Person-First Respectful Language

Example	Inclusive Alternative
"The DCD students"	Use the Students Name
“SpEd”	Mrs. Johnson’s Class // Student receiving reading services
Non-verbal	Communicates through gestures and augmentative device
Non-compliant	Experiences difficulty following verbal directions and benefits from clear, predictable routines.

Strength-Based Language, Emphasizing Interests and Preferences

Deficit-Based Language:	Strength-Based Language:
"Struggles with reading."	Excels at science and uses that interest to stay motivated during reading related tasks. Demonstrates a need for foundational reading skills instruction
“Is unmotivated.”	Strong autonomy skills; responds best to choices and flexible assignments.

Re-Frame Goals & Needs

Deficit-Based:	Strength-Based:
“Deficient in Social Skills”	A curious observer who needs support in peer initiation / interactions
“Low reader”	Enjoys listening to stories; will build on known letter sounds to decode new words
“Blurts”	Eager to be heard; will use strong communication skills to practice expectations of the classroom, to replace instances of interrupting.