



Consulting to Independent Schools

Developing a Common Language for Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism

Being mindful that language is fluid and constantly evolving, we have compiled what we hope is the most current set of terms for schools to use in talking and writing about Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within their communities.

I. General Terms

Diversity

is who we are. It is a quantitative and evolving representation of gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, family structure, language, socio-economic status, physical ability, appearance, learning ability and religious affiliation. The information and responses we receive from family, friends, teachers, the media, etc. to these cultural identifiers influences our perception of who we are and who others are.

Multicultural Practice

is the qualitative partner of diversity. Multicultural Practice means acting on the commitment to create an inclusive school and classroom environment, instructional strategies, communication skills, staffing, curriculum, relationships, materials, resources and ongoing professional development based on multiple cultural perspectives. It is characterized by a full integration of the intellectual and empathic, (“head and heart”) when interacting in a diverse environment.

Inclusion

is a quality in an organization’s policies, programs and practices that gives everyone the opportunity to participate fully and safely, and values the talents, background and viewpoints they bring to the institutional culture. Diversity is the quantitative foundation from which to establish inclusion and effective multicultural practices will sustain inclusion.

Equity and Justice focuses on empowerment and co-ownership of the community in strategically building on and sustaining diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusivity.

Effective Diversity Ally

- actively and consistently supports a school's diversity, multicultural and inclusion efforts. Saying, "I'm an ally" is not sufficient. Your actions need to confirm it.
- participates in multicultural practices on a daily basis
- is committed to being a "life-long learner" on issues of diversity and inclusion, and applying this learning to their work at the school, e.g. in the classroom, in administrative duties, etc. D.E.I. work is also evolving, e.g. a decade ago, we were not openly discussing the needs of gender-fluid students, and multi-racial populations have increased in our schools.

White Privilege

Is a term for societal privileges that benefit white people in Western countries beyond what is commonly experienced by the people of color under the same social, political, or economic conditions. These privileges are unearned and are distributed based on values of the dominant group, which in the West are Europeans (and in the US more often Europeans from Northern and Western Europe.) According to McIntosh and Lee, "whites in a society considered culturally a part of the majority enjoy advantages that people of color do not." The term denotes both obvious and less obvious passive advantages that white persons may not recognize they have, which distinguishes it from overt bias or prejudice. These include cultural affirmations of one's own worth; presumed greater social status; and freedom to move, buy, work, play, and speak freely. The effects can be seen in professional, legal, educational, and personal contexts. The concept of white privilege also implies the right to assume the universality of one's own experiences, marking others as different or exceptional while perceiving oneself as normal. (This term has also been amended to discuss male privilege, straight privilege, able-bodied privilege, etc.)

White Fragility

Is a term coined by white social scientist Robin DiAngelo. She explains, "White people in North America live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress. This insulated environment of racial protection builds white expectations for racial comfort, while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress, leading to what I refer to as White Fragility. White Fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium." We would add that crying is often a form of white fragility that we have frequently observed in schools and displayed by both white students and adults, when told they may have exhibited behaviors of bias or stereotyping.

Micro-Aggressions

Brief, everyday exchanges that send hurtful or demeaning messages to individuals of difference by well-intentioned members of the dominant culture, who do so unconsciously. Micro-aggressions are considered to be different from overt,

deliberate acts of bigotry, such as the use of racist epithets, because the people perpetrating micro-aggressions often intend no offense and are unaware they are causing harm.

Micro-aggressions have been described as including statements that:

- repeat or affirm stereotypes about the target group or subtly demean it,
- positions the dominant culture as normal and the target one as aberrant,
- express disapproval of or discomfort with the target group,
- assumes all target group members are the same,
- minimize the existence of discrimination against the target group,
- seeks to deny the perpetrator's own bias,
- minimizes real conflict between the minority group and the dominant culture.

Social scientists have described micro-aggressions as "the new face of racism," saying that, in parts of American society, the nature of racism has shifted over time from overt expressions of racial hatred and hate crimes, towards expressions of aversive racism, such as micro-aggressions, that are more subtle, ambiguous and often unintentional. Researchers say this has led some Americans to wrongly believe that racism is no longer a problem for non-white Americans.

Intersectionality is a term developed by Kimberle Crenshaw that describes the cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.

