

Use inclusive language

A suggestion for implementing the strategy
'Leading with moral purpose' from the Guide:

[Leading inclusive schools](#)

Includes:

Use names not labels

Use language to respect and celebrate diversity

Use anti-racist language and pronounce Māori correctly

Review and develop inclusive language

Recognise the impact of words

Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Leading schools that include all learners](#)

Strategy: [Leading with moral purpose](#)

Suggestion: [Use inclusive language](#)

Date

22 June 2026

Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/leading-schools-that-include-all-learners/use-inclusive-language

Use names not labels



THE MOST APPROPRIATE LABEL IS
USUALLY THE ONE SOMEONE'S PARENTS
HAVE GIVEN THEM.

Source:

[Michael Giangreco](#)

<https://www.uvm.edu/cess/cdci/profiles/michael-f-giangreco-phd>

[View full image \(974 KB\)](#)

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Use language to respect and celebrate diversity

Use inclusive language to support diversity and challenge stereotypes, biases and discrimination.

An individual's preferred language may differ from the following guide and should be honoured.

- ✓ Identify people as individuals. For example, use "student" instead of "blind student" or use a student's name rather than "down syndrome student".
- ✓ If a group membership is relevant, emphasise individuality first and avoid language that stereotypes or defines them by their disability, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status or membership in a particular group.
- ✓ Reframe deficit group labels to focus on positive actions and support. For example, "literacy acceleration", "strengthening hauora and wellbeing" or "multilingual" rather than "target", "at risk" or "ESOL" students.
- ✓ Embrace gender neutral and inclusive language. For example, use "parent" rather than "mother, father", use "welcome friends and whānau" or "Hi everyone".

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Use anti-racist language and pronounce Māori correctly

“By being intentional about the words we use (and don't use), we play a small part in breaking the cycle of systemic racism.” Source: [Anti-racist language guide](#) - (University of Arizona).

Finnian Galbraith, year 11 student at Kāpiti College, talks about the importance of pronouncing Māori words correctly.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/U6-SdrRxPOQ>
Closed Captions

Source:

[Finnian Galbraith \(YouTube\)](#)

<https://youtu.be/U6-SdrRxPOQ?si=AsRbuns3xfHAWJPG>

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Review and develop inclusive language

The language we use shapes our culture, expectations, and influences our actions.

Develop shared expectations for positive and inclusive language in all parts of the school.

- ✓ Consider the language and terminology you currently use to identify students and discuss their progress, needs, and supports.
- ✓ Reflect on whether the current language is respectful, accurate, useful, supports high expectations, and aligns with values and beliefs.
- ✓ Check for deficit identifiers that lower expectations, affirm stereotypes or are discriminatory.
- ✓ Ask students and whānau for feedback.
- ✓ Refine and adopt agreed language and terminology.

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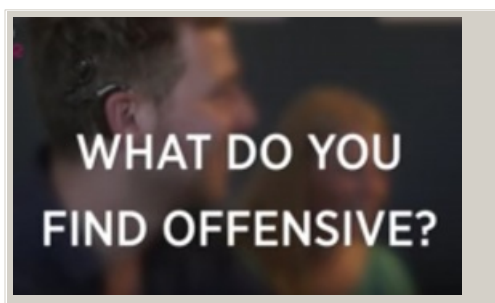
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Recognise the impact of words

A group of young people describe some of the questions they have been asked. Here are their responses.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/aj1aIuPVuzo>

Closed Captions

Source:

[BBC Three \(UK\)](#)

<https://youtu.be/aj1aIuPVuzo>

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Useful resources



Te Reo Hāpai – The language of enrichment

A glossary of new words in te reo Māori related to the mental health, addiction, and disability sectors.

Publisher: Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui

[Visit website](#)



Enhancing staff capability at Newtown School

Newtown School shows their commitment to being “everybody’s school”.

Publisher: Education Gazette

[Visit website](#)



Guide to LGBTQIA+ students: Use inclusive language to affirm diversity

Gender inclusive language and concepts.

[Visit website](#)



Bias-free language

Guidelines for writing about people without bias. Provides examples.

Publisher: American Psychological Society

[Visit website](#)

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