

BARTON LAB

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Using Inclusive Language

Use inclusive language to reduce bias and
create a safe, welcoming environment

Families

Families can look very different for each child, so it is important to use language that includes different family dynamics to avoid "othering," or portraying one type of family as more normal than others.

Instead of:

Mom, dad, parent

Immediate and extended family

Son, daughter

Members of a household

Try:

Grown up, adult, caregiver

Family

Children

Family members

Why?

Children are raised by a variety of different people. Grown ups may not be immediate family or live in the home. Using inclusive language creates an accepting space for all families.

Gender & Sexuality

Using gender-neutral language can decrease stereotypes and negative attitudes toward specific genders.

Additionally, it is accepting of gender-nonconforming people. Avoid assuming heterosexuality and speak openly and often about different types of relationships.

Instead of:

Boys and girls

Fireman, mailman,
ballerina

Wife, husband,
mommy, daddy

Nicknames or compliments that assume gender (ex: sweat pea, princess, little man, tough guy)

Try:

Children, students, friends

Fire fighter, mail carrier, ballet dancer

Partner, spouse,
grown up

Complimenting effort, actions, and asking children what they want to be called

Why?

Gendered language can affect the choices and opportunities we give kids and that kids think they have. Using gender neutral terms lets children explore their interests independent of expectations.

Race & Ethnicity

Using racially sensitive language is essential to creating an accepting space. Be careful to not assume race or terminology someone may identify with, and always respect individual preference. Keep up to date with acceptable terminology.

Instead of:

Assuming race/ethnicity

Using name of the continent
(ex: Asian)

Foreigners

Using nouns instead of adjectives (ex: a Mexican)

Try:

Conducting a demographic survey, asking

Use the country
(ex: Chinese)

International people

Using adjectives instead of nouns
(a Mexican person)

Why?

Race and ethnicity are important pieces of identity. Using current and preferred language respects individuals and builds an inclusive space.

Disability

When working with young children, use person first language instead of disability first unless the individual or family has requested something else. Ask for preferences when possible and always respect the family and the child's preferences for how they would like to be referred. Use individual preference if it is known, and person-first language if it is not.

Instead of:

Afflicted with, suffering from, victim of...

Focusing on disability or deficit (ex: nonverbal)

Focusing on presence of a disability (ex: Handicap parking)

Identifying people by disabilities

Why?

People with disabilities are not solely defined by their disability. People should use person-first language, focus on ability, and talk about people with disabilities in a balanced way- not superhuman or heroic.

Try:

A person with [specific disability]

Focus on ability (ex: uses gestures)

Focus on accessibility (ex: Accessible Parking)

Refer to disability when it is necessary

Share with us!

How do you use inclusive language?



How has inclusive language made you or your children feel welcome?

Comment, tag us, and post with the hashtag [#bartonlabshares](#)



Resources

[Inclusive Language Guide](#)

[Using Inclusive Language: Guidelines and Examples](#)

[Respectful Disability Language- National Youth Leadership Network](#)

[Writing about People with Disabilities- ADA](#)

[Diversity Style Guide: A glossary of terms](#)