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# Equity at Stevens: A Guide to Inclusive Language\*

Fall 2022

\*Taken from "[Language Values at Bank Street](#)", Bank Street  
College of Education School for Children

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Welcome to the Stevens guide to inclusive language. This guide is intended for guidance with all written, electronic, and oral communication. Thank you to Bank Street whose work was integral in the production of this guidebook. We are all learning together and no one document can ever be considered exhaustive. Let's learn and grow together.



NOTE: This guide does not cover all situations. Polite and thoughtful questions are usually the best way to get information, and that information is a solution to saying incorrect and ignorant things. Be aware that people may not always welcome questions and a response is not something they are obligated to give.

# Gender

Human beings exist along a gender-identity continuum. At Stevens, we use inclusive language that values gender diversity.

## Instead of:

## Say:

Boys and Girls  
Ladies and Gentlemen  
Miss/Mister  
Brothers and Sisters

3rd Graders, Siblings,  
Folks, People, Readers,  
Scientists, Creators,  
Detectives

You guys

- You
- You all
- Y'all

- Mailman
- Fireman
- Caveman

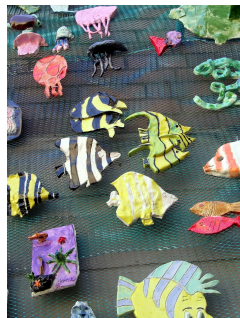
- Mail carrier
- Firefighter
- Cave dweller

Complimenting  
appearance

- Tell me why that \_\_\_\_\_ is special to you
- I can see that you are very excited about your new \_\_\_\_\_
- You look so happy today

Boys things/girls things

- Kids' things
- There are no boys or girls things
- Name the things (trucks, dolls)



# Pronouns 101\*

Type	Name	Example
Feminine	She, her, her	She went to the store. I spoke to her. It was her apple.
Masculine	He, him, his	He went to the store. I spoke to him. It was his apple.
Gender Neutral	They, them, their	They went to the store. I spoke to them. It was their apple.
Gender Neutral	Ze, zir/zem, zirs/zes	Ze went to the store. I spoke to zir/zem. It was zirs/zes apple.
Gender Neutral	Ze, hir, hers	Ze went to the store. I spoke to hir. It was hers apple.
Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language.		

I'm seeing Jeremy this weekend. They're going to take me skateboarding. Then I'm going to go with them to the movies.

Brittany brought me to this awesome concert! Ze is so fun. I can't wait to hang out with zir again.

\*Adapted from Trans Student Educational Resources.



# Gender Grammar\*

Problem	Correction	Reason
"Transgendered" (adjective)	Transgender	Only adjectives that are derived from nouns and/or verbs (unlike transgender) end in "ed."
"Intersexed"	Intersex	Only adjectives that are derived from nouns and/or verbs (unlike intersex) end in "ed."
"Transgendered" (verb)	transition	Only verbs can have an "ed" added onto the end of the word to become a participle. Transgender is an adjective, not a verb. One does not "transgender," they transition.
"A transgender," "Transgenders"	A transgender person, Transgender people	Transgender is not a noun. "Jake is a transgender" is not only grammatically incorrect, but it can also be offensive.
"Sex change," "Sex reassignment surgery," "Gender reassignment surgery"	Gender confirmation surgery, Genital reconstruction surgery, Genital reassignment surgery	Surgery does not change one's sex or gender, only genitalia.

\*Adapted from Trans Student Educational Resources.

# Sexual Orientation

Human beings exist along a sexual orientation continuum. At Stevens, we use inclusive language that values sexual orientation diversity.

Don't make assumptions about heteronormativity; i.e., boys have or want girlfriends, girls have or want boyfriends. Avoid phrases like

- "ladies' man"
- "boys will love those eyelashes"
- "your mom and dad must be so proud."

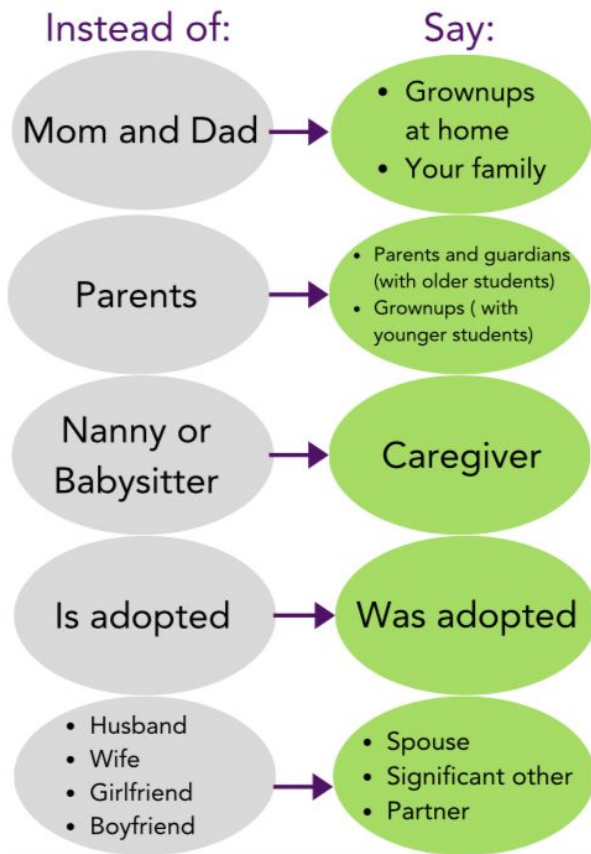
People get to love who they want to love. If you are not sure about what language to use, you can ask,

- "What do you call the person(s) you are with?"
- "Are you in a relationship?"

