

# Person First Language Guide

## COMMUNICATING WITH AND ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

### Person-First Language:

We use person-first language for all persons because we believe that each individual is made in the image of God. Especially when working with children, who may not yet have embraced an identity as a person with a disability, we find this gives kids a lens that emphasizes they are a kid first, not whatever disability they may have.

### Identity-First Language:

An individual's preference may change over time, such as when an individual prefers to be called "autistic" instead of "a person with autism". Using identity-first language to honor a person's preference is appropriate and comes from relationship with that person. Person-first language is used by default if such preferences are not known, honoring how God made people each with a unique design.



### General Tips:

- ❖ Person-first language is used in all communications, including oral and written.
- ❖ A person or the person's name is always referenced first, with the disability or diagnosis referenced secondarily or not at all.
- ❖ Only reference the disability or diagnosis if it is pertinent to the story.
- ❖ Uses of "typically-abled" or "able-bodied" are not person-first and do not represent neurodiverse communities. Strive to be consistent in the use of person-first language toward all individuals, not just



### Additional Resources:

- ❖ Center for Disease Control Guide on Person-First Language
- ❖ National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, Person-First Language

### Okay

- ❖ Erin, who lives with autism spectrum disorder...
- ❖ Jeremy, a student with Down syndrome...
- ❖ A student who has Down syndrome...
- ❖ Individuals with disabilities
- ❖ Teresa, a wheelchair user...
- ❖ Teresa uses a wheelchair
- ❖ A person with a disability and his peers...
- ❖ Peers who are also second graders...
- ❖ Peers who are neurotypical

### Not Okay

- ❖ Autistic students like Erin...
- ❖ Jeremy, who has Down syndrome...
- ❖ A Down syndrome student
- ❖ Disabled people
- ❖ Special needs people
- ❖ Teresa is wheelchair bound
- ❖ Typically-abled