

EDUCATOR TOOLKIT



CELEBRATING 15 YEARS

**SPREAD
THE WORD** 



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Individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID), a group made up of over 200 million people, representing every country, belief system, sexual orientation, gender expression, race, and ethnicity, continue to be excluded and isolated from their peers in schools, workplaces, and communities around the world.

By taking the pledge to include, you and your students can commit to acting for meaningful social inclusion and combating the hurtful and dehumanizing effects of exclusion. This toolkit is for educators who want to support their students with and without ID in promoting inclusion at all school levels.

Below you will find ideas, resources, and more so that you and your students can engage every day of the year on what it means to fully include those with ID. To learn more about how to write and talk about Spread the Word >>, view our Core Messaging Toolkit or explore our website at www.spreadtheword.global.

As we celebrate 15 years of Spread the Word, we're reflecting on the incredible journey and the impact this campaign has had in fostering inclusion and breaking down stereotypes. Now, we're energized to renew our commitment by returning to the roots of the campaign, reigniting the spark and momentum that defined its early days in 2009. With the same passion and dedication, we aim to journey back to the heart of our mission. We're eager to inspire change, one word at a time.

Spread the Word was created to End the Word and we believe we should stick to the core reason why this campaign was created, to commit to acknowledging the hurt caused by disparaging words towards people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The R-word is not as prevalent, but it is still used, along with other derogatory language words. Words matter because they hold the power to shape perceptions, influence emotions, and drive actions. The language we use can either foster understanding, empathy, and unity, or perpetuate stereotypes, division, and discrimination. Choosing our words carefully is essential for effective communication and building a more inclusive and compassionate society.

PROVIDE GUIDANCE & SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Respectful and inclusive words and actions are essential to the movement for the dignity and humanity of people with intellectual disabilities. You can support your students in their efforts to make their schools and communities inclusive for all.



CREATE INCLUSIVE SPACES

Be a role model
for inclusion in
your school.

- Help create a positive school climate: Model inclusive language, use multiple and diverse examples that speak to all students.
- Talk with students and other educators about how they can promote inclusion.
- Plan activities that can be easily adapted.
- Create opportunities for inclusion through group projects and activities.
- Teach your students the meaning of inclusion and why it is so important.
- Encourage your students to take action for inclusion.

BE A MENTOR

Support your
students' efforts
in promoting
inclusion.



- Start a **Special Olympics** or **Best Buddies** club with your students or get involved with an already existing club as an advisor. Coach a **Special Olympics Unified Sports** team at your school.
- Help your students speak with other teachers and school administrators about their ideas and needs.
- Encourage students to reach out to sports teams, student government, service organizations, or other clubs focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, such as the Gay-Straight Alliance at your schools.
- Create a network of students, educators, and community members dedicated to fostering inclusion. Work with students to bring new people into the conversation.
- Challenge your students to learn more about inclusion. Lead the **Inclusion Tiles** activity from Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools and encourage

HOST AN EVENT

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Help your
students plan an
inclusion event at
your school.



- Work with students at your school to host an assembly or pep rally for inclusion. You can host an event on Zoom, create a video, or use social media when in-person gatherings aren't possible. View [this guide from Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®](#) for more ideas for virtual events.
- [Unified Sports](#) and [Best Buddies Clubs](#) are a great place to start but consider bringing other clubs in that focus on inclusive practices such as racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, culture, mental health, and more.
- Talk to your students about planning an Inclusion Week around Spread the Word Day in March. Create a theme or challenge for each day, use social media, and have students and community members sign the banner throughout the week. Involve them throughout the year promoting Spread the Word, using flyers and social media. [Find Social Templates Here.](#)
- Share why it is important to Pledge to Include. Have students and community members sign the banner or take the pledge online at www.spreadtheword.global/pledge.

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Social Media is a powerful way to raise awareness for Spread the Word. It allows people to engage in conversations that help change attitudes and drive people to pledge to take their own action for inclusion at www.spreadtheword.global. Here are some ideas for using social media channels. Here are some ideas for using social media channels to start discussions about inclusion. Educators can use these tips on their own social media platforms, or provide this information to their high-school and college-aged students.



FACEBOOK

- Like and follow the [Spread the Word Page](#)
- Re-share articles, videos, and events and your own narrative on inclusion. Contribute to positive discussions in the comments.
- Post on your own page inviting friends to take the **#pledgetoinclude**.
- Share your own story of inclusion with photos from Special Olympics of Best Buddies events.
- Network with other schools and educators to share best practices.



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- Follow [@PledgeToInclude](#), [@SpecialOlympics](#) and [@BestBuddies](#)
- Retweet posts to your own page. Include your own words.
- Use **#PledgeToInclude** when talking about the Spread the Word Campaign or how you are working to make you community more inclusive.
- Tag teachers, school administrators, and community leaders and challenge them to take the Pledge.



INSTAGRAM

- Follow [@PledgeToInclude](#).
- Join discussions in the comments or share posts to your own page or story.
- Post photos or videos from school, Best