

## The Importance of People First Language

*"Your words, attitudes and actions impact my life more than my disability."*

People First Language (PFL) represents a more respectful, accurate way of communicating about a person with a disability. Words DO matter! When we adopt new ways of thinking and talking about people with disabilities, we exert a positive influence on their lives and on society as a whole. We've seen the power of language on other groups; we have made changes and no longer use certain titles or ethnic slurs. It's time to extend that courtesy to our young people and adults in our schools, work, and communities who happen to have a disability. People with disabilities are NOT their disabilities or diagnoses, they are PEOPLE first. People First Language describes what a person *has*, not who a person *is!*

People First Language isn't about being 'politically correct'. It's about good manners and respect. So, for example, we should refer to a person who has autism, not an autistic person; a person who has a learning disability, not a learning disabled person; a woman who uses a wheelchair, not someone confined to a chair, a person who has a physical disability, not a crippled person, etc. We have the power to create a new way of looking at disability - won't you do your part?!

Source: Information from "Disability is Natural" website; [www.disabilityisnatural.com](http://www.disabilityisnatural.com).

## Self-Advocacy Resources:

Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment: <http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow.html>

"From Here to There...The Self-Advocacy Handbook". <http://www.nasuad.org/hcbs>

"Become Your Own Expert! A Self-Advocacy Curriculum for Individuals with Learning Disabilities" Winnelle D. Carpenter, M.A., Powerful Learning Concepts, 2006.

"Skills to Pay the Bills-Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success": Dept. of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP): [www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/](http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/)

"Expanding the Circle: Respecting the Past, Preparing for the Future". Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. <http://etc.umn.edu/curriculum/>

"Promoting Self-Determination in Students with Developmental Disabilities" [www.guilford.com](http://www.guilford.com)

"Choicemaker Self Determination Series" - Dr. James Martin. [www.soprisslearning.com](http://www.soprisslearning.com)

"Next S.T.E.P." [www.proedinc.com](http://www.proedinc.com)

For more resources, visit [www.tslp.org](http://www.tslp.org).

## Final Thoughts .....

- Self-advocates believe that people with disabilities are equals. They have the same choices, rights and responsibilities to speak up and empower themselves as everyone else. They can make decisions and learn from their experiences.
- Every individual has unique strengths. And, everyone can become a leader. Your son/daughter's strengths can be used for leadership responsibilities.
- To make choices, we must understand ourselves. Part of that understanding comes from knowing what brought us to this point in our lives; knowing about the past, so we can make informed choices for the future.

*"Every student can learn, just not on the same day or in the same way."* George Evans

*"All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop our talent."* John F. Kennedy



## Transition Services Liaison Project

[www.tslp.org](http://www.tslp.org)

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# Self-Advocacy Tips for Parents

*"A young person with a disability should be given opportunities to make choices and experience the consequences of those choices..."*

*"Learning to behave responsibly comes with support, practice, and mistakes..."*

*"Few things help children more than placing responsibility upon them and letting them know that you trust them..."* (Authors Unknown)

## While in high school, your son/daughter should...

- ✓ Be aware of personal preferences, interests, strengths and limitations
- ✓ Share strengths, learning styles, challenges and needed accommodations with teachers
- ✓ Learn and practice communication and problem solving skills
- ✓ Learn about his/her disability
- ✓ Actively participate in IEP meetings
- ✓ Set goals and work toward them
- ✓ Apply for Youth Leadership Forum (activity sponsored by TSLP) to learn more about self-advocacy



## Did You Know???



Parents and guardians play a critical role in teaching self-advocacy skills. Here's how you can help with this:

- Learn about your son/daughter's disability. Help him/her understand the challenges it may present
- Help him/her understand how the disability might impact school, home, and community life
- Become familiar with accommodations and modifications
- Encourage participation in the development of their IEP or 504 Plan and attend meetings
- Model advocating and support your son/daughter in practicing and using self-advocacy skills
- Encourage independence and support him/her in the process
- Provide opportunities for success

## What is Self-Advocacy?

Self-Advocacy is learning how to speak up for yourself, making decisions about your own life, learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you, finding out who will support you in your journey, knowing your rights and responsibilities, problem solving, listening and learning, reaching out to others when you need help and friendship, and learning about self-determination.

