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Respectful Language Lessons: Lessons that encourage students to speak respectfully, stand-up for one another, and use words positively to promote an inclusive, accepting campus for all.

## Lessons:

### Words Matter

**Description:** Students experience why some words when used as descriptors can be hurtful. Better alternatives are offered to break down barriers and build unity.

**Time Required:** 20 minutes

**Materials Needed:** Print and cut apart [Descriptive Words](#)  
There are thirty words per sheet. Be sure to include all the *red italicized* words.

### Steps:

1. Cut out the cards containing descriptive words: <http://bit.ly/2zCNVXL>
  - a. Pass them out to the class face down -- Tell everyone to peek at their card but make sure they don't share it with anyone
2. Have everyone stand up, and ask these questions:
  - a. If you feel the word you have describes someone you know, but not you, **SIT DOWN**.
  - b. If you feel the word you have describes you, **SIT DOWN**.
  - c. If someone used the word to describe you, would it make you feel good? If it would, **SIT DOWN**.
  - d. If you have ever used the word to describe someone else, **SIT DOWN**
  - e. If someone used the word to describe you, would it hurt your feelings? If it would, **STAND UP**, or remain standing.
  - f. If the word you have makes you feel unhappy or sad, **STAND UP**, or remain standing.
4. Have the students still standing read off their words one at a time and discuss:
  - a. What do you think all these words have in common?
  - b. No one would use these words to describe themselves, and the words don't make you feel good about yourself.
  - c. Do you know that a few of the words "Retarded" "Crippled," and "Handicapped," are often used to describe people who have some type of physical or intellectual disability.
  - d. Why are these words used when no one would ever choose them to describe themselves?
5. Have the students sitting down read off their words and discuss:
  - a. Ask your students if those words could NOT be used to describe someone with a physical or intellectual disability



- b. When describing a person with a disability, it is important to acknowledge their **PERSON-HOOD**, that is to describe them as a **PERSON** with a **DISABILITY**, not a **DISABLED PERSON**
  - c. You would never describe a person with cancer, as cancerous. This is ONE aspect of their being.
  - d. The word “retarded” is an antiquated, old-fashioned term that is very hurtful when used to describe a person with an intellectual disability.
  - e. There are lots of words that were once deemed OK to use to describe a person’s differences that aren’t used anymore. This is just another example of how language changes over time
6. Have students reflect on the activity:
- a. If you got one of the not so great words, how did you feel when asked if you had ever used that word to describe someone?
  - b. Did you find it interesting that the word “Retarded” evokes the same feelings as the word “Loser,” “Ugly,” or “Stupid?” Why do you think that is?
  - c. Is the word “Stupid,” or “Loser” any less hurtful?
  - d. How will you react if you hear someone using one of these hurtful words about someone you know?
7. Click [here](#) if you would like to receive a Respect or ‘Spread the Word to End the Word’ banner for the students to sign after the discussion is complete.

## Standing By or Standing Up

**Description:** Have students draw conclusions about the impact of basing someone’s rights on something they cannot control, and reflect upon the difficulties of standing up for what is right.

**Time Required:** 20 minutes

**Materials Needed:** Video of Speech by Soeren Palumbo: <http://bit.ly/2zGIAAnj>

### Steps:

1. Tell students they are going to watch a speech by Special Olympics Youth Leader and Notre Dame honor student Soeren Palumbo. The speech illustrates the consequences of treating someone differently based on something they cannot control.
2. After showing the speech, hold a class or small group discussion using the following questions as a guide:
  - a. Did you predict that the target of the teens’ discrimination was Soeren’s sister? If not, what was your reaction?
  - b. How would you describe the teens who were teasing Olivia?
    - i. You may want to introduce words like “intolerant,” “discrimination,” and “prejudiced” if the student’s don’t use them
  - c. Why does the use of the R-word demonstrated intolerance?
  - d. Is it just as bad to remain quiet when someone is calling someone the R-word as it is to use the term yourself?

- e. How would your life be different if you were judged by just one element of your life, especially if it was one you could not control?
  - f. It is possible to be an innocent bystander? What the important lessons we can learn from Soeren's story?
3. Click [here](#) if you would like to receive a respect banner for the students to sign after the discussion is complete.

