



## Sport of the Month



# September

This month's theme: **acceptance**

### Goals:

- Help students understand the consequences of judging another person or being judged by another person.
- Help students understand the difficulties of standing up for what is right, even standing up to their own friends.
- Help students understand the roots and consequences of intolerant behavior and how to reverse such behavior.

### Cycling in Special Olympics

Cycling requires good physical condition, balance, endurance, and tactical thinking. Special Olympics includes time trial and road race events in different distances.

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

"The most significant change is that there is now awareness that every student, those with or without disabilities, has a voice and contributes to school programs."

### Week 1:

Students can take a leadership role in the classroom and school community by effectively challenging intolerant and judgmental behavior. While this is not an easy thing for students to do, such a leadership role prepares young people to understand their civic responsibilities.

Display the following quote for all your students to see:

*"There are all kinds of courage. It takes a great deal of courage to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends."* —Dumbledore in *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

In their journals or on separate sheets of paper, have students respond to the quote, answering the following questions (provide more guidance as needed):

- ▶ What does this quote mean to you?
- ▶ Do you agree or disagree with it?
- ▶ How does it relate to experiences in your own life?
- ▶ What do you think is the best way to stand up to your friends, compared to how you would stand up to your enemies?

Encourage your students to share their responses either in small groups or with the entire class. As an alternative, collect students' answers and read them aloud yourself, keeping each writer anonymous. This approach may result in further discussion of the topic.

—adapted from *Get Into It*, Grades 6–8



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## Week 2:

## Take Action!

● **Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day (September 24) honors the founder of Special Olympics.** Plan and host a Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day event at your school to get staff and students excited and educated about the amazing opportunities that inclusion can bring! Visit <http://specialolympics.org/educators/> for more information.

● **Start a Unified Sports Team with local Special Olympics athletes and partners from your school.** Unified Sports Teams include athletes with and without intellectual disabilities. Contact your local Special Olympics Program to see what Unified Sports they offer; then get started recruiting a coach and scheduling practices. Visit <http://specialolympics.org/educators/> to find contact information for your local programs.

## September events:

● **Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day, September 22**



Revisit the activity results from Week 1. Pay particular attention to discussing the ways in which students felt they may have been the victims of intolerance or judgmental behavior. Also, ask students if they have noted intolerance in television shows, movies, or music.

Next, ask students if they have heard of the R-word. Explain that the R-word is the word *retard* and that this term is demeaning to those with intellectual disabilities. Discuss the use of the R-word in popular culture, and ask students if they have heard friends, celebrities, and others use the R-word. Then ask students if they think it is possible to reverse the trends of intolerance related to intellectual abilities. Write down student responses where your entire class can see them and ask your students if they think their generation shares a responsibility to reverse the trends.

Finally, have students write responses to the following prompt:

*In order for my generation to help reverse stereotypes against those with intellectual disabilities,...*

For additional resources that will help you discuss the R-word, visit <http://specialolympics.org/educators/>

## Week 3:

Revisit the activity from Week 2. This week, however, assign your students to groups of three or four. Have them review each others' responses to the writing prompt. Next, have the groups brainstorm ways in which they can influence larger groups of their peers to reverse intolerant behaviors toward persons with intellectual disabilities. Finally, ask the groups to put together a promotional ad—either a print ad or script for a television ad—that advocates for persons with intellectual disabilities and against intolerant behavior.





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Week 4:

## Program Spotlight: Get Into It®

Get Into It® is a free web-based, interactive curriculum for children in grades K–12. Part of Special Olympics Project UNIFY®, this unique program delivers online resources that include lessons, activities, videos, athlete stories, and supplemental materials designed to be used in general classrooms.

Get Into It is designed to:

- ▶ Educate students in how they can become change agents in their communities
- ▶ Motivate young people to use their creative energy in leadership roles
- ▶ Teach students to accept, respect, and advocate with and for persons with intellectual disabilities
- ▶ Activate young people with new approaches for sharing experiences, engaging in community action, and making a difference

To request your free copy of the Get Into It activities and lessons, email [getintoit@specialolympics.org](mailto:getintoit@specialolympics.org).

Building on lessons from Weeks 2 and 3 and using resources available at <http://specialolympics.org/educators/>, gather your students once more into their small groups and have them review the R-word fact sheet, event and activation ideas, and the R-word pledge. Print copies of the pledge for your students to review. Then brainstorm other actions students can take to make these pledges meaningful. Explain that you'll hold a schoolwide Spread the Word event in March.

**SPREAD THE WORD  
TO END THE WORD.**

