


A RethinkEd National Webinar:

Using Language to Empower Neurodivergent Students and Promote Allyship

Presenter



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Objectives

- Define and be able to recognize ableism and anti-ableism
- Understand the importance of being anti-ableist with language along with some anti-ableist language norms
- Learn strategies to support students with inclusive language
- Learn about the benefits of allyship with ND students and how to promote allyship

Agenda

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- Review neuro-diversity and neuro-divergence
- Review the importance of neuro-diversity-affirming care

- Learn about ableism & anti-ableism
- Understand the power of language
- Hear from our guest speaker


- Learn about neuro-diversity-affirming language substitutions
- Five strategies to support inclusive language

- Discuss allyship and the power of allies in schools
- Six strategies for allying with neuro-divergent students

• Neurodiversity & Neurodivergence


Neurodiversity refers to the naturally occurring variation in brains from person to person

Neurodivergent (ND) is an umbrella term which describes variation in some brains and an identity for folks with brain variation




Some Examples of Neurodivergence


- ADHD • Autism • Bipolarism •
- Cerebral Palsy • Dementia •
- Down Syndrome • Dyscalculia •
- Dysgraphia • Dyslexia •
- Dyspraxia • OCD • Parkinson's •
- PTSD • Schizophrenia •
- Synesthesia • Tourette Syndrome •

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• Neurodiversity-Affirming Support

- Providing support to **neurodivergent** individuals with the understanding that
 - neurodiversity is natural
 - an individual's differences are not deficits and don't require "fixing"
 - Focus on inclusivity, not conformity



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Ableism

Ableism is a set of discriminatory beliefs and practices about the disability community.

Anything or anyone that perpetuates harmful beliefs is considered to be engaging, acting or speaking in an **ableist** way.


Ableism can be seen in schools

policies, accessibility, accommodations, language norms, intervention recommendation norms, reports, etc.



Ableism has a spectrum damaging consequences in schools


- Lack of inclusion & limited accessibility
- Negative & harmful stereotypes

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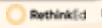
Anti-Ableism

Anti-Ableism refers to the theories, actions and practices, including language norms, that are used to counter ableism.


We can strive to be anti-ableist in our everyday action.



Our anti-ableist actions will benefit not only our students, but the entire school culture.

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Discussion Question



What do you believe might be some of the consequences of using ableist language in schools?

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The Power of Harmful Language

Harmful language holds a lot of power

Harmful language is

- Divisive
- Othering


Harmful language can


- Lower self-esteem
- Lower sense of self-worth
- Okay treating others differently and poorly




Affects **small** & **big** moments & decisions

Affects disabled folks **now** & in the **future**

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Guest Speaker 



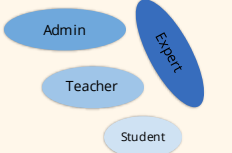

Syntyche Jennings-Bechar
Neurodivergent BCaBA & IO
Psychologist, PhD Student

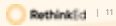
Where do we see ableist language in schools?

Power of Educators




- Power dynamics are **always** at play
- Educators have **authoritative** power
- Experts exert **influential** power


Power Dynamics in a School or Classroom

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Anti-Ableist & Inclusive Language

-  Learn from the disability community about the terminology they prefer
-  Choose terms and discuss practices that embrace and affirm
-  Avoid using ableist language and phrases



Use language that:

- Embraces
- Affirms
- Models inclusivity
- Advocates for inclusive practices
- Empowers

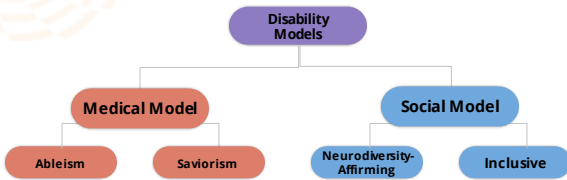
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The Power of Inclusive Language



- Inclusive language:**
- Promotes & perpetuates inclusivity
 - Embraces folks
 - Raises
 - Self-esteem
 - Sense of self-worth
 - Models
 - Inclusive practices
 - Advocating for others

Disability Language Origins



Ableist Language & Anti-Ableist Substitutions



Pathologizing v. Strength-Based Language

Pathologizing

- Symptom • Abnormal
- Comorbid • Cure
- Treatment • Suffering

Pathologizing language is rooted in the medical model. Implies something is wrong that requires fixing.

