

Resolution No. 29-16
Urging the Use of People-First Language for Students with Disabilities

WHEREAS, all students deserve to be treated with dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, more than 705,000 students with disabilities receive special education services in California, comprising about ten percent of the state's public school enrollment; and

WHEREAS, the Yolo County Special Education Local Plan Area serves the Davis Joint Unified School District, Esparto Unified School District, Washington Unified School District, Winters Joint Unified School District, Woodland Joint Unified School District, and the Yolo County Office of Education comprised of more than 3,000 students with disabilities.

WHEREAS, students with disabilities are sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, friends, and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, the contributions of students with disabilities enrich our communities as they live, learn and share their lives; and

WHEREAS, the language used to refer to students with disabilities has a profound impact in shaping beliefs and attitudes about these students, driving policies and laws, influencing our feelings and decisions, and affecting students' daily lives; and

WHEREAS, old, inaccurate, and inappropriate descriptors about students with disabilities perpetuate negative stereotypes and attitudinal barriers; and

WHEREAS, when we identify or describe students with disabilities primarily in terms of their disability or mental diagnosis, we devalue and stigmatize them; and

WHEREAS, using thoughtful terminology can foster positive attitudes about students with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, one of the major improvements in communicating verbally or in writing with or about students with disabilities is People-First Language, which places the person ahead of his or her disability; and

WHEREAS, People-First Language is an objective form of communication that eliminates generalizations and stereotypes by focusing on the person rather than the disability; and

WHEREAS, for example, we do not refer to a child with cancer as "a cancerous child," and similarly, we should not refer to a child with autism as an "autistic child" or a child with epilepsy as "an epileptic," and

WHEREAS, a recent report of the Statewide Special Education Task Force called for a unified, inclusive educational system that supports all students based on individual needs;

WHEREAS, the manner in which written and verbal policies and communications refer to students with disabilities can undermine this important state educational goal; and

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WHEREAS, the Davis Joint Unified School District Board of Education recognizes the necessity of a more respectful and humanistic view of students with disabilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED and affirmed that policies and procedures should utilize People-First Terminology to the greatest extent possible, especially those utilized by state and local educational agencies.

PASSED and ADOPTED this 1st day of October, 2015 by the following vote:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTENTIONS:

Alan Fernandes, President
Board of Education

ATTEST:

Winfred B. Roberson, Jr.
Superintendent