Critical Race Theory was developed by the late Harvard legal scholar Derrick Bell, among others, as a theoretical framework that examines society and culture as they relate to categorizations of race, law, and power. CRT recognizes that racism is engrained in the systems of the American society, and is pervasive in the dominant culture. This is the analytical lens that CRT uses in examining existing power structures. CRT identifies that these power structures are based on white privilege and white supremacy, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color.

Equitable Outcomes refers to the concept that the school's goals should apply to all students. While the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary, all students should be prepared to be ready for postsecondary education. For more specifics see:

<http://essentialschools.org/benchmarks/resources-for-equitable-outcomes/>
https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/mei/bauman_et_al.pdf

II. The "Isms," "Phobias," and Related Terms

Prejudice – is an attitude, opinion or feeling formed without adequate prior knowledge, thought or reason. Prejudice can be pre-judgement for or against any person, group, sex or object. Any group can prejudge or be prejudiced toward another group.

Racism – is racial prejudice with institutional power that is used to the advantage of one race and the disadvantage of others. The critical difference between racism and prejudice is the institutional power of racism to enforce prejudices in a systemic and far-reaching way.

Institutional Racism, AKA Systemic Racism, is a form of racism that is embedded as normal practice within society or an organization, which can lead to discrimination in such areas as employment, education, housing, health care, politics and justice. The term *institutional racism* was first coined in 1967 by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, who wrote that while individual racism is often identifiable because of its overt nature, institutional racism is less perceptible because of its "less overt, far more subtle" nature.

Internalized Oppression, AKA Internalized Racism, is the belief among historically oppressed people that negative stereotypes about themselves and positive stereotypes about a dominant group are, in fact, true. Robin Nicole Johnson emphasizes that internalized racism involves both "conscious and unconscious acceptance of a racial hierarchy in which whites are consistently ranked above people of color." These definitions encompass a wide range of instances, including, but not limited to, belief in negative racial stereotypes, adaptations to white cultural standards, and thinking that supports the status quo (i.e. denying that racism exists).

Anti-Racism - No one is born racist or antiracist; these result from the choices we make. Being antiracist results from a conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily. These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as we move through life. In the absence of making antiracist choices, we (un)consciously uphold aspects of white supremacy, white-dominant culture, and unequal institutions and society. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you *are*; it is about what you *do*.

Sexism – is gender prejudice with institutional power that is used to the advantage of one gender and the disadvantage of the other. Sexism is any attitude, action or practice backed by institutional power that subordinates people because of their gender.

Classism is any attitude, action or institutional practice that subordinates people because of their economic status.

Anti-Semitism is prejudice or ideological racism directed specifically at Jews. Anti-Semitism has a tremendous impact on both Jewish and non-Jewish populations because of the brutality of the Holocaust. The practices of the religion of Judaism are as much culture as religion and therefore anti-Semitism attacks many facets of an individual, his or her family, religious group and culture at large. As with any expression of religious intolerance/bigotry, anti-Semitic attacks are easily executed as property crimes on the house of worship. The swastika has also been adopted as an expression of anti-Semitism, making it easy to exemplify one's hatred for Jews.

Heterosexism refers to the belief that heterosexuality is the only acceptable form of sexual/cultural expression. Groups and organizations reinforce heterosexist practices when they make and carry out policy, or when they do not challenge heterosexist practices. Heterosexism is seen in government and legal documents. Marriage inequality was one example of the way gay people were denied basic legal rights and privileges. Heterosexism is seen as inaction or insensitivity, not a direct attack, though it is often at the core of anti-gay violence.

Homophobia refers to the fear, dislike, or direct hatred of GLBT people.

Bigotry is the stubborn, hostile and complete intolerance of any race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental disability, religion, or belief that differs from one's own.

Xenophobia is a fear, hatred, or bias toward people from countries other than one's own. This may also extend toward any manifestations of culture or customs other than those of one's country.

Islamophobia is prejudice against or hatred of the Islamic religion and of Muslim people. An **Islamophobe** is an individual who holds a biased view of Islam and promotes prejudice against or hatred of Muslim people. Some examples of such biased views include: assuming Islam is not a religion but a political ideology, assuming all Muslims are terrorists, and assuming US citizens who practice Islam are not Americans.

Ableism is a form of discrimination in which preference is shown to people who appear able-bodied. Some activists with disabilities question the term "ableism," preferring to use "disabilism," which enforces the idea that this form of discrimination involves the targeting of people with physical, learning, intellectual or sensory disabilities.