Schools/IEP teams can assess students' self-advocacy skills, and develop goals and/or objectives to increase these skills. CHOICE and CONTROL are critical components to being a self-determined person. Oftentimes, adults just "assume" students will learn these skills on their own. In reality, students with disabilities often need direct instruction to learn how to make good decisions, communicate effectively, and solve problems. Learning the skills to be a good self-advocate should be a central piece of transition planning for all young adults!



## Encourage Your Youth to Actively Participate in IEP Meetings!



Federal law states that all youth with disabilities must be invited to their IEP meeting by the time they turn 16 yr. old. They should also be involved in all aspects of the process, including evaluation, setting goals, etc. If students are not able to attend the meeting, their preferences and interests must be taken into account.

*Levels of Participation in IEP Meetings include:*

- 1.) Youth attends as full member of IEP team. IEP case manager directs questions to youth to encourage participation.
- 2.) IEP case manager works with youth to co-present Information.
- 3.) Youth leads IEP meeting with support from other participants.

For more information on student participation in the IEP, contact TSLP staff or consult website at [www.tslp.org](http://www.tslp.org).

## What does an Assertive Self-Advocate look like?

Help role model these characteristics of a self-advocate at home, and encourage the development of these skills in your son/daughter. Talk to the teacher about teaching self-advocacy skills at school.

A Self-Advocate:

- Understands his/her own strengths and weaknesses
- Takes initiative
- Introduces self to others
- Is prepared and has information ready
- Asks specifically for what is needed
- Is well-mannered and asks for help in a reasonable way
- Uses appropriate body language
- Listens without interrupting
- Sets goals for self
- Is open-minded and tolerant of others



## Person-Centered Thinking: Another Tool for Transition

**Person-Centered Thinking (PCT)** was introduced in South Dakota through the Division of Developmental Disabilities in 2007. PCT trainers, coaches and mentors have been working with Community Support Providers and others to expand the model to assist persons with disabilities. In 2010 People Planning Together and Families Planning Together were added to assist individuals and their families in planning for positive life outcomes. In 2012 a group of educators in the northeast part of the state were trained in PCT and how the process can be used in schools.

The core person centered thinking skills are listening differently and using what we hear differently to help individuals with disabilities be more successful. Person centered thinking and planning allows those with special needs to have positive control over their lives. If youth with special needs are to have self-directed lives within their own communities, then those around them, especially those who do the day-to-day work with them, need to utilize person centered thinking skills and practices.

According to Helen Sanderson Associates, an international leader in the development of the person centered thinking concepts, teaching and supporting the use of person centered thinking skills means:

- 1) Plans will be used and acted upon and the lives of people who use the services will improve;
- 2) Educators and families will have a number of ways of getting plans started; and
- 3) Updating of plans will occur more "naturally".

For more information: [www.sdparent.org](http://www.sdparent.org)

## One Page Profiles

**What is it?** One page profiles are one page of person-centered information around three core headings: an appreciation (great things about me), what is important to me, and how to support me (what you need to know or do to support me).

**How are they used?** A one page profile can be used in 3 main ways:

- 1) To share information about someone. For example, in new situations or meeting new people, or at the front of a person's records
- 2) As the beginning of a more detailed person-centered description
- 3) As the basis for action-going from a one page profile to then ask what is working and not working from different perspectives and acting on this

One page profiles have been used on infants as young as three months, to people at the end of life. They are equally powerful with staff; in fact, several organizations now expect staff to have a profile. You can have one or many one page profiles for different situations, such as school, daycare, physicians, assisted living, etc.

\*More information: [www.thinkandplan.com](http://www.thinkandplan.com); Using one page profiles in schools [www.helensanderrsonassociates.co.uk](http://www.helensanderrsonassociates.co.uk); [www.learningcommunity.us](http://www.learningcommunity.us)