BASICS OF DISABILITY AWARENESS

By Beth Gordon

Beth Gordon~

As both a reading teacher and a teacher of the visually impaired, Beth taught for over 25 years in the Miami-Dade County Public School System and served as the District Chairperson for the Programs for the Visually Impaired for 8 years. Beth worked with VSA Florida (now arts4all Florida), to develop the position of Cultural Access Coordinator. In that capacity she focused on several initiatives; including the use of universal design and assistive technology for inclusive programming, professional development which targeted access strategies for staff and docents in a variety of cultural venues, and the development of audio description and open captioning programs in the state of Florida. Beth has been a presenter on inclusive strategies including universal design for learning, sensory friendly cultural events, assistive technology, and cultural accessibility for teachers, universities, cultural organizations and at numerous state and national conferences.

Beth is a founding member of the All Kids Included (AKI) steering committee and now works as an independent Inclusion and Accessibility Consultant.

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

❖The ADA defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment or a record of having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

❖"Major life activities" could include learning, communicating, and concentrating, and even eating

Who are children with disabilities?

Children ages 0-17 with disabilities make up a little under 8% of the US population

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) identifies 14 categories of disability

IDEA was amended with the "Every Student Succeeds Act" (ESSA) in 2015. In the law Congress states:

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

"Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities."

Disabilities Are

Visible and Hidden

HIDDEN DISABILITIES

People with hidden disabilities may have conditions such as cancer, epilepsy, severe allergies, diabetes, lung disease, asthma, hypertension, early stages of AIDS, or heart disease

ADA includes people with hidden disabilities under the protection of the law

Disabilities

Physical Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairments/Other Health Impairments (Including severe allergies)

Sensory Impairments
- Vision/Hearing

Developmental Disabilities
- Intellectual Disabilities/Brain Injury/Autism Spectrum Disorder /Multiple Disabilities

Learning Disabilities

Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities (E/BD)

Speech/Language Impairment

PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

People First Language ~ *Speaking with Awareness*

USE	DON'T USE
People with disabilities	The handicapped
People who use wheelchairs or wheelchair user	Confined to a wheelchair or wheelchair bound
People who have autism	The autistic …
People who are deaf or hard of hearing	Deaf and dumb or mute

People First Language

People First Language describes what a person HAS, not what a person IS!

Are you myopic or do you wear glasses?

Are you cancerous or do you have cancer?

Are you disabled or do you have a disability?

People First Language puts the person before the disability

The words we choose to use, say a lot about how we think and feel. Using language that is respectful lets others know that, "this is a place where people of all abilities are welcome and valued!"

People First Language Speaking with Awareness

"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightening and the lightening bug."

~Mark Twain
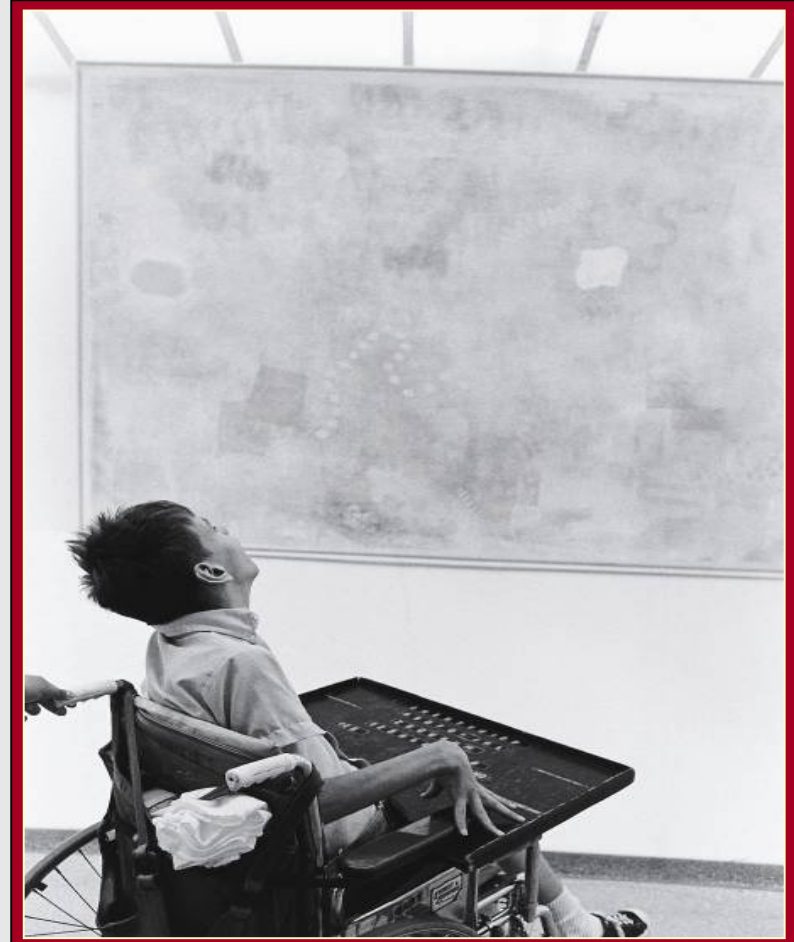
Best Practice

1 See the student first not the disability

2 Talk directly to student – not through interpreter or companion

3 Focus on students' abilities

4 Anticipate differences/ learner variability

5 Plan for students' needs before they come –UD/UDL

Best Practice

Use your resources: Parents, caregivers, IEP's, and students themselves. Open and honest communication with students, parents and caregivers is the best way to learn about your students.

People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget the way you made them feel.

~Maya Angelou