



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE

AP No. 0121
Effective Date:
April 7, 2025

- I. **PURPOSE:** To provide guidance and procedures for students, parents, school staff, and community members of Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) on the best practices to support the use of respectful language when referring to different groups of individuals, including those with disabilities.
- II. **POLICY:** The Prince George’s County Board of Education (Board) believes in a culture of dignity and individual respect for all students and adults. Students and adults with disabilities are people first and are not defined by their disability. The Board also firmly believes that the academic achievement of ALL students is paramount and must improve. To that end, the reprogramming of thoughts about ALL students’ ability to reach their full academic potential, without regard for their race or ethnicity, citizenship status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, culture, language, disability, or special needs, is imperative. (Board Policy 0121)
- III. **BACKGROUND:** People-First language is to be used to communicate appropriately and respectfully with and about an individual with a disability. People-First language emphasizes the person first, not the disability. People-First language will acknowledge the individual respect and personal dignity due every person, regardless of ability or disability, and therefore, shall be used in all written and spoken communications within and by PGCPS. Please see this [link from the National Institute of Health](#) that lays out reasons why an individual may opt to use Identity-First and not People-First language.
- IV. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - A. *Accessibility* – The practice of making information, activities, and/or environments sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible.
 - B. *Disability* – A physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions, an impaired function or ability.

- C. *Diversity* – Differences in factors that include, but are not limited to, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, region, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, socioeconomic status, age, marital status, disability, or genetic information.
- D. *Equity Lead* – A school-based staff member who serves as the liaison between the school and the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Belonging.
- E. *Identity-First language* – A way of referring to people that emphasizes a core part of their identity, such as a disability or chronic condition. It is often used to reclaim a negative identity or to express cultural pride.
- F. *People-First language* – The use of respectful language when referring to people with disabilities that emphasizes the person instead of the disability. By placing the person first, the disability is no longer the primary defining characteristic of an individual, but one of several aspects of the whole person.
- G. *Stakeholder* – An individual or group with an interest in the decisions or activities of PGCPs, including, but not limited to, students, families, staff, and community members.
- H. *Stereotype* – A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.

V. **PROCEDURES:**

A. Expectations for School Staff

1. School staff will demonstrate respect for diversity in the workplace and schoolhouse by using People-First language.
2. School staff will work collaboratively to embrace, understand, and be sensitive toward people with disabilities to include other staff, students, families, and community members.
3. Each school’s Equity Lead will serve as a resource to ensure understanding and implementation of People-First language. In the absence of an Equity Lead, the school’s administration will serve in this capacity.
4. School staff will embrace and model respect for the uniqueness of ALL stakeholders with disabilities by using People-First language.
5. School staff will be provided with opportunities for cross-cultural conversations and be encouraged to engage co-workers in rich discussions about disabilities and

the use of People-First language during, for example, systemic professional development sessions and collaborative planning meetings.

6. Each school's administration will lead the efforts to reach out to all families and other non-school-based stakeholders to inform them about the use of People-First language when engaging with people with disabilities in the school environment.

B. Expectations for **ALL** Central Office Staff

1. All staff will demonstrate respect for diversity in the workplace using People-First language.
2. All staff will work collaboratively to embrace, understand, and be sensitive toward people with disabilities to include staff, students, families, and community members.
3. All staff will be provided with opportunities for cross-cultural conversations and be encouraged to engage co-workers in rich discussions about disabilities and the use of People-First language during, for example, systemic professional development sessions and team meetings.

C. Support for Schools and Central Offices

1. The Office of Equity, Diversity and Belonging and the Department of Special Education will provide systemic professional development on the implementation of culturally responsive practices to include People-First language.
2. Expectations for the use of People-First language will be included in the PGCPs Employee Code of Conduct.

VI. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE: The Office of Equity, Diversity and Belonging, in collaboration with the Department of Special Education, shall serve as the Superintendent's designees in supporting adherence to this administrative procedure. Supervisors will monitor their direct reports' adherence to this administrative procedure.

VII. RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND OTHER RESOURCES:

Board Policy 0101 – Educational Equity
Board Policy 0102 – Culturally Responsive Schools and Central Offices
Board Policy 0121 – People-First Language
Administrative Procedure 0102 – Culturally Responsive Schools and Central Offices
PGCPs Employee Code of Conduct

- VIII. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THIS ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE:**
The Office of Equity, Diversity and Belonging, in collaboration with the Department of Special Education, will review and update this administrative procedure as appropriate.
- IX. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDURES:** None. This is a new administrative procedure.
- X. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** April 7, 2025

Attachment: [People-First and Identity-First Language Explanation](#)