Lookism is discrimination against people on the basis of physical appearance.

Ageism is an atmosphere in which generally older adults or senior citizens are devalued, negatively stereotyped and subjected to discrimination. Children and teenagers, however, may also experience ageism. (For example, when landlords do not want to rent housing to people with children, or teenagers are placed under surveillance when shopping in stores.)

Color Blindness suggests the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals equally, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. It focuses on commonalities between people, such as their shared humanity. However, colorblindness is not sufficient to heal racial wounds on a national or personal level. In a colorblind society, white people, who are unlikely to experience disadvantages due to race, can effectively ignore racism in American life, justify the current social order, and feel comfortable within their relatively privileged racial standing. Most people of color, however, who regularly encounter racial

disparities, experience colorblind ideologies quite differently. Colorblindness creates a society that denies negative racial experiences, rejects cultural pride, and invalidates the perspectives of people of color. Colorblindness has helped make race into a topic that people cannot openly discuss. If we don't talk about race, we can't fully understand it, much less address racial issues.

III. Group Terms

Beverly Daniel Tatum writes that we need to “use the language of race in order to describe what is taking place in the lives of particular groups of people, groups that have been socially defined on the basis of physical criteria, including skin color and facial features.”

Please bear in mind that the terms defined below, developed by North American social scientists, are used primarily in the US (as well as some parts of Canada). People from other nations, as well as those who have emigrated to the US (and Canada) from other nations, may not be familiar with these terms and may not use them, even when the terms may apply to them in a North American social science context.

For example, someone who recently emigrated from Taiwan to Seattle may not refer to themselves as a “person of color” or “Asian,” but solely as “Taiwanese.” The children of this individual, if raised in the US, however, may identify as a “person of color,” “Asian” or “Asian-American” and/or “Taiwanese” or “of Taiwanese descent.”

People of Color

is a term of solidarity used primarily in the US, to describe all people who are listed below. The term is meant to be inclusive among these groups. *People of color* is generally preferred to both *non-white* and *minority*, which are also inclusive terms, because it frames the subject positively; *non-white* defines people in terms of what they are not (*white*), and *minority*, by its very definition, carries a subordinate connotation in a world in which the majority of people are not white.

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) is a relatively new term that has developed some popularity during the racial protests during the spring and summer of 2020. It is also a term of solidarity defining people who are not European-American, but it seeks to highlight the egregious Black and Indigenous experiences of African enslavement and Native American genocide, especially because Indigenous people can be neglected in social justice conversations and actions and that anti-Black racism continues to be the most intense in the U.S.

- **African American/Black/African – African American** refers to people of African descent who were born in the US. **Black** is an inclusive term for people of African descent, including those from the US, the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa and other parts of the world. (Although these are the

technical definitions, some people in this community may use the terms interchangeably or prefer one term over the other.) **African** refers to people who were born on the African continent.

- **Indigenous/Native American/American Indian/First People/First Nation People:**
 - **Native American** and **American Indian** refers to descendants of the original people who inhabited North, South and Central America prior to European conquest. There is debate among this group itself as to which term is preferable, and some use the terms interchangeably. Some recommend it preferable to refer to a particular native people or nation by its name: Pueblo, Cherokee, Wampanoag, Narragansett, Eskimo etc.
 - **First People/First Nation People** are terms used by indigenous people of Canada.

- **Asian American/Asian - Asian American** refers to people of Asian descent living in the US. **Asian** is an inclusive term for people of Asian descent who were born in or live in Asian nations.

- **South Asian/South Asian American – South Asian** refers to the native people who live in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. **South Asian American** refers to people of South Asian descent living in the US.

- **Pacific Islander** – refer to people of the islands in the Pacific Ocean including three major ethnic groups: Polynesians (Tahitians, Samoans), Micronesians (US Trust Territories, such as Guam) and Melanesians (Australia, New Zealand, and the Solomon Islands).

