SOGI 123

# Why "That's so gay" is NOT Okay (Secondary)

**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

**Summary**

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.

**Lesson Plan**

1. Label Activity: create a class set of cards with different types of labels on them.
    a. Some examples may include: joker, brainiac, jock, shy, popular, loner, bully, drama queen, emo, nerd, loud, quiet, kind, mean, artistic, etc.
    b. Invite students to select a card and without looking at it place it facing outward on their forehead and begin to mingle around the room.
    c. Instruct students to interact with others in the room based on the label that they have been given.
    d. Allow students to mingle for 3-5 minutes in this way.
    e. Have students hand in their labels and invite them to "release" any negative feelings or interactions that they may have experienced while being treated like their label.

2. Debrief - ask students to reflect on and consider the following questions:
    a. What was it like for you being treated like your label?
    b. Invite students to reflect on and consider a time in their lives when they felt labelled or summed up by a single word. Was this helpful or unhelpful? Why or why not?
    c. What are the limitations of using a single label to describe someone?

**Key messages for students:**

- Sometimes labels can be helpful for framing or categorizing things in our minds, but other times labels are attached to unhelpful and even hurtful stereotypes.
- Labelling others presents a single narrative and as such, it is generally unhelpful to label someone or something because we are all more than just one thing.
- We all have the power to either help or hurt others. The language we use and the way that we choose to interact with others is very powerful. Be sure to use your power in a positive way!

3. Talk briefly about the history of the English language, and how it is dynamic and constantly changing. What are some words that are fairly new? Examples:
    a. U and V used to be interchangeable - haue versus have
    b. I and Y used to be interchangeable - wyfe versus wife
    c. Definitions of words have changed - https://ideas.ted.com/20-words-that-once-meant-something-very-different/
        - **Flirt**: Some 500 years ago, flirting was flicking something away or flicking open a fan or otherwise making a brisk or jerky motion. Now it involves playing with people's emotions (sometimes it may feel like your heart is getting jerked around in the process).
4. What did the word "Gay" mean originally? Give an original definition of "gay": https://www.etymonline.com/word/gay
    a. What does it mean now? (people attracted to others of the same sex)

b. Do people ever use "gay" to mean happy today? (When was the last time you heard someone say, "I'm going to the movies with my friends tonight… I'm so gay!")
c. What does it mean today when someone says, "That's so gay"? What did the person really mean when using it this way? (Weird, boring, terrible, crappy, etc)
d. When the word "gay" is used as a negative, who does it affect? Responses may include:
    - People who are gay (or questioning)
    - People who have two moms or two dads (parents are gay)
    - People who have a family member (sibling, aunt/uncle, etc) or someone they care about who is gay
    - People who have gay friends
    - People who believe that everyone should be respected and accepted for who they are
    - Society - by using this phrase negative (homophobic) attitudes towards gay and lesbian people are perpetuated (which is not only against school policy but is also against the law).
e. Do people who use it this way ever say they didn't mean for it to be homophobic? What do you think of this defense?
f. Is "That's so gay" ever used as a positive? Does this sometimes perpetuate stereotypes? (Perhaps when describing something as flamboyant)
g. Are all gay people the same? Think about the start of the lesson when you were given a label; think of a time when you were summed up by a single word. How did this make you feel?

5. Brainstorm ways to respond when you hear someone use the phrase, "That's so gay".

Conclude the lesson by reminding students that the language we use and the way that we choose to interact with others is very powerful. Remind them that laughing or even being silent when hearing discrimination signals approval not only to the speaker, but to everyone who heard it.