

Alternatives to Deficit Language

Instead of Saying...	Say...
at-risk	genius
unmotivated child	a child in an unmotivating curriculum
struggling students	struggling instruction, assessments, policies, and systems of education
the child is strange or weird	the child is genius and creative
defiant and confrontational	genius
non-English speaker	"child's language(s)" speaker e.g., Spanish speaker, Pashto speaker
non-white	naming who they are
subgroup	naming who they are
minorities	naming who they are
red student/RTI Tier 3	genius
grit	genius
underdeveloped skills	full genius developing
low-functioning child	low-quality assessments
family instability	societal instability
remediation	systematic problems
poor attitude toward school	unclear purpose of school and the extent to which it is fulfilling our students' lives and joy
celebrating resilient students	creating spaces where students don't have to overcome the curriculum and instruction they've been handed
not a math person	every child a math person
disadvantaged child	disadvantaged systems and structures
can't read/nonreader	student who is struggling at the moment with a particular skill or strategy (e.g., letter-sound relationships)
traditional "achievement data"	wider equitable achievement data
labeling ancestors as slaves	referring to them as geniuses who were forcibly enslaved
Why did the parents give their child that name?	What a beautiful and original name!
test prep	cultivation of students' genius and joy