

Why “That’s so gay” is NOT okay

Rationale

This lesson demystifies the word “gay” and challenges misunderstandings of the word while making it clear that the word “gay” should never be used as an insult. It will encourage students to speak out and be an upstander when they hear homophobic comments.

Grade/subject(s): K-12

Core Competencies:

- Social Responsibility – Valuing Diversity. Students value diversity, defend human rights, advocate for others, and act with a sense of ethics in interactions, including online.

First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one’s actions
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story
- Learning requires exploration of one’s identity

Teaching Strategies and Questions

Key questions:

- What is an insult?
- What is a compliment?

Define each and then ask for some examples of insults and compliments.

Who knows what the word gay means? (*definition: a man who is romantically attracted to another man, or a woman who is romantically attracted to another woman. Students might also know the word lesbian, which is only for 2 women who are romantically attracted to other women*).

Some students may say gay means “happy”. This is true in old literature and Christmas carols. Currently, it is used correctly, or as an insult.

- Who has ever heard “gay” used as a compliment?
- Who has heard it used as an insult?

When gay is used as an insult, is the person using a word that actually explain what they are trying to say? (“That soccer game was so gay”, but they actually mean that soccer game was dumb, frustrating, annoying, I didn’t like it).

- Why is it important to use words properly, according to their meaning?
- When the word “gay” is used as an insult, who does it affect?
 - Anyone around who is gay
 - Someone who has two moms or two dads (parents are gay)
 - Anyone around who knows someone who is gay
 - Anyone around who has a friend, family member or someone they care about who is gay
 - Anyone who believes that all people need to be respected and accepted for who they are

Is there anything wrong with the word “gay”? No, not when it is used properly.

Reinforce that in our school there is no tolerance for any form of discrimination. We believe that all students, staff and community members should be treated with respect. Homophobic comments like “that’s so gay” will not be tolerated.

Be an upstander, instead of a bystander, let other know that “gay” should never be used as an insult.

This lesson plan was created by Sarah Larsen, Burnaby School District.