Work to avoid making assumptions about how adults identify themselves in the present or how children might identify themselves in the future. Sexuality can be fluid along the course of a person's life.



# Families



# Race/Ethnicity

People have racial/ethnic identities that are personal and familial. At Stevens, we work to be mindful of the language we use in order to avoid making assumptions about people as we engage in conversation that touches on race and ethnicity.

Race is a social construct, but racism is real. Before inquiring about how someone identifies racially, ask yourself, "why do I need to know this?"

Instead of:

A person is a minority (in regards to race/ethnicity)



Say:

They are a person of color (if they identify as such)

What are you?  
Where are you from?  
Where are you originally from?



What is your cultural or ethnic background?  
Where are your ancestors from?

Referring to mixed race people as "half" anything

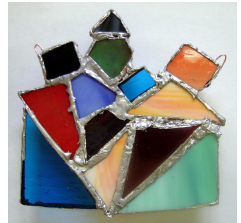
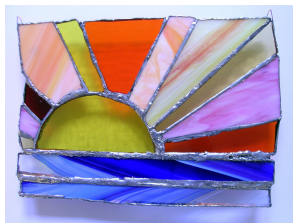


They are "fully" both



# Religion

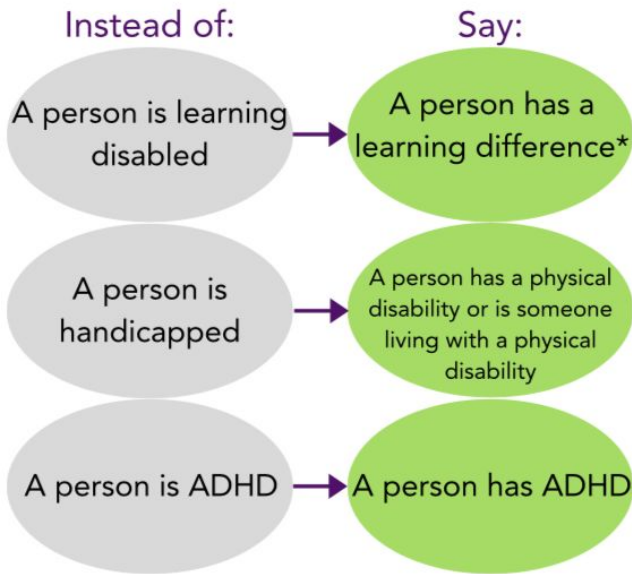
At Stevens, we work to be mindful of the language we use in order to avoid making assumptions about people as we engage in conversation that touches on religion. As a guiding framework, it may be helpful to say, "Some people believe in a god or many gods and some people do not believe in any god." Also, not all religions celebrate specific days, and many religions have significant holy days that are not about celebration.





# Being Able

People have different learning styles, needs, and preferences. Everyone has different ways that they feel help them to learn successfully. However, our society is built for able-bodied and able-minded people. At Stevens, we work to be mindful of the language we use as to avoid making assumptions about people as we engage in conversation that touches on ability.



The goal of this is to emphasize and acknowledge the person first. Using “difference” does not mean that a person does not have a diagnosed disability. This is the language we use with younger children, to support them from an affirmative stance rather than from a deficit model. If a child has been diagnosed by a licensed professional, we work to provide all of the necessary accommodations to support this child’s learning. This acknowledges that our bodies and their needs will change over time

# Ableist Language

Ableism is the systematic, institutional devaluing of bodies and minds falsely deemed deviant, abnormal, defective or subhuman. Language is one tool of an oppressive system, and being aware of it can help us understand how pervasive ableism is. Note that some of the words on this page are slurs, while others may not be considered harmful or offensive but can be contextually ableist.

Instead of:

Crazy, psycho,  
insane



Consider saying:

Wild, confusing,  
unpredictable, impulsive,  
foolish, or silly

Retard(ed), spaz,  
stupid

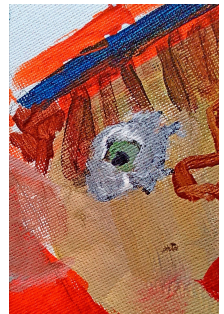
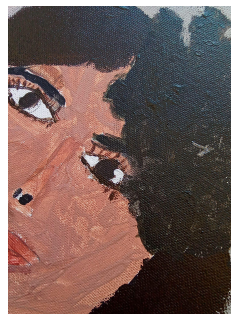


Uninformed,  
ignorant, impulsive,  
or reckless

A specific disability  
diagnosis or name as a  
metaphor/hyperbole  
(for ex: OCD, -phobic,  
bipolar)



What's actually happening  
or being observed without  
comparing it to a disability  
(for ex: meticulous, bigotry  
against, indecisive)



# Socioeconomics

At Stevens, we work to be mindful of the language we use in order to avoid making assumptions about people as we engage in conversations that touch on socioeconomics.

Instead of:

Where did you go for break?



Say:

What was a meaningful interaction from your break?  
Name something you learned over break?

Saying or implying that public schools are bad and private schools are good.



There are many school options open to students and families. We can't make assumptions about a school that we do not attend.

Describing status as upper, middle, or lower class.



Words/Phrases such as "enough," "more than enough" and "less than enough" to engage in conversations about status.

