

People First Language (PFL)

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What is People First Language (PFL)?

- PFL puts the person before the disability, and it describes what a person *has*, not who a person *is*.
- PFL represents a more respectful and accurate way of communicating. People with disabilities are not their diagnoses or disabilities, they are people, first.
- PFL is *not* about "political correctness," it's about good manners and The Golden Rule of treating others as you want to be treated.

Consider this...

- Are you “myopic” or do you wear glasses?
- Are you “cancerous” or do you have cancer?
- Is a person “handicapped/disabled” or does he/she have a disability?

If people with disabilities are to be included in all aspects of society, and if they are to be respected and valued as fellow citizens, we must stop using language that sets them apart and devalues them.

Why is People First Language important?

- Words shape our world.
- Words reflect and reinforce our attitudes and our perceptions.
- Many words used as disability descriptors can evoke feelings and/or imagery that perpetuate negative stereotypical perceptions.
- These perceptions create barriers and obstacles to the success, inclusion and acceptance of individuals with disabilities.

Words do indeed matter!

- Myth: "Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words can never hurt you."
- *Words do indeed matter! Words can* hurt or help; they can raise or lower expectations; they can crush hopes or create dreams; and so much more.

What **NOT** to say...

- Handicapped/Disabled, retarded, crippled/lame, crazy/nuts, suffers from, afflicted with, confined to, victim of, challenged, behavior kid, autistic kid, SPED, etc.

What **NOT** to say...

- Terms such as “SPED” may have negative connotations such as students being referred to as “SPED” in a name-calling way. Therefore, further use of this term in other settings, such as when referring to programs for students with disabilities, teachers of students with disabilities, or as an abbreviation for Special Education is considered derogatory.

What TO say...

SAY:

People with Disabilities

Intellectual Disability

Robert has autism.

Sara communicates with...

INSTEAD OF:

Handicapped/Disabled

Mental Retardation

Robert's autistic.

Sara is non-verbal.

What TO say...

| SAY: | INSTEAD OF: |
|---|---|
| Program for developing social, communication & behavioral skills | Autism Program |
| Program for students with behavioral support needs | Behavior Program |
| Program for developing independent living skills from the classroom to the community. | CBI (Community Based Instruction) Program |

Special Education is a **SERVICE** not a **PLACE**

- All students are general education (GE) students.
- Some GE students require specially designed instruction and/or related services.
- Special Education is a **SERVICE**; it is not a **PLACE**.

Where do we go from here?

- **DO NOT** focus on labeling and further segregating students with disabilities by using words with negative stereotypical perceptions
- **FOCUS** on providing appropriate supports, accommodations, services for students with disabilities in their Least Restrictive Environment
- **MODEL** appropriate PFL for others when they do not use PFL and when appropriate have a direct conversation.

A Few Exceptions:

- Some people with disabilities have their own preferences about how we discuss their disability.
- For example, in some deaf communities, it is preferred to say, "He's deaf," rather than "He has deafness." It is important to be aware of and respect DEAF Culture.
- In some communities of the blind, it is preferred to say, "He is blind" or to say, "person without sight" rather than "He has blindness."

When in doubt, you can:

- Observe and listen to the language used by a person with disabilities, and take your cues from what is said.
- Ask individuals if they are willing to share their preferences with you.
- If all else fails, and you accidentally offend someone, a sincere apology can help.

It's Time for a Change...

- Isn't it time to make this change?
- If not now, when?
- If not you, who?

Who should use person-first language?

- In an ideal world, everyone. However, until old habits are replaced by new habits, we who work in the field, especially need to set an example as well as better understand and empathize with those who advocate for Person First Language.

Let's do it!

- It's time to care about how our words impact the people we are talking *about*, and to be mindful of the *attitude and actions* generated by the words we use.
- Using PFL is the right thing to do, so let's do it!
- Start using PFL today and encourage others to do the same!

Student First Language

- Made by the students of the STEP Program
- STEP: Student Transition Education Program
- Boise School District - Boise High School
- <http://youtu.be/oFGByJN7I5Y?list=PLgT99if6LcQM-T6zM9O-uDd8bzGEqotwJ>

Resources

- Information used to create this powerpoint came from Kathie Snow and the website: www.disabilityisnatural.com
- Snow, Kathie (2010). To ensure Inclusion, Freedom, and Respect for all, it's time to embrace People First Language.
- YouTubeVideo:
<http://youtu.be/oFGBYjN7I5Y?list=PLgT99if6LcQM-T6zM9O-uDd8bzGEqotwJ>