

Internal Education and Commitments



These are practices that our organizational staff went through to help us deepen our collective understanding of the suggested practices and feedback. We believe that internal study should be ongoing. We still have much to learn, so please let us know if there are other things you have tried or think we should try!

Contact us at california@gsanetwork.org.

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LEARN TO RECOGNIZE ABLEISM AND ABLEIST LANGUAGE

- As youth group and club leaders, we try to mindfully create spaces that are welcoming to disabled and neurodivergent students, and where able-bodied and neurotypical students can learn and deepen their commitment to disability justice.
- Many offensive and ableist words are actually still commonly used. While they may not be used as intentionally offensive, they reflect the interpersonal and institutional ableism present in society.
- Derogatory or insulting speech against neurodivergent folks contributes to feeling ostracized or othered in spaces.

EXAMPLE:

Many examples of ableist language and alternatives can be found at:

<https://www.autistichoya.com/p/ableist-words-and-terms-to-avoid.html>

Some others: The “autistic screech” (literally “REEE”, to mock an autistic meltdown or way of communication) or phrases like “I’m slow” or “I’m so OCD”.

LEARN ABOUT IDENTITIES/LABELS THAT ARE USED IN THE COMMUNITY

- Learn about identities and labels that are used in the community and how to collectively use them as a facilitation team, following the leadership of youth and broadly the disabled community.

As a team, we use:

- Neurodivergent and neurotypical
- Neurodiverse when the group is mixed
- Ableism, ableism
- Able-bodied, Able-bodied folks, people who are able-bodied
- Disabled folks/people and people with disabilities (sometimes both together)
- X is Autistic

However, we also try to mirror the words that people use to describe themselves in specific instances if they do not match the terms we use.

For instance, “X identifies as differently-abled” or “X identifies as a person with autism”

DEVELOP INTERVENTIONS AND PROTOCOLS TO SUPPORT YOUTH WHEN ABLEISM SHOWS UP IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

- Our team chose a protocol to address language or behaviors directly if possible when facilitating so that we engage all participants present in the effort to combat ableism.

EXAMPLE:

Possible Intervention Language:

- "Is there another word you can use?"
- "Some folks consider _/that word a derogatory term, is there a different word you can use?"
- "Some folks consider _/that word a derogatory term; a word you can use instead is _, does that get at what you were trying to say?"
- Online meetings also provide the chance to follow up with the group via chat if a facilitator misses the opportunity in the moment.

WORK TO BRING IN A DISABILITY JUSTICE ANALYSIS INTO CAMPAIGN WORK AND ISSUES

GSA's can advocate for school improvements that benefit LGBTQ+ students, disabled and neurodivergent students, and students of color.



EXAMPLE:

Having multiple accessible single-stall gender-neutral bathrooms throughout campus (as opposed to just one or zero!) helps multiple groups of students.

We have a long way to go here. We know students are more likely to say they do not see positive representations of disabled people in their sex education and that disabled students are not receiving comprehensive sex education in accessible ways, and that disabled students are policed heavily and are overrepresented in the school-to-prison pipeline.

In our Quick Reference Guide, we have included a list of links, readings, and more for you to use to review with your GSA or organizations to delve deeper into the issue.