## “Spread the Word to End the Word” Initiative

**Description:** Have students take part in a campaign that asks people to pledge to stop saying the R-word, as a starting point towards creating more accepting attitudes and communities for all people. We suggest using the videos below to front load the content around increasing awareness.

**Time:** 15-45 Minutes

**Materials needed:** Click [here](#) to register your class, and receive a banner from Special Olympics to have students sign take the pledge against using the R- word. This banner is large enough for the entire student body to sign.



### Steps:

- 1) Show one or more of the videos below to the class:
  - Special Olympics PSA: <http://bit.ly/2gy2qVe>
  - Mic News Piece: <http://bit.ly/2yJ3zDx>
  - Lowell High School (San Francisco) Best Buddies: <http://bit.ly/2yIZSNZ>
  - James Logan High School (Union City): <http://bit.ly/2g2PPcv>
  - Clovis North High School (Fresno): <http://bit.ly/2yErtA>
- 2) Class Discussion led by teachers of principal; Some topics can include:
  - a. The importance of being aware that words can be offensive and hurtful, even if it's in a joking manner
  - b. Using the word “retard” in a derogatory manner is offensive because it demoralizes a group of people who may have different abilities than we do but deserve to be treated the same as anyone else
  - c. Respectful and inclusive language is essential to the movement for the dignity and humanity of people with intellectual disabilities
  - d. How students can use dialogue to uplift one another and use positive words, instead of negative ones
- 3) Have students taking the pledge against using offensive, hurtful language by signing the R Word Banner.



4) Have students take the online pledge promising to eliminate the derogatory use of the R-word. Follow the [link here](#)

**Abilities Awareness Lessons:** Lessons that help students understand the importance of recognizing and accepting every individual for their differences.

**Lessons:**

**Diverse Ability**

**Description:** The importance of recognizing that we are all different, and understanding challenges that individuals must overcome based on their inherent abilities.

**Time Required:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** [Diverse Ability Handout](#), a pencil or pen

**Steps:**

- 1) Have students stand side-by-side in a line or large circle. Explain that they will need to listen carefully and respond to sentences that describe them -- their individual traits, likes and dislikes -- by stepping forward.
- 2) Begin with external characteristics (physical descriptions and experiences);
  - a. Step up if you throw the ball with your right hand
  - b. Step up if you wear eyeglasses
  - c. Step up if you've ever worn braces on your teeth
  - d. Step up if you have more than one sibling
- 3) Continue to call out internal characteristics (preferences and abilities);
  - a. Step up if you're better at writing than singing
  - b. Step up if your favorite color is blue
  - c. Step up if you prefer playing sports over coloring
  - d. Step up if you'd rather play video games, than play outside
  - E. Step up if you consider yourself shy, rather than outgoing
- 2) Have students sit down, and discuss:
  - a. Did you learn anything new about one another?
  - b. How much can you tell about people just by looking at them?
  - c. Which similarities and differences can you see and which ones can't you see?
  - e. Each one of us is different and we also *do* things in a different way. But sometimes people don't want to be different. Sometimes people would prefer to just blend in and be like everyone else, but that's not always easy to do.



- 3) Explore with class what it feels like to do something differently than what they're used to. Hand out a piece of paper and have them do these activities.
  - a. With a pen or pencil, try writing your name below using the opposite hand that you normally use
  - b. With the hand you normally write with, try and write the ABC's backwards (starting with "Z") as quickly as you can
  - c. Now try to sing the ABC song, while writing the alphabet backwards.
  
- 4) Discuss with Class:
  - a. No matter how well you did at these activities, I think we can all agree that they were challenging.
  - b. What would it be like if doing simple tasks here in the classroom were as difficult to do as these activities? Would they take longer?
  - c. What if you were the only one in the classroom that took a long time to complete tasks?
  - d. Would people treat you differently? How would you feel about yourself?
  - e. How would it feel to be treated differently, based on something you have no control over?
  
- 5) Pass out Diverse Ability Hand-Out: <http://bit.ly/2yIIGGO>

## We're all alike... We're all different

**Description:** Students will realize that there is limited information they can find out about someone simply by looking at them. Encourages students to look deeper into the similarities and differences between one another.

