forward.

**No-tech/lo-tech/hi-tech:** After a discussion of what challenges students face in their schools, have students design their perfect school that addresses all of those challenges. Students can create a brochure for prospective students, emphasizing the experience prospective students will have if they choose to attend this school.

# SESSION 2

## Objective

Students understand and educate others on students' rights in schools.

Students reflect on and individually/privately respond to the prompt:

**What rights do you think you have in school? Name as many as you can.**

**"In school, I think I have the right to..."**

**"In school, I think I have the right to be free from..."**

## Entry Activity (10 minutes)

The prompt should be posted in text large enough for students to see and repeated out loud for the students. Students may also benefit from a handout with the question/s printed with space to write their answers.

Students may either keep their answers private or discuss as a group, according to the needs and personalities of your students. If discussing as a group, as part of this discussion you can explore the idea of what is a "right," and different types of rights (legal, rights under school policy, fundamental human rights).

Distribute **Know Your Rights materials** to the students individually or in small groups. If students identified certain interests in Session 1, make sure they get the corresponding resources. You can split up the different resources among the students, so everyone has something different. Ask students to take some time to review the materials and answer the following questions as they do:

## Resource Review (30 minutes)

- 1. What are three things you learned from this resource?**
- 2. What are two questions you have after reviewing this resource?**

The prompt should be posted in text large enough for students to see and repeated out loud for the students. Students may also benefit from a handout with the question/s printed with space to write their answers, or can write the answers in their optional project notebooks or binders.

Ask students to share their responses with the whole group and take time to answer the questions that came up about students' rights.

## Project Planning (20 minutes)

## Extension opportunities:

Students now split up into individual/small group working spaces to work on their specific projects. Explain and have students fill in the **Brick by Brick Project Handout** individually first with their tentative ideas. After filling out the form with their tentative ideas, ask them to consider the following questions:

1. **What did I learn about students' rights that is relevant to my specific project?**
2. **How can my project make sure students know their rights?**
3. **How can my project help to protect students' rights?**
4. **Are there rights students don't yet have at my school that I still want to fight for?**

The prompts should be posted in text large enough for students to see and repeated out loud for the students. Students may also benefit from a handout with the question/s printed with space to write their answers or can write the answers in their optional project notebooks or binders.

Spend time with the different groups/individuals helping work out some of these answers and project planning. If using project notebooks or binders, collect and review at the end of the session.

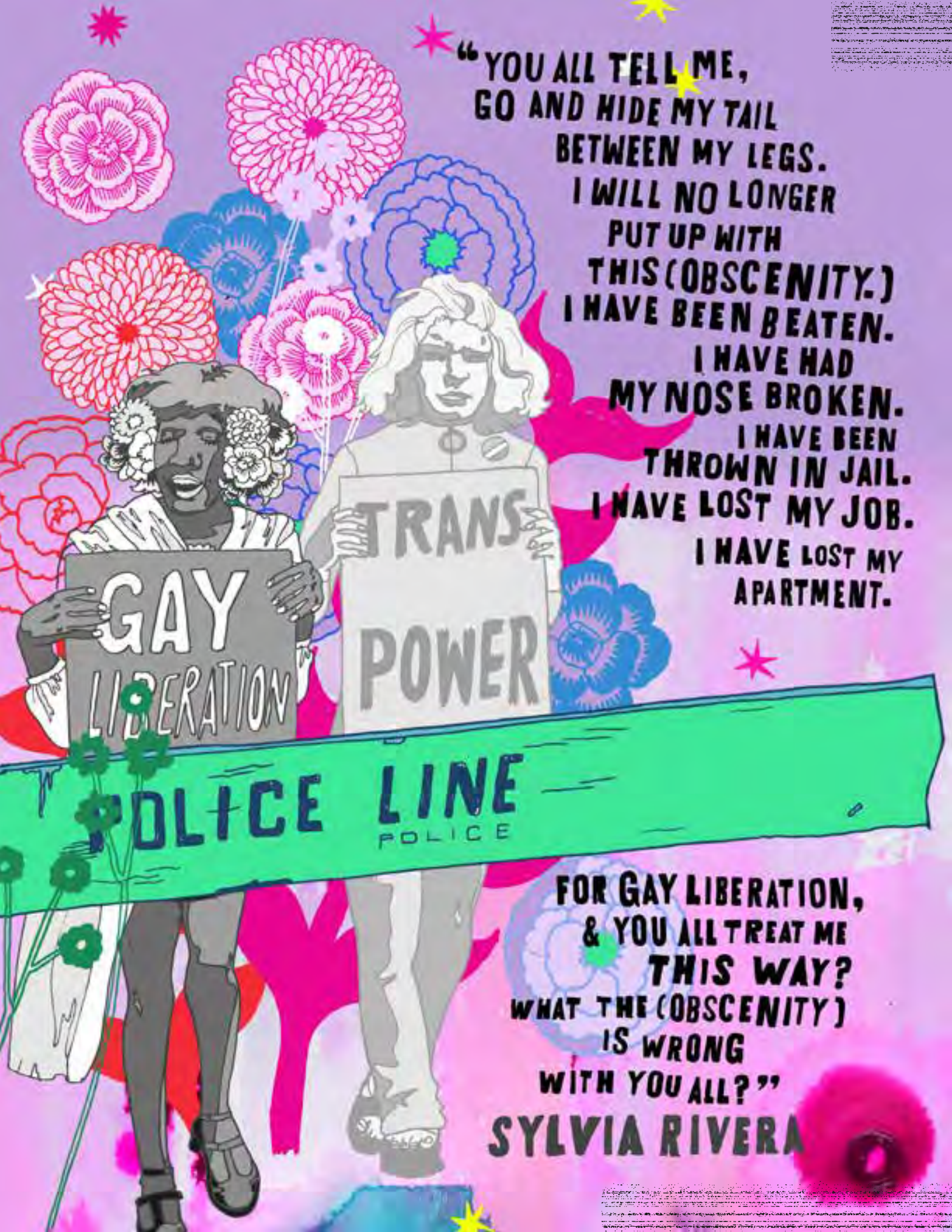
**No-tech/lo-tech:** Ask students to create a formal (PowerPoint or poster-based) presentation on the area they spent time learning about to share with the rest of the group.

**No-tech:** Ask students to examine their student handbook. Create a list of what is in the handbook about student rights, and what is missing.

**Hi-tech/no-tech:** Ask students to do independent research on an area they did not learn about in class and find more resources to share with students. Have students contribute to an **online resource hub** of Know Your Rights resources for students in their school. Have students propose that this resource be incorporated into the school website, or build an independent website using Weebly or Wix. This could also be a paper resource, like a brochure.







**"YOU ALL TELL ME,  
GO AND HIDE MY TAIL  
BETWEEN MY LEGS.  
I WILL NO LONGER  
PUT UP WITH  
THIS (OBSCENITY.)  
I HAVE BEEN BEATEN.  
I HAVE HAD  
MY NOSE BROKEN.  
I HAVE BEEN  
THROWN IN JAIL.  
I HAVE LOST MY JOB.  
I HAVE LOST MY  
APARTMENT.**

**FOR GAY LIBERATION,  
& YOU ALL TREAT ME  
THIS WAY?  
WHAT THE (OBSCENITY)  
IS WRONG  
WITH YOU ALL?"  
SYLVIA RIVERA**