

MT. DIABLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Resolution No. 15/16-15

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

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

WHEREAS, 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; and

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

WHEREAS, the Mount Diablo Unified School District Board of Education, resolves and affirms that state policies and procedures should utilize People-First Terminology to the greatest extent possible, especially those utilized by state and local educational agencies;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the Mount Diablo Unified School District recognizes the necessity of a more respectful and humanistic view of students with disabilities and does hereby proclaim the District should utilize People-First Language to the greatest extent possible.

Signed:

Cheryl Hansen, President

Debra Mason, Vice President

Brian Lawrence, Member

Linda K. Mayo, Member

Barbara Oaks, Member

Date