

# TEN THINGS YOU CAN SAY OR DO WHEN YOU HEAR “THAT’S SO GAY!”

1. Ask, “How would you feel if your name/identity was inserted instead of “gay”?”  
i.e.: “That’s so Bryce/ Gurvir / Aisha! etc.” and it was used repetitively.
2. Ask, “What does that mean?” or say, “That’s so what?”  
Typical student response, “It’s stupid, weird, ugly, etc.”  
Teacher response: “That’s the same as saying, ‘Gay people are stupid, weird, or ugly’ and I find that offensive.”
3. Ask, “How can a book, idea, or song have a sexual orientation?” if they are referring to an inanimate object when using this slur.
4. Say, “You might be surprised to know that what you just said could hurt someone’s feelings.”
5. Say, “This is a homophobia-free zone.  
Homophobic slurs like that are not tolerated here.”

6. Ask, “What does gay mean?” Use this opportunity to discuss the language of oppression.
7. Show one of the NFB videos: Sticks and Stones, One of Them or In Other Words.
8. Post classroom posters on this topic
9. Say, “Gay is OK.”
10. Make links between homophobic slurs and other forms of discrimination. Use analogies between racism, sexism, ableism, ethnocentrism, etc.

## USE A STRATEGY THAT REFLECTS YOUR PERSONAL TEACHING STYLE AND IS APPROPRIATE TO THE SITUATION AT HAND.

“Homophobia is like Racism and Anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry in that it seeks to dehumanize a large group of people, to deny their humanity, their dignity and personhood... I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream to make room at the table of brother and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people.”

Coretta Scott King

## Responding to Name-Calling in School: Considering the Time and Place

Your response to name-calling and harassment will be impacted by both the setting in which it occurs and the time available to you. The choices you make while walking rapidly through the hallway on your way to teach your next class will, of necessity, be different from the options you can choose with plenty of time to spare and the structure of a classroom supporting you. If “time and place” allow for only punitive or reactive responses, or if the needs of the targeted student will be better served by your speaking to the offending student(s) later, make sure to carve out a future “time and place” to deal with the situation more reflectively. Education will go much further than punishment alone!

	Less Time/Public Space (at dismissal, during recess)	More Time/Private Space (during class, after school)
Structured Setting (Class, library)	<p>“That expression is unacceptable in this room.”</p> <p>“You know the class rules.”</p> <p>“Please Apologize.”</p> <p>“Take a time out.”</p> <p>“Leave her/him alone.”</p>	<p>“What did you mean by, ‘That’s so gay’?”</p> <p>“That was a stereotype. Stereotypes are a kind of lie, and they hurt peoples feelings.”</p> <p>“That was a homophobic putdown and it doesn’t belong at school.”</p> <p>“That was hurtful. Your comment hurt by...”</p>
Unstructured Setting (Hallway, gym, school yard)	<p>“Cut it out.”</p> <p>“That’s way out of line.”</p> <p>“Stop it right now.”</p> <p>“Whoa, that is NOT okay!”</p>	<p>“That is bullying. It is against school rules.”</p> <p>“At this school we do not harass people. Do you want me to write this up as a bullying incident?”</p> <p>“That was really mean. Why did you say that?”</p> <p>“Do you understand why that was so hurtful?”</p>

