



Acceptance and Respect Mini-Lessons



Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools®**

Updated October 2020



Special Olympics Mission

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in sharing gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® is a program for schools Pre-K through university that intentionally promotes social inclusion by bringing together students with and without intellectual disabilities through sport and education-related activities. There are currently over 7,600 schools in 49 U.S. states, the District of Columbia and the commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The three-component model offers a unique combination of effective activities that equip young people with the knowledge, skills, tools and training to create classrooms and school climates of acceptance, respect, and meaningful inclusion. These are school climates where students with disabilities feel welcome and are routinely included in -- and feel a part of -- all activities, opportunities, and functions.

This is accomplished by implementing **Special Olympics Unified Sports®, inclusive youth leadership** opportunities (such as clubs, student organizations and leadership teams), and **whole school engagement**. The program is woven into the fabric of the school community, enhancing existing efforts and providing rich opportunities that empower all students to be the agents of genuine change in their schools, creating socially inclusive environments that support and engage all learners. Unified Champion Schools implementation can vary greatly from school to school, based on the needs, goals, schedules, and other factors unique to each school, but the building blocks and framework are the same.



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The contents of this Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® resource were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



The mini-lessons on acceptance and respect that follow can be used as part of schoolwide PBIS instructional lessons or in preparation for hosting a Spread the Word Campaign. In each lesson, students examine the rights of those with disabilities and the responsibilities of all citizens to help protect those rights, reflecting and examining the problems and issues related to respect and inclusion within their school and community. These activities connect well to other instructional opportunities that explore civic responsibility, societal influence, human experience, or peer pressure.

For school staff who wish to use the full set of activities, this series of mini-lessons begins with an immersive experience where students are randomly given different rights within the classroom, prompting reflection on the personal and societal impact of treating people differently based on something not in their control. They examine their personal experiences with intolerance, as a victim or a perpetrator, and consider the consequences of standing by as others are targeted. Students watch an authentic story about a group of teenagers who mock a young girl because of her intellectual disability, and the students examine examples from history when intolerance and prejudice had a significant negative effect. They identify the roots of intolerance and prejudice, and brainstorm strategies and solutions for overcoming them. The students then brainstorm how intolerance and prejudice could be reversed, particularly with other youth their age. Finally, they create a product to influence their peers to show tolerance toward, and acceptance, of others who may be different from themselves.

The desired outcomes of these activities are as follows. Students will:

- Draw conclusions about the personal and societal impact of basing someone's rights on something they cannot control.
- Reflect upon the difficulties of standing up for what is right, especially to one's own friends.
- Identify and examine current and historical non-inclusive, intolerant behaviors in their school, their community, and society as a whole.
- Identify the roots and consequences of non-inclusive, intolerant behavior.
- Recognize ways to overcome intolerant behavior, with an emphasis on people with disabilities.
- Influence others to help reverse the trends of intolerant, non-inclusive behavior.

“The right to play on any playing field? You have earned it. The right to study in any school? You have earned it. The right to hold a job? You have earned it. The right to be anyone's neighbor? You have earned it.”

- Eunice Kennedy Shriver

Acceptance and Respect

Mini-lesson 1: How Do Rights Lead to Responsibility?

Focus: Students are given different rights within the classroom, prompting them to reflect on the personal and societal impact of treating people differently based on something that is not within their control.

Time Required

30-60 minutes

Recommended Materials

- Index cards, 1 per student
- Different colored markers or stickers
- Copies of "How Do Rights Lead to Responsibility?" worksheet, 1 per student
- Treats for 1 group to select
- Enough pencils/pens for each student

Preparation

Before beginning the lesson, decide on a way to divide the class into random but equal groups. Here are a few options:

- Put different colored dot or stickers onto index cards and have students select
- Have students pull a colored stick, clothes pin, or length of ribbon from a cup or bag
- Have students pick randomly from a deck of cards
- Use the App "Team Handshake"

These different groupings will represent one of the following categories:

- Placed in an area where they have difficulty seeing or hearing you.
- Not allowed to sit on chairs.
- All members of one group must share one writing utensil.
- Given a homework pass.

Steps

1. As students enter the room, randomly assign students to random, equal groups using one of the methods above. Explain to the class what each group represents.
2. Distribute copies of "How Do Rights Lead to Responsibility?" which is found on the next page. Students should reflect on a famous quote and make connections with their own lives.
3. Give students time to complete the task and discuss their answers within their group, while still being treated differently based on their colored dots. Have each group share how they were made to feel differently based on the group they were placed in.
4. At the conclusion of this part of the lesson, restore equal rights for all students. Discuss the exercise using the following questions as a guide. If time allows, expand the discussion to explore why it's so difficult for students their age to stand up to their own friends and how they have felt when they have or have not done so.
 - What did it feel like to have more or fewer rights?
 - For those who had more rights, did you try to fight for those with fewer rights? Why or why not?
 - How would you relate the exercise to rights or treatment of those around the world based on skin color, religion, gender, or ability?
 - What is the impact to individuals, the community and society as a whole when people are denied rights or treated differently based on things they cannot control?

