

Pacifica School District Resolution No. 2016-01-13-A

Resolution 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 10,000 students with disabilities receive special education services in San Mateo County SELPA, comprising about ten percent of the county's public school enrollment; and

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 medical 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, 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 Task Force on Special Education entitled, "One System: Reforming Education to Serve All Students," 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 further this important state educational goal; and

WHEREAS, The Pacifica School District recognizes the necessity of a more respectful and humanistic view of students with disabilities; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Pacifica School District Governing Board, That PSD affirms that policies and procedures should utilize People-First Terminology to the greatest extent possible, especially those utilized by county and local educational agencies; and be it further

Resolved, That the Associate Superintendent of PSD transmit copies of this resolution for appropriate distribution to all members of the PSD staff.

Regularly Passed and Adopted this 13th day of January, 2016

_____ Ayes _____ Noes _____ Abstentions _____ Absences

Matthew Levie
Board President