



## Sport of the Month



## basketball

### Basketball in Special Olympics

Basketball is one of the top sports at Special Olympics. Young players learn to handle the ball and dribble, and older players learn the strategies to play a challenging game.

Basketball is also a favorite sport for Special Olympics Unified Sports in which players with and without intellectual disabilities form teams to play other Unified teams. It's a learning experience that's also a lot of fun.

How do Special Olympics activities impact students? Here's how one teacher answered:

*"We were able to provide several leadership opportunities for students with and without disabilities. Each even reached out to a different population of the school, which created a more lasting impact in our work toward a more unified school!"*

# March

This month's theme: **power of words**

### Goals:

- Determine words that have a positive impact on an individual's feeling of self-worth.
- Incorporate positive words into daily speech and writing.
- Understand how negative words can impact individuals and work to change negative speech in the school community.

### Week 1:

Plan for your students to watch an inspiring video clip from Special Olympics that talks about the power of words. You'll find a link to *Taking a Stand Against the R-Word* at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>. The video runs just over nine minutes and will no doubt make a big impression on your students.

Stop the speech at 1:28 when Soeren (pronounced Sor'-en) describes the teens teasing an African-American child and using a racial slur. Ask students if they could ever see themselves or their friends doing something similar. They likely will say no, making the story's ultimate revelation more powerful. Continue the video clip.

Stop the speech again at 4:25 after Soeren polls his audience to see if they discriminate based on age, gender, or race. He then asks how many have used the terms *retard* or *retarded*. Poll your students using the same question.

Finally, show the final part of Soeren's speech in which he reveals that his younger sister Olivia was the real target of the teenagers at the store.

Hold a class or small group discussion using the following questions as a guide:

- Did you predict that the target of the teens' discrimination was Soeren's sister? If not, what was your reaction?
  - How do you think the teasing made Soeren feel?
  - How would you describe the teens who were teasing Olivia? (Students may use words like *mean*, but you may also want to introduce words like *intolerant* and *prejudiced*.)
  - Why does the use of the *R*-word demonstrate intolerance?
  - Is it just as bad to remain quiet when someone uses the *R*-word as it is to use the term yourself?
  - How might Soeren's story be different if Olivia had been seen by the teens as more than a "retard"? How might it have been different if one of the teens had stood up to the others?
  - What are the important lessons we can learn from Soeren's story?
- adapted from *Get Into It!*



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## Week 2:

### Take Action!

- This month it's time for students to share all they've learned as part of a schoolwide campaign to end the *R*-word! Finalize your event planning and review the resources available at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators> to be sure you're ready. Refer to the event timeline you've created to get your campaign rolling.

Challenge students to share examples of intolerance and prejudice toward those with intellectual disabilities that they've seen in the news or in popular culture. Ask, *Do you hear the R-word used in movies or songs? Do you hear famous people use it? If so, does that make it seem more or less acceptable?* Distribute "The 'R' Word in Our World" (provided at the end of this newsletter or available for download at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>), which gives four examples of the *R*-word being used in a form of entertainment or pop culture. Read one or more of the examples and discuss why the *R*-word may have been used in the example (to entertain, to insult, etc.), what the likely impact was, and what students would say to the artist or entertainer who used the word. Finally, have students draw conclusions about the impact of using the *R*-word in popular culture, at school, and in the community as a whole.

Refer students back to Soeren's story (or another of the intolerance examples shared during the lesson). Ask questions such as *Why do you think that the teens were mocking Olivia, considering they did not know her? What might cause someone their age to be intolerant of others?* Reasons might include influence from family, friends, or society; insecurity; fear; unfamiliarity; ignorance; competitiveness; need to conform; need for power; or lack of education. Have students brainstorm at least one idea for reversing or overcoming each reason on their list. For example, inviting a student with intellectual disabilities to come to their class might help overcome or reverse unfamiliarity.

Have students wrap up today's lesson by sharing their thoughts in their writing journals.

—adapted from *Get Into It!*

## Week 3:

Picking back up on last week's discussion, ask students if they think it is actually possible to reverse the trends of intolerance related to intellectual disabilities. For those who say no, challenge them to explain. For those who say yes, challenge them to identify whose responsibility it is to make that happen. You may want to create a list of responses. Do students think that their generation shares that responsibility? Have students get out their journals and complete this sentence: "In order for my generation to help reverse stereotypes against those with intellectual disabilities..." Share answers with the class.

Next, distribute "You've Got the Power!" (provided at the end of this newsletter or available for download at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>), which challenges student groups to create a product or project to influence their generation to reverse intolerant, noninclusive behavior related to those with intellectual disabilities. They can act upon one of the ideas listed or come up with a new one, incorporating it into this month's Spread the Word to End the Word campaign. Their project should be targeted to kids their age and focus on either the power of inclusion or the negative impact of prejudice or intolerance.