"Give to every human being every right that you claim to yourself."

- Robert Ingersoll

How Do Rights Lead to Responsibility?

Throughout history, people have been awarded certain rights or treated differently based on things they cannot control. Their skin color. Nationality. Gender. Abilities. The quotes below express several people's opinions related to equal rights.

Select one quote and answer the questions below it.

Quote #1: *We could learn a lot from crayons: some are sharp, some are pretty, some are dull, some have weird names, and all are different colors...but they all have to learn to live in the same box.*

- Author Unknown

Quote #2: *Give to every human being every right that you claim for yourself.*

- Robert Ingersoll

Quote #3: *I am the inferior of any man whose rights I trample underfoot.*

- Horace Greeley

Quote #4: *He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it.*

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Reflections

1. Choose one quote and put it in your own words. What do you think its author was trying to say?

2. Do you agree or disagree with the author? Why?

3. What actions (or inactions) have you witnessed or been a part of at your school or in your community that relate to the quote?

4. How might you take responsibility for how others are treated in your school or community?

Acceptance and Respect

Mini-lesson 2: Standing By or Standing Up

Focus: In this lesson, students will examine their personal experiences with intolerance, as a victim or perpetrator, and consider the consequences of standing by as others are targeted or bullied.

Time Required

30-60 minutes

Recommended Materials

- Video of [“Daina Shilts’ Powerful Story”](#)
- Copies of “Standing By or Standing Up” worksheet, 1 per student

Preparation

Tell students they are going to watch a video about Special Olympics athlete Daina Shilts and her experience in school without Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools programming. The video illustrates the consequences of treating someone differently based on something they cannot control. Have students watch Daina’s story and prepare to have a discussion after watching.

Steps

1. Start the video. At 1:21 after Daina describes her experience at school, pause the video. Ask students if they have ever seen bullying like that in their school, and what they did when it happened.
2. Stop the video at 4:02 after Daina explains her success with Special Olympics Unified Sports® and snowboarding. Ask students to consider the hurdles that Daina had to overcome to become such a successful athlete. What hurdles would they experience? How would that be different than Daina’s?
3. After the video has ended, hold a class or small group discussion using the following questions as a guide:
 - a. After seeing all of Daina’s trophies, medals, and accomplishments at the beginning of the video, what expectations and assumptions did you have about Daina and her life?
 - b. How do you think the bullying in school made Daina feel?
 - c. How would you describe the students who bullied Daina? (You may want to introduce words like “intolerant,” “discrimination,” and “prejudiced” if the students don’t use them.)
 - d. How does the use of violence and derogatory language demonstrate intolerance?
 - e. Is it just as bad to remain quiet when someone is bullying another individual as it is to bully someone yourself?
 - f. How might have Daina’s story been different if others had stood up for her and made her feel included?
 - g. 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?
 - h. Is it possible to be an innocent bystander? What are the important lessons we can learn from Daina’s story?



“He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Standing By or Standing Up

While watching the video about Daina's story, take down some notes about what you see and hear. Think about your own experiences with bullying and/or bystanders, and compare. Use the following questions to reflect.

Write down 2 instances of bullying that happened to Daina in school.

Have you ever experienced bullying at school? What did you do?

What hurdles did Daina have to overcome to become a successful athlete?

What hurdles would you have to face? How is that similar or different to Daina's experience?

Acceptance and Respect

Mini-lesson 3: Language Matters

Focus: Examine examples of when intolerance and prejudice have had a negative effect on someone. Students will identify the roots of intolerance, and brainstorm strategies and solutions for overcoming it.

Time Required

30-60 minutes

Recommended Materials

- Copies of “Language Matters” worksheet, 1 per student
- Link for the [Special Olympics Inclusion Pledge](#) and/or [Spread the Word Pledge](#)
- A Spread the Word banner
- Pens/markers to sign the banner

Preparation

Refer back to the video about Daina Shilts and have students think about their own experiences with exclusive and derogatory language.



Steps

1. Distribute the “Language Matters” worksheet which asks students to reflect upon their own use, active or passive, of derogatory language. If needed, explain the difference between active and passive involvement. Give students time to complete the worksheet. Distribute the below discussion questions on slips of paper if needed.
2. Have students discuss the following in small groups:
 - When have you been the victim, witness, or perpetrator of intolerance or discrimination of any sort?
 - Does intolerance and/or discrimination exist in your school or community? Share examples.
 - Have you ever been the victim, witness, or perpetrator of intolerance or discrimination because of a disability? Share examples.
 - How does social media contribute to intolerance and discrimination?
3. As a wrap up with the whole group:
 - Why do you think people treat others in hurtful ways, especially when they do not even know them?
 - What causes someone to be intolerant of others?
 - How does our choice of words matter?
 - How can you show your respect towards others?
4. Share the Special Olympics Inclusion Pledge and/or the Spread the Word Pledge. Have students sign the “Spread The Word” pledge banner in your class and hang it up in the school.

