What to say….

It doesn't matter if it's a Grade 1 student who might not know
what the word "gay" means, a Grade 6 student trying to sound cool, or a Year 10
student "teasing" a friend. All of these have the potential of creating an unsafe
classroom or school environment and must be addressed. So, what can caring
adults do?

*A safe and welcoming school environment is essential for student
success. Educators are a critical component in creating and
environment that enables all students to thrive!*

Stop It …

Keep it simple with quick responses:

—
• "Remember, we don't use put-downs in this class."

• "Do you know what 'gay' means?"

• "It's not OK at this school to use 'gay' disrespectfully to mean something is bad."

• "You may not have meant to be hurtful, but when you use the word 'gay' to mean
     something is bad or stupid, it is hurtful." Follow-up: "Do you know why it is
     hurtful?"

• "Using the word 'homo' to tease someone is harassment and is unacceptable."

• "Even if you didn't mean to offend people who are gay, it is offensive to call this
     assignment gay (or queer); if you don't like something, then say you don't like
     it!

• "It is never OK to say, 'you act like a girl (or look like a boy)' as a put-down."

• "Using the words 'queer', 'dyke' or 'fag' to joke around is not OK. These are
     hurtful words and can impact anyone who overhears them."

- "It doesn't matter who said it, I don't want to hear that kind of language again. Is that clear?"

Many trans young people have experienced negative situations that affect their mental health such as peer rejection, bullying, issues with school, university or TAFE, and a lack of family support.
Telethon Kids health Trans Pathways summary

Don't Ignore It …

- Harassment does not go away on its own.

- Ignoring mean name-calling and hurtful teasing allows it to continue and possibly get worse.

- If other students do not see action, they get the message there is nothing wrong with it.

- Not speaking up teaches not only the student targeted, but also anyone within hearing range that they will not be protected from harassment.

- Almost any response is better than ignoring the situation. You may not know exactly what to say, but you must stop the harassment.

- Taking action reaffirms limits. Interrupting name-calling and harassment isn't always easy. With experience you will become more comfortable in handling it. Practice with colleagues.

- You can always go back to the student and say or do something else if you feel you did not respond well.

78.9% of trans young people have experienced issues with school, university or TAFE and have higher rates of wanting to hurt themselves, self-harming, reckless behaviour, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, diagnoses of depression and anxiety than those who did not experience issues with school, university or TAFE

Educate …

- If you have the time and opportunity to educate on the spot, do it. If you don't, make time later.

- If you have been hearing the phrase "That's gay" or "no homo," take time during class to make sure that your students know what "gay" means and know why it is hurtful to use as a comment or put-down.

- Be clear that using the word "gay" in a negative way is disrespectful. Be clear that using the phrase "That's gay" is hurtful to other students who may have family members or friends who are LGBTIQ.

- Be prepared to provide accurate information. For the youngest students, keep it simple – for example, "the word gay describes a man and a man or a woman and a woman who love each other." As students get older, they may want more explanations and discussion.

Be Proactive …

- Develop an environment of respect and caring for all students in your school and classroom using inclusive language, books and other materials.
- Establish clear schoolwide and classroom policies against hurtful teasing and bullying. Ensure that all members of the school community understand what the policies are and why they are important.

- Be explicit that rules against hurtful name-calling include "That's gay!" "It" "Homo!" "Fag!" "Tranny!" "Sissy!" and other LGBTIQ put-downs.

- Develop the capacity of students and educators to be allies that stand up for students who are harassed.