



## San Joaquin County Office of Education

James A. Mousalimas, County Superintendent of Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
016-014: People First

November 23, 2015  
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### **SJCOE Supports People First**

#### *The San Joaquin County Board of Education resolves to support People First Language*

The San Joaquin County Board of Education resolved to support the use of people-first terminology when referring to students with disabilities.

“We want to put a face on our students,” Kathleen Skeels, San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) assistant superintendent of special education and SELPA said when presenting the resolution approved by the Board of Education at its regular meeting on Nov. 18th.

“Instead of saying you have an autistic student, we now will say ‘my student with autism,’” Skeels explained. “We want to remember that it is the student, the person, first,” Skeels said.

For decades students with special needs have been identified by their disability. Instead of categorizing a child by their disability, the resolution calls to have the disability stated last.

“It’s inspiring to see the work our staff does with our students with special needs,” County Superintendent of Schools James Mousalimas said as he referred to the staff as heroes in the community.

The county resolution follows Assembly Concurrent Resolution 60, which passed the Legislature earlier this year. It “recognizes the necessity of a more respectful and humanistic view of students with disabilities, and would affirm that state policies and procedures should use People First Language to the greatest extent possible.”

“After all, we are all people first,” Skeels noted.

The San Joaquin County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) serves students with moderate to severe disabilities from birth to age 22. The SJCOE SELPA serves nearly 50% of the county’s special needs population with 8,490 students. The Lodi Unified School District (LUSD) SELPA serves close to 4,000 students, and the Stockton Unified School District (SUSD) SELPA serves 4,029 students, Skeels noted. LUSD and SUSD are the only districts in the county with separate SELPAs.

Skeels presented the Nov. 18 resolution on behalf of the LUSD SELPA, the SUSD SELPA, and the SJCOE SELPA. For more information about ACR 60 please visit: <http://bit.ly/1T2aauf>

#### **About the San Joaquin County Office of Education:**

*San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) provides educational leadership, resources, and services to support schools throughout the county. With its highly regarded programs, innovative staff, and community partnerships, SJCOE ensures that every student in San Joaquin County has the opportunity of a quality education. For more information, visit [www.sjcoe.org](http://www.sjcoe.org).*