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“Watch Your Language/Person First” Article Review

The two articles, “Watch Your Language” and “How Are Your Person First Skills?” both cover the topic of the controversy of categorizing and stereotyping persons with disabilities. Each acknowledges that change needs to occur on how we address individuals that don’t fit a “social norm” and give suggestions on how to go about making such changes.

When I first began reading, I found that these concepts and ideals of treating and addressing individuals with disabilities did not confuse me at all. I understood the reasoning behind the decisions on both sides of the spectrum—those that use respectful terminology and those that don’t understand the difference. But though I believe that my understanding of the ideas presented in the article were without difficulty, I still learned many new things.

On of the things that I learned was the history behind the term *handicapped*. I had never heard the “hand in cup” beggar story before. Now I see how derogatory the term actually is and plan to practice person first skills to avoid such terminology all together. Another thing that I learned was to not stop an individual with a disability from trying something they might have extreme difficulty every accomplishing. Unfortunately, I have to admit I lack understanding of trying something that you can almost assuredly never accomplish. After all, there are many individuals in the world that have disproven such a theory. The last thing I learned (and plan to implement) is to consider having person-first writing as a requirement. I think it is a wonderful idea and, like all things, with extensive practice, the bad habits of stereotyping and generalizing can be overcome.

From now on and continuing into the future, these two articles have influenced me to be more aggressive in my advocating of persons with disabilities. I will not simply sit by and allow others to be grouped into a segregated unit. Instead I will lead by example in treating them exactly as they should be treated—as human beings!

**References**

TEACHING Exceptional Children, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 18-23.  
 Copyright 2001 CEC.

TEACHING Exceptional Children, Vol. 40, No. 5, pp. 40-43.  
 Copyright 2008 CEC.