

**“Person First” Language**  
...an attitude and a way of talking!

As a general rule, include a disability as something a person has, rather than what he or she is.<sup>\*</sup> The rationale is that we must see our students (and others) as human beings first, with interests, feelings, and strengths. Having a disability is only one identifier, and should not define the person.

<b>Instead of...</b>	<b>Say...</b>
is sped	receives special education services
afflicted or suffers from...	a person who has...
confined to a wheelchair	uses a wheelchair
disabled or handicapped	student with a disability
is Downs	has Down syndrome

*\*Please note: Some groups of people collectively see their differences as inherent to their identity, and not as a disability. Examples of accepted language include “a person who is deaf” or a “student who is blind.” In some cases, such as with autism, there is not a consensus at present, and advocates promote conflicting perspectives; this requires that we listen closely to the language used by the person or family. Some prefer the term “autistic,” while others see this as negative and offensive. In the school setting, in the absence of information to the contrary for a particular student, the language “has autism” is less likely to offend.*