- **Latino/a/x, Chicano/a/x/, Mestizo and Hispanic:**
 - **Latino/a/x** refers to people in the US from, or descended from, Central America, South America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. **Latino/a/x** also refers to a shared cultural heritage that is Spanish, Indigenous, & African, a history of colonization by Spain or Portugal, and a common language mostly Spanish, or Portuguese.
 - **Hispanic** refers to Europeans from Iberia (Spain and Portugal), and/or the usage of a European-based language. Some people who are Latino sometimes call themselves Hispanic (e.g. in New Mexico) or Spanish (e.g. in Puerto Rican neighborhoods of NYC.)
 - **Chicano/a/x** is chiefly a US term of someone of Mexican-American background, usually born and/or raised in the United States. It is especially used politically by Mexican-Americans to identify themselves and is very much a term of pride among the group.
 - **Mestizo** (more often used in the Western U.S. and in Latin American countries) refers to a person of racially mixed parentage, particularly those having one parent with Spanish or Portuguese roots and one Native American parent.

- **Arab/Middle Eastern - Arabs** are a group of people of various descents, religions and histories, whose ancestors originated in the Middle East or Northern Africa. Those self-identifying as Arab, also identify nationally, such as Egyptian, Lebanese, etc. The Arabic language is the unifying aspect among Arab people. Arab people may or may not practice Islam. **Middle Eastern** refers to people descended from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, extending from Morocco to the Arabian Peninsula and Iran. Middle Eastern people vary racially, much like Latinos, depending on European, African or other ancestries.
- **Bi-Racial/Multi-Racial – Multiracial** describes people whose are descended from multiple races. **Biracial** often is only used to refer to having parents or grandparents of two different races. The term multiracial may encompass biracial people, but can also include people with more than two races in their heritage.

European American/White – refers to people of European descent living in the US. Europeans are the majority culture in the countries of Europe. While the term Caucasian is sometimes used in place of European American or White, it implies a common ancestry related to the Caucasus Mountains, a mountain system in Eurasia between the Black and Caspian Seas and incorporating the nations of Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Since not all European American/White people descend from this far Eastern region of Europe, Caucasian is considered an inaccurate term, and is falling out of favor much in the same way as the words “Negro,” “Oriental,” and “Mulatto” have.

International People – refers to people of other nations who are visiting, temporarily living in, or recently emigrated to the US. The term “foreign” is being used less often, as it has a less welcoming tenor, implying otherness or being in a place in which you do not belong.

Adoptee is a person who joins a family via adoption. Although this term refers to a person who has been adopted, many adopted children (and their parents) do not like to be referred to in this way, because they consider themselves to be every bit as much a full member of their adopted family as any biological child would be, and therefore consider themselves to be just a regular "child," rather than an "adoptee" or an "adopted child."

Adoptive Parents: A person or persons who become the permanent parents of a child, to whom they have not given birth, with all the social, legal rights and responsibilities incumbent upon any parent. Although this term is often used to refer to both parents that are seeking to adopt, and parents that already have adopted, it is probably more commonly used to describe parents that are seeking to adopt, although since some parents will adopt on more than one occasion, they could be both an adoptive parent who has already adopted, and an adoptive parent

who is seeking to adopt.

Birth Parent: This is another term used to refer to the "biological parents" of a child, whether male or female, and regardless of whether the parents of the child are married to each other, or are shown as the parents of the child on its birth certificate.

People with Disabilities: People who have a physical, learning or intellectual difference that substantially limits one or more major life activities. In general, a physical, learning or intellectual difference includes hearing, audio processing, seeing, mobility, reading, executive functioning, some forms of autism, chronic physical or emotional illness, and intellectual disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as walking, talking, hearing, seeing, breathing, learning, performing manual tasks, communication, conventional social interaction and caring for oneself. *(See additional information on People with Disabilities below.)*

V. LGBTQ Language (*The following is from GLSEN: Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network*):

LGBT or GLBT is an acronym to refer to Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual and Transgender people. Sometimes the phrase is expanded to **GLBTQ** to include those Questioning their sexual or gender orientation. **Q** also can refer to **Queer**, a word that was once pejorative when talking about GLBT people, but has since been reclaimed by some members of this community. Another expansion is **LGBTQA**, the **A** referring to people who define themselves as Asexual. This particular set of terms is rapidly evolving, and is sometimes referred to as **LGBTQA+** to acknowledge that evolution.

Gender: A set of cultural identities, expressions and roles – codified as feminine or masculine – that are assigned to people based upon the interpretation of their bodies, and more specifically, their sexual and reproductive anatomy. Since gender is a social construction, it is possible to reject or modify the gender one is assigned at birth, and to develop, live and express a gender that feels truer and just to oneself.

