Person-First Language

Brief Overview:
- Youth will be introduced to proper etiquette when speaking about people with disabilities by learning and practicing person-first language.

Issue Area(s):
- Special Needs

YVC Strategic Focus Areas:
- Compassionate Communities

Learning Objectives:
- By the end of the lesson, youth will learn person-first language by fixing at least five incorrect statements.

Skill Development Potential:
- Interpersonal Skills
- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Diversity/Multicultural Sensitivity
- Professionalism

National Education Standards (i.e. Common Core)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3
  Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6
  Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level

Materials:
- First-Person Language worksheet
- Whiteboard/posterboard
- Writing utensils

Instructions/Content:
- Write “Person-First Language” on the board and ask youth to state what they think this means.
- After receiving potential answers, read the following:
  - Person-first language is the proper way to speak about an individual with a disability. Person-first language avoids dehumanization and is also proper etiquette. For example, instead of saying “disabled people” or “blind person” say “people with disabilities” or
“person who is blind.” In person-first language, the person is not labeled by their disability.

- Hand out the Person-First Language worksheet and complete the first line together as a group.
- Give youth about 10 minutes to finish the exercise.
- Come together as a group and discuss your answers.

Reflection Questions:
Excellent service-learning incorporates a variety of challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one’s relationship to society.

1. Describe how you would feel if you were always labeled by a disability.
2. Analyze why it is important to use correct language when speaking about others.
3. Recognize how learning and using person-first language will impact you as you go about your daily life.
   a. You begin to see those with disabilities as people also.
   b. You create a habit of using proper etiquette, which adds to professionalism.
4. Identify other areas that we can use person-first language.
   a. Speaking about race
   b. Speaking about occupations

Career Connections (optional):
- Teacher/Para-educator
- Physical or Occupational therapist
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Social Worker

“Take It Home” Challenge (optional):
- Commit yourself to person-first language throughout your future YVC projects and daily life and teach others about it as well.
- Make it a point to interact with someone who has a disability.
Person-First Language Worksheet

Person-First language focuses on recognizing people before their disabilities. Person-first language is the proper way to speak about an individual with a disability. Person-first language avoids dehumanization and is also proper etiquette. For example, instead of saying “disabled people” or “blind person” say “people with disabilities” or “person who is blind.” In person-first language, the person is not labeled by their disability.

Change the incorrect statements below to reflect person-first language.

1. The blind girl
2. The handicapped
3. The autistic boy
4. The nonverbal person
5. Disabled people
6. The deaf woman
7. A Down’s baby
8. The quadriplegic man
9. The mentally ill
10. The learning disabled

Challenge Question:

11. The normal kid
12. The healthy kids
Person-First Language Worksheet- ANSWER KEY

Person-First language focuses on recognizing people before their disabilities. Person-first language is the proper way to speak about an individual with a disability. Person- first language avoids dehumanization and is also proper etiquette. For example, instead of saying “disabled people” or “blind person” say “people with disabilities” or “person who is blind.” In person-first language, the person is not labeled by their disability.

Change the incorrect statements below to reflect person-first language.

1. The blind girl _______The girl who is blind/ the girl with a vision impairment____
2. The handicapped _______The people who are handicapped________________________
3. The autistic boy _______The boy with autism________________________
4. The nonverbal person _______The person who is nonverbal/ The person that communicates with their eyes/device/etc.___
5. Disabled people _______People with disabilities________________________
6. The deaf woman _______The woman who is deaf/ The woman with a hearing impairment_____ 
7. A Down’s baby _______The baby with Down’s syndrome________________________
8. The quadriplegic man _______The man with a physical disability/ the man with quadriplegia_____
9. The mentally ill _______The people with a mental illness/ The people with a mental health condition____
10. The learning disabled _______The person with a learning disability____________

Challenge Question:

11. The normal kid _______Children without disabilities________________________
12. The healthy kids _______Kids without any physical or mental disabilities______