



# Respectful Language

People First & Person-Centered

Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee

Respect the  
person



PEOPLE  
FIRST

Do not try to fix me  
because I am not  
broken. Support me.  
I can make my  
contribution to the  
community in my  
way.



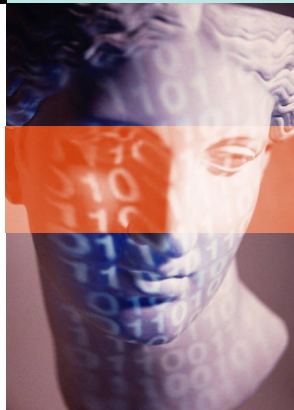
Use my  
name, not  
my label



See my  
humanity



Never use  
the R-word



People with  
disabilities  
have a lot  
to offer -  
notice what  
we can do!



There's no  
such thing  
as a 'sped  
kid'



Colorado Special Education  
Advisory Committee

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[www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/  
CSEAC.asp](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/CSEAC.asp)



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## Speak & Write with Respect!

Use my name  
not my label

### See the person, use their name

People first language is about respect, about seeing the person. It is about valuing the person as an equal. It is about seeing the child/teen/adult as a person and realizing that labels really don't matter when you get to know a child or a person with a disability.

*"Do not admire me. A desire to live a full life does not warrant adoration. Respect me for respect presumes equity." - Norm Kunc*

My name is  
Emma,  
what is  
yours?

Who, not what

### Language influences what we think

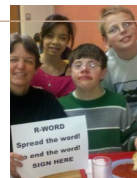
The minute we put a label on a person, their future is changed. If the language is respectful, caring and empowering, it has a positive effect. If the language has a negative connotation, it can damage confidence and self-esteem. Labels can help us understand an individual's needs but we have to be sure we see the person before the label and use the label to help, not hurt.

Do you want to be called by your label (physical features, disease, condition, skills, age, gender) ????????

Respect

### Some people value their differences

And prefer to be called an 'autistic' person. They feel that their brain differences are not separate from who they are and want to be seen as whole and not a person with a part of them that is 'broken'.



NeuroDiversity values all kinds of brain and body diversity

No R-word

### Spread the Word to End the Word

When people use the r-word and other derogatory terms towards themselves or others they are displaying not only a lack of respect but intolerance. Take the pledge to end the use of the r-word (from [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org))

***I pledge and support the elimination of the derogatory use of the r-word from everyday speech and promote the acceptance and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.***

It's not funny to say that is so re\*&ded, it is offensive to people with intellectual disabilities and the people who love them.

Media



### Journalists and reporters

Anytime you write, speak or refer to a person with a disability, please use person-first language:

- ⇒ He is a boy with Down syndrome.
- ⇒ She wears glasses and has a learning disability.
- ⇒ Her son is a four-year old with autism.
- ⇒ My child receives special education services.

The only exception is if the person you are writing about tells you something different. And always ask the person!

School

### There are no 'sped kids'

When we think and use respectful language, we see that saying things such as "the sped kids eat lunch together" or "that's the sped class" or "those are my special ed students" or "that's the autism room" we are not using person-first language. Teachers, staff, parents and students can support each other to use respectful language at all times, in all places.



Schools have classrooms, not sped rooms

Talk with,  
not about

### Talk to and with a person with a disability

Don't talk about them without them! In whatever way is appropriate for the person with a disability, include them in any discussion about them.

*"Do not try to control me. I have a right to my power as a person. What you call non-compliance or manipulation may actually be the only way I can exert control over my life." -Norm Kunc*

Nothing about us, without Us!



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