**Time Required:** 30 minutes

**Materials Needed:** A pencil or pen, paper, a whiteboard or chalkboard, The poem "I am" by Mattie Stepanek: <http://bit.ly/2z6dDl6>

### Steps:

- 1) Have all students stand up and instruct them that they will be moving around, and conversing with other students who share a specific personal characteristic.
- 2) Call out categories, and have students re-organize themselves into groups throughout the room. Pause the action to have groups shout out the preference of characteristic they share. (I.e. We all like pizza with pepperoni! Our favorite sport is soccer! etc.)
  - a) Team up with others who have the same color eyes as you
  - b) Team up with others who like the same topping on their pizza
  - c) Team up with others who have the same number of siblings as you
  - d) Team up with others who have the same favorite sport as you
  - e) Team up with others who has the same favorite color as you



- 3) Have the student sit down, and ask these questions:
  - a) Were you always teamed up with the same person?
  - b) Some groups were small, and some groups were large -- in which size did you like being?
  - c) Once you learned more about others, were you surprised by any of your similarities?
  - d) What happens when you think only about those similarities and differences you can see?
- 4) Write down the word unique (as it applies to an individual), and diversity (as it applies to a group) and write the definitions on the board and discuss:
  - a) Unique - being the only one of it's kind; unlike anything else
  - b) Diversity - the condition of having or being composed of different elements
- 5) Read the Mattie Stepanek Poem "I Am" <http://bit.ly/2z6dDI6>
  - a) Have the student reflect whether this poem is about an individual or a group
  - b) Re-read the poem and have the students write down the words that apply to them
  - c) Have them brainstorm new words that describe or pertain to the group as a whole. Make a list of these adjectives and phrases as a group.
    - i) Example: We are Friends. We are Supportive. We are Tough. We are Encouraging. We are Kind.
  - d) Emphasize the commitment that the group has to one another, and the importance of building one another up by recognizing each other for their differences.

### **Unified Exhibition Game: How to organize a Unified Exhibition Game; this is where students play a competitive or noncompetitive activity during a PE class, recess, and or lunch period**

**Description:** Host a Unified Exhibition Game at your school! Pick a sport, and bring together special education students, and general education students to play on the same team together. Unified games can happen during recess, lunch, physical education class or anytime during the school day. Suggested games are: basketball, modified softball, soccer, kickball.

**Example 1:** Building off of the Special Olympics Unified Soccer event. Have the students who participated in this event put on a exhibition game during lunch.

**Example 2:** A middle school will host a basketball game with the girls and boys basketball teams playing with special education students during a lunch period.

Please click [here](#) to register an activity and Special Olympics will coordinate equipment, drill books, and can provide any support leading up to the game.

### **Unified Exhibition Video Examples:**

First ever Unified Exhibition game at Rocketship Elementary School: <http://bit.ly/2gwNAhV>



Unified Exhibition Game at Freedom High School:

<http://bit.ly/2y0POMD>

## Whole School Presentations

**Guest speakers from Special Olympics will require at a minimum 4 classrooms to participate. These presentation may not occur during Inclusion week depending on demand. Presentations will be scheduled throughout the school year.**

### **Sign up for a Special Olympics Representative Speaker**

**Description:** Please click [here](#) to coordinate a representative from Special Olympics to come to your school and discuss topics that will educate, motivate, and activate students. Discussion topics include: What is Special Olympics? How can we increase acceptance of all differences? What can we do to motivate change?

### **Sign up for a Special Olympics Athlete Speaker**

**Description:** Please click [here](#) to coordinate having a Special Olympics athlete come and speak to your school. They will touch on their personal story, and open the floor up for a Q&A period where students can ask questions about their struggles, accomplishments, and any other relevant topics.

If you would like to show a video of an athlete's speech, you can do so here: [Candy's Speech](#)

### **Things to look for when selecting a Community Speaker**

**Description:** Do you know a community member who would like to speak? Here are some guidelines of things to look for in potential speakers that can complement the work being done throughout the week.

- 1) Is this person impacted or in close relations with a person who has an intellectual disability?
- 2) Has this person had to overcome any personal hardships, or situations of adversity?
- 3) Are there any disabilities (cognitive or physical) that this person has, and would like to speak about?
- 4) Stories of inclusion, and working together.