“I am the inferior of any man whose rights I trample underfoot.”

- Horace Greeley

Language Matters

Think about your own thoughts and actions (or inactions) with regard to intolerance and prejudice toward others. Then rate yourself using the scale below and answer the questions that follow:

1 - I never or almost never do this. 2 - I sometimes do this. 3 - I frequently do this. 4 - I always do this.

1. I make fun of people for things like race, religion, gender, body size, or physical or mental ability.

- ☐ I never or almost never do this.
- ☐ I sometimes do this.
- ☐ I frequently do this.
- ☐ I always do this.

2. I treat people differently if they are or have a different race, religion, gender, body size, physical, or mental ability than I do.

- ☐ I never or almost never do this.
- ☐ I sometimes do this.
- ☐ I frequently do this.
- ☐ I always do this.

3. I use hurtful language (like the R-word) to refer to people who have intellectual disabilities.

- ☐ I never or almost never do this.
- ☐ I sometimes do this.
- ☐ I frequently do this.
- ☐ I always do this.

4. I laugh when my friends use hurtful language.

- ☐ I never or almost never do this.
- ☐ I sometimes do this.
- ☐ I frequently do this.
- ☐ I always do this.

6. I remain quiet when my friends use hurtful language.

- ☐ I never or almost never do this.
- ☐ I sometimes do this.
- ☐ I frequently do this.
- ☐ I always do this.

7. I use person-first language, like saying that someone is a "person with a disability" rather than a "disabled person."

- ☐ I never or almost never do this.
- ☐ I sometimes do this.
- ☐ I frequently do this.
- ☐ I always do this.

8. I encourage my friends to use person-first language.

- ☐ I never or almost never do this.
- ☐ I sometimes do this.
- ☐ I frequently do this.
- ☐ I always do this.

Choose one of the statements from above for which you rated yourself a 2, 3, or 4, and reflect on why you believe you did the action. Would you do it again? Would there be a value in not doing it? What would that value be?

Acceptance and Respect

Mini-lesson 4: Be the Solution

Focus: Students will brainstorm how intolerance and prejudice can be reversed and create a product to influence their peers to show tolerance towards and acceptance of others who are different than themselves.

Time Required

30-60 minutes

Recommended Materials

- Copies of “Be the Solution” worksheet
- Pens and Pencils
- 4 large poster boards or sheets of paper on the wall (marked individually with “Administration,” “Teacher,” “Parent,” and “Student”)
- Additional paper for students to use for their “product”
- Post-It Notes

Steps

1. Remind students of the definitions of intolerance, discrimination, and prejudice.
2. Have students think about a situation or time that they witnessed intolerance, discrimination, or prejudice, and ask them how they would overcome this situation? What could be a solution?
3. Create a list of student-generated solutions and record them on the “Student” poster.
4. Assuming students believe that intolerance or prejudice toward those with disabilities is a problem at their school, in their community, or in society as a whole, whose responsibility is it to find solutions? Have students take the perspective of their administration, teachers, and parents, and record solutions on the appropriate poster.
5. Distribute the “Be the Solution” worksheet, which challenges student groups to create a product (such as a blog, Instagram post, or poster) to influence their generation to reverse intolerant, non-inclusive behavior toward those with disabilities. They can act upon one of the ideas from the list of solutions above or come up with a new one. Their product should be targeted toward their peers and should focus on (1) the power of inclusion related to those with disabilities; (2) the negative impact of prejudice or intolerance toward those with disabilities; (3) or both.
6. Reflection: Using the ideas generated in Step 4, ask students to reflect on the potential reaction of their peers to the project they’ve designed. Do they think their friends will be influenced to be more inclusive? What obstacles do they anticipate? How can they overcome these potential obstacles?



“A rewarding life is filled with challenge, so do not pity me. Give me a chance!”

- Thomas Gatu, Special Olympics athlete

Be The Solution

Unfortunately, prejudice and intolerance toward those with disabilities and others has been part of our society for many years. Through this lesson, you have explored and reflected upon many examples of this including students bullying Daina; the hurtful use of derogatory language in school, community, and society; examples of intolerance and prejudice; and your own personal experiences. The good news is that your generation, the Unified Generation, has the power to become part of the solution in reversing these long-standing trends. You can do this by making inclusion a part of your life, influencing others to do the same, and explaining the consequences of intolerance and prejudice.

For this activity, you will create a poster, song, blog, poem or announcement to influence your peers to help reverse the trends of intolerance and prejudice against those with disabilities.

Your product should be targeted toward students at your school and should focus on:

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

For your project, think about the following:

1. What examples of intolerance and prejudice against those with intellectual disabilities have I experienced or witnessed at our school or in our community?
2. Why might the bullies from Daina's story have acted intolerant or prejudiced? What were their goals?
3. What might help or persuade them to change their behavior?
4. How can I use this information to create a persuasive project?