Strength-based

- Strong sense of routine
- Honest • Optimal
- focus on interests

Infantilizing v. Equitable Language

Infantilizing

- Special interests • handi-capable • Unique snowflake

Infantilizing language is patronizing. Often tries to "tip-toe" around accurate terms, implying inherent inferiority in disability.

Equitable

- Consider: do you need to specify?
- Interests • Passions • Individual

Fear-based v. Embracing Language

Fear-based

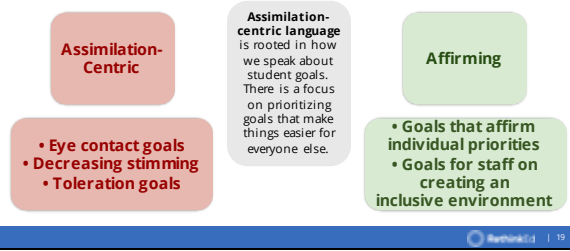
- At risk • Eradication • Prevention • Epidemic • Dangerous • Challenging

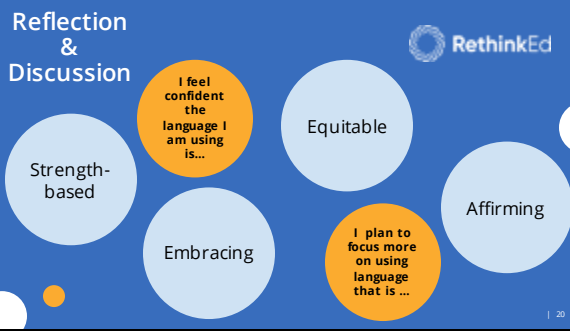
Fear-based language promotes a sense of fear around disability and is often danger-based

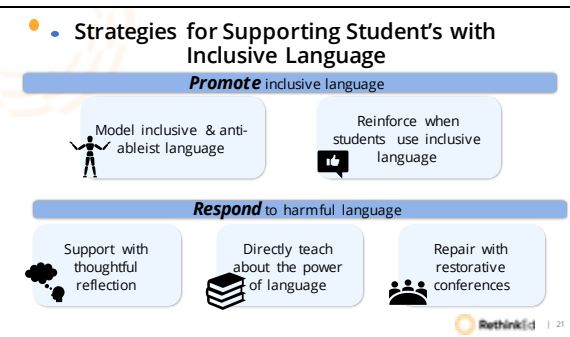
Embracing

- Likelihood • Difference • Contextually-challenging • Interfering

Assimilation-Centric v. Affirming Language








Disability & Neurodivergent Allyship

Allyship is....

- Supporting others how they want to be supported
- 
- Using your power and privilege to promote equity and support others

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The Power of Allyship

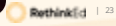
When we ally with neurodivergent and disabled students, we:

- Support building more inclusive learning environments
- Contribute to removal of barriers to access and learning
- Build stronger relationships
- Continue to raise awareness and support for equitable learning

Allyship helps students to feel:

- Respected
- Comfortable
- Involved
- Connected
- Empowered



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Guest Speaker 



Syntyche Jennings-Bechar
Neurodivergent, BCaBA & IO
Psychologist, PhD Student

What is a first step in becoming an ally to the Neurodivergent or Disability community?

Strategies for Allying with Neurodivergent Students

- Learn about individual students & support needs
- Learn about the disability community - from the disability community
- Practice accountability & accept feedback
- Be a role model with your actions & words
- Support students with self-advocacy
- Ask students what they need and advocate for them

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Reflection

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- Modeling inclusive language & actions
- I feel confident I support allyship by...**
- Learning about the disability community
- Practicing accountability & accepting feedback
- Supporting students with self-advocacy
- Learning about individual students
- I plan to focus more on promoting allyship by...**
- Advocating on behalf of students

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Q&A with our neurodiverse & expert panel


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- Emilia Nuñez**
Neurodivergent Behavior Analyst
- Syntyche Jennings-Bechar**
Neurodivergent BCaBA & IO Psychologist
- Marissa Ferguson**
Clinical Behavior Analyst


We  Feedback 

We would love and appreciate any feedback you have for us.

Please feel free to use the link in the chat to provide us with feedback for today's webinar.



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 **RethinkEd** | Together We Power Potential

Join us next month for the continuation of our webinar series on supporting neurodivergent students!

December 13th at 1pm

Strategies to Amplify Neurodivergent Student Voice & Agency

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