Gender Identity: A personal conception of oneself as male, female, both, neither and/or another gender. Gender identity can be the same as or different from the gender a person is assigned at birth. Gender identity is a matter of self-identification; no one can tell anyone else how to identify or what terms to use. Gender identity is different from sexual orientation, and everyone has both a gender identity and a sexual orientation.

Gender Binary: A socially constructed system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two categories, “male” and “female,” in which no other possibilities for gender are believed to exist. The gender binary is a restrictive and inaccurate way to view gender because it does not take into account the diversity of gender identities and gender expressions among all people. The gender binary is oppressive to anyone that does not conform to dominant societal gender norms.

Gender Expression: The multiple ways (e.g., behaviors, dress) in which a person may choose to communicate gender to oneself and/or to others.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity and expression are aligned with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Cis-normativity: The assumption that cisgender identity is the norm, which plays out in interpersonal interactions and institutional privileges that further the marginalization of transgender people.

Gender Non-binary: An umbrella term for gender identities used by people whose gender is not exclusively male or female.

Gender Nonconforming: A descriptive term and/or identity of a person who has a gender identity and/or expression that does not conform to the traditional expectations of the gender they were assigned at birth. People who identify as “gender nonconforming” or “gender variant” may or may not also identify as “transgender.”

Transgender: An umbrella term describing people whose gender identity does not match the gender they were assigned at birth.

Gender Pronouns: The pronoun or set of pronouns that a person identifies with and would like to be called when their proper name is not being used. Examples include “she/her/hers,” “he/him/his,” “ze/hir/hirs,” and “they/them/theirs.” Some people prefer no pronouns at all.

Why focus on pronouns?

You may have noticed that people are sharing their pronouns in introductions, on nametags, and when GSA meetings begin. This is happening to make spaces more inclusive of transgender, gender nonconforming, and gender non-binary people. Including pronouns is a first step toward respecting people’s gender identity, working against **cis-normativity**, and creating a more welcoming space for people of all genders.

How is this more inclusive?

People’s pronouns relate to their gender **identity**. For example, someone who identifies as a woman may use the pronouns “she/her.” We do not want to assume people’s gender identity based on gender **expression** (typically shown through clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms, etc.) **By providing an**

opportunity for people to share their pronouns, you're showing that you're not assuming what their gender identity is based on their appearance. If this is the first time you're thinking about your pronoun, you may want to reflect on the privilege of having a gender identity that is the same as the sex assigned to you at birth.

What about PGP (Preferred Gender Pronoun)?

There has been a shift away from the term “preferred gender pronoun” or “PGP” to using “pronoun.” This change was made because a person’s pronouns are not just *preferred*; they're the pronouns that must be used.

Where do I start?

Include pronouns on nametags and during introductions. Be cognizant of your audience, and be prepared to use this resource to answer questions about why you are making pronouns visible. If your group of students or educators has never thought about gender-neutral language or pronouns, you can use this resource as an entry point.

What if I don't want to share my pronouns?

That's ok! Providing space and opportunity for people to share their pronouns **does not** mean that everyone feels comfortable or needs to share their pronouns. Some people may choose not to share their pronouns for a variety of reasons, e.g. they are questioning or transitioning their pronouns, they don't use or like any pronouns, they don't feel comfortable sharing them at that moment or in that space, or they fear bullying or harassment after sharing. In the case that someone has left pronouns off the nametag or chosen not to share their pronouns, please refrain from using pronouns for that person and refer to the person by name.



Make your support visible

- Include “pronoun” under “name” in nametags and introductions as an opportunity for participants to make visible their gender pronouns.
- Put up a sign or statement like this near the nametags, classrooms, or meeting spaces:

[Your School or Group Name] is including pronouns because we are working to make our spaces more inclusive of transgender, gender nonconforming, and gender non-binary people.

- Put up this sign near nametags with pronoun sections:
We encourage you to fill in the pronoun section along with your name, so that we use the correct pronouns with each other from the beginning. We have left the pronoun section blank so that you can fill in any/all pronouns you use.
- Wear and distribute pronoun buttons or nametags at school.