—adapted from *Get Into It!*

### March events:

- Spread the Word to End the Word





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Week 4:



## Youth Summits

Special Olympics Youth Summits pair students with and without intellectual disabilities, ages 12–17, and gather them as delegates to discuss ways to reverse negative stereotypes and attitudes about intellectual disability. Youth summits are often student-led and student-designed, making the content age-appropriate and engaging to all participants.

Wrap up this month's study of the "power of words" with the following reinforcement activities:

- Have students reflect in their journals (or on a sheet of paper) about an experience from their own lives, at school, or in their community when they discriminated against someone, stood by quietly as a friend discriminated against someone, or were a victim of discrimination. Their reflection could be shown in words or pictures, as a drawing, paragraph, or even a poem. It should include a description of the situation, how they felt during and after the incident, and what, if anything, they would change if they could. Have student volunteers share these experiences with the class or in small groups. What common elements do the stories share? Based on the examples, would students say that prejudice and intolerance exists at your school? In your community?
- Divide students into two groups. One group will be challenged to develop a list of rights for students their age. The other group will be challenged to develop a list of rights for students their age with intellectual disabilities. Compare lists. If appropriate, add to each list if something from the other list pertains. Then ask, *Do students with and without intellectual disabilities have different rights? What conclusions can you draw from the exercise?*
- Challenge students to write one of two letters: a letter from Olivia Palumbo to the teens who mocked her or a letter from one of the teens to Olivia. Share pairs of letters with the class.  
—adapted from *Get Into It!*



## The “R” Word in Our World

Below are a few examples from entertainment/pop culture when the “R” word was used to describe someone or something. Review the examples and think about why the R-word may have been used in the example (e.g., to entertain, to insult, etc.); what the likely impact was; and what you would say to the artist or entertainer who used the slur. What is the impact of using the R-word in popular culture, at school, and in the community as a whole?

### Music: Let’s Get Retarded

The song, “Let’s Get Retarded,” later changed to “Let’s Get it Started,” appeared on the Black Eyed Peas’ 2003 album, “Elephunk.” Its lyrics included:

Everybody, everybody, let’s get into it.

Get stupid. (come on)

Get retarded (come on), get retarded (yeah), get retarded.

Let’s get retarded (ha), let’s get retarded in here. Let’s get retarded (ha), let’s get retarded in here.

### Film: Tropic Thunder

The 2008 movie, “Tropic Thunder,” starred Ben Stiller as Tugg Speedman, a fading action hero, and Robert Downey, Jr. as Kirk Lazarus, an Australian star. The movie uses the R-word more than a dozen times, including these lines from the script:

Stiller (As Tugg Speedman) There were times, when I was doing Jack, that I actually felt retarded, like really retarded...In a weird way, I had to sort of just free myself up to believe that it was okay to be stupid or dumb.

Downey, Jr. (As Kirk Lazarus): Everybody knows you never go full retard.

### Celebrities: Guy Ritchie/Madonna

In a 2009 Esquire magazine article, producer Guy Ritchie calls his ex-wife Madonna the R-word. His quotes include:

She’s a manifester, if there ever was one. First-rate manifester. Madonna makes things happen. Put Madonna up against any twenty-three-year-old, she’ll outwork them, outdance them, outperform them. The woman is broad. And, of course, here you go: I still love her. But she’s retarded, too.

### Television: Politically Incorrect

In the late night television show, “Politically Incorrect,” host Bill Maher compared his two dogs with retarded children. The transcript of the show includes these quote:

Bill: But I’ve often said that if I had – I have two dogs – if I had two retarded children, I’d be a hero. And yet the dogs, which are pretty much the same thing...[Laughter]...What? They’re sweet. They’re loving. They’re kind, but they don’t mentally advance at all.

Guest 1: I’m going to throw my shoe at you for that one – oh!

Bill: What? Dogs are like retarded children.

Guest 1: My 9-year-old nephew is retarded. I’ve never thought of him like a little dog.

Bill: Well, maybe you should.

Guest 2: But I don’t think you ought to use the word retarded. I don’t think that’s right.

Bill: Don’t use the word “retarded”? Well, what word should we use?

Guest 2: Just a regular person.

Bill: But they’re not a regular person.

## You've Got the Power!

Unfortunately prejudice and intolerance toward those with intellectual disabilities has been part of our society for many years. Through this lesson, you have explored and reflected upon many examples of this intolerance including the teenagers mocking Olivia; the hurtful use of the R-word in movies, music, and television; and your own personal experiences. The good news is that your generation has the power to help reverse these trends by spreading positive messages of inclusion and explaining the consequences of intolerance and prejudice.

For this activity, you will create a message, initiative, or project to influence kids your age to help reverse the trends of intolerance and prejudice against those with intellectual disabilities. You may wish to explore <http://www.specialolympics.org/projectunifyresources> to see projects created by other young people, including songs, films, photos, and messages.

Your project should be targeted to kids your age and should focus on:

- The power of inclusion related to those with intellectual disabilities
- The negative impact of prejudice or intolerance toward those with intellectual disabilities
- Or both.

Your project can take any form. Ideas include a song, letter, commercial, blog, poem, video, series of announcements, newsletter, or series of photographs.

