

WORDS MATTER! : TALKING ABOUT DISABILITIES

1 in 10 children have a disability.

Words have a lot of power! They can be used to hurt others or make people feel welcome and included. We all know and care about people with disabilities and it's important to show kindness with our words.



Language changes!

There are words people once used that were used to harm others or have unkind origins. If a disabled person asks you to stop using that term-DO NOT USE IT. It does not hurt you to stop using a word, but that word may be causing lots of harm to a neighbor or friend.

**Will my words show respect
or cause hurt?**

Person First Language: "I have a disability."

Our words place the disability after the subject. This language emphasizes that an individual is a person who lives with a disability. Their disability does not define them. For example, we say, "Person with Down Syndrome," or "He has low vision."

Identity First Language: "I am a disabled person."

We recognize that the person's disability is a large part of who they are and that their diagnosis isn't something that should be cured or changed. This sounds like, "autistic person," or, "I am deaf."



**Never correct someone over the way they
talk about their disability and use the same
language they choose. This is a personal
decision and often influenced by a
disability community.**

Human Diversity is awesome!



We are all different in some ways. Some people wear glasses for blurry vision and someone who is non-speaking may use a device like an iPad to communicate. People's brains can work in different ways too (**neurodiversity**). People learn in different ways or may experience the world in a way that isn't the same as yours. For example, a noisy lunchroom is exciting to you, but your classmate feels uncomfortable and wears headphones to be okay with the noise. You may walk to get from one place to another, but a friend uses a wheelchair or a walker to move safely between spaces.

Different isn't bad or weird- it's just different!! And, the world is WAY more interesting and fun because we aren't all the same! Our lives are better because of human diversity!

MAKE SURE TO LISTEN TOO!

- Talk to our disabled friends about their experiences and respect them by changing our words if they ask.
- Read books and watch movies/tv shows by writers with disabilities and/or with disabled characters.
- When we learn things about our words and disabilities, look at the source of the information. Try to get content from disabled voices and research the history of the organization to ensure they have been treating disabled people with respect.

This poster was made with the help of disabled students.