

Grades 9–12 **March** Sport of the Month

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.

Dear Student,

This month we are discussing one of the most serious aspects of discrimination in our communities—our words and the tremendous impact they have on people. In particular, we'll focus on the words *retard* and *retarded* and how those terms affect people with intellectual disabilities, their families, and friends.

You may use these terms without even thinking about what they truly mean. Our lessons this month will get you to stop and think about the terms, along with other words and how they impact people. Our quest is to use words that help, not harm, others in our daily interactions.

teacher signature

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

Many of our discussions this month will hinge on an inspiring and thought-provoking speech by a student named Soeren Palumbo. After viewing *Taking a Stand Against the R-Word*, we'll also discuss examples of the *R-word* being used by celebrities and in movies or TV shows.

Furthermore, you will reflect in your writing journal about an experience from your own life, at school, or in your community when you either discriminated against someone, stood by quietly as a friend discriminated against someone, or were a victim of discrimination. The goal of our exercise is to empower you to do your part in changing perceptions and language to end intolerance toward those with intellectual disabilities.



What you can do:



Take action Think about your own speech and the words you typically use each day. Many of us are guilty of using the *R-word* in daily speech, as Soeren Palumbo points out in the *Taking a Stand Against the R-Word* video. But once you see the power that those words have and their capacity to hurt those with intellectual disabilities and the people who love them, take action to modify your own speech to use words of respect. And don't be afraid to explain to others why they should do the same.