Tips for Gender-Neutral Language:

- If you feel comfortable, introduce yourself with your pronouns as a model. For example: *“Hi, I’m Anjelique. I use she/her and they/them pronouns.”* or *“I’m Milo, and I use they/them pronouns.”*
- Practice. Use gender-neutral pronouns such as “they” and “ze” while visualizing the person who uses them.
- Whenever possible, take the lead from the transgender and GNC students and educators in your school, especially during the planning stages.
- Welcome feedback, and be ready to make adjustments as you continue to make your spaces more inclusive: *“If you have any feedback for us on how to make this a more welcoming space for transgender, gender nonconforming and gender non-binary people, please let us know.”*
- When addressing groups of people or people whose pronouns you haven’t been told, use gender-neutral language such as, *“friends,” “folks,” “all,”* or *“y’all,”* rather than *“guys,” “ladies,” “ma’am,”* or *“sir.”*



Inclusive Emergency Management Consultants Dedicated to improving the lives and safety of all people

VI. Language For Talking About People With Disabilities (*The following is from EAD & Associates, NY, NY.*)

The words one chooses to use when referring to people with disabilities in oral and written communication often carry either a positive or a negative connotation. Therefore, adopting

the following suggestions will help others know that you respect people with disabilities and may also encourage people to think and act more appropriately toward others.

Put People First

The person should always come first. An individual has abilities as well as disabilities. Focusing on the person emphasizes the status we share, rather than conditions we presently do not. Thus, say “the person who has a disability”, rather than “the disabled person”. Similarly, it is better to refer to “people with disabilities” than to “the disabled” or “the handicapped”.

Emphasize Action

People with disabilities, even severe ones, can be quite active. Thus, it is better to say “*President Franklin Roosevelt used a wheelchair and occasionally walked using braces and crutches*” rather than “*he was confined to a wheelchair*”, or “*the wheelchair-bound President*”, or “*the President was in a wheelchair*”.

Do Not Sensationalize, Pity or Characterize

Avoid words like “*afflicted*”, “*crippled*”, and “*victim*” when referring to a person with a disability. Also, remember that people are more than their disabilities. Instead of saying that “*President Roosevelt suffered from asthma*”, “*Helen Keller was handicapped by blindness*”, “*Peter Stuyvesant was an amputee*” or “*Moses was afflicted with a speech impairment*”, do say “*Einstein had a learning disability*”, “*Napoleon had epilepsy*”, or “*Alexander Graham Bell was hard of hearing*” or “*Marlee Matlin is an actress who is deaf*”.

Avoid Inappropriate Words

“*Handicapped*” has gone the way of “*invalid*” and “*crippled*” and is no longer viewed as an appropriate term to refer to a person with a disability. “*Differently abled*” and “*physically challenged*” are fad phrases, which have not gained general acceptance among people with disabilities and, in fact, offend many. “*Special*” when used to refer to people with disabilities, is a rather backhanded compliment – everyone is special in some way – and use of that term as an alternative to “*different*” is as inappropriate as using the latter term. Words like “*wheelchair person*” simply should not be used. People without current disabilities, when referred to in contrast to people with disabilities should be referred to as “*people without disabilities*” rather than as “*able bodied*” or “*normal*,” since a person with a disability may be more “*abled*” than others with respect to pertinent activities. Of course, in some contexts, when quoting from an old statute or referring to a particular entity by name, use of some words which otherwise should be avoided may be necessary. For example, The Federal Rehabilitation Act uses the term “handicapped” and schools have “Committees on Special Education” (an improvement over the former “Committees on the Handicapped”). At the time when some organizations were formed and laws were written, few people had yet considered the role of language in encouraging inclusion.

Language Referring to the Senior Citizens

There are several terms used to refer to senior citizens that are used interchangeably, depending on the agency or organization. Other common terms include: “*seniors*”, “*elderly*”, “*the aging*”, “*older persons*”, etc. Often the title used in the name of the agency or organization will indicate the appropriate term to use while working with that entity (e.g. the Administration on Aging uses “aging” primarily in speech and written materials).

Points to Keep in Mind

- Physical disability does not imply a mental disability or childishness.
- Different means of communication does not mean low intellectual ability.
- Disabilities can occur to anyone at anytime in life.
- Some disabilities can be temporary or episodic.
- Don't be afraid to encounter someone with a disability.
- By choosing words which convey a positive image of our colleagues, clients, and friends, we begin to break down often unconscious attitudinal barriers to their integration and meaningful participation in society.

For a complete list of recommendations or other resource information regarding people with disabilities, contact: EAD & Associates, LLC - Emergency Management & Special Needs Consultants at 718-330-0034 or mail@eadassociates.com or visit www.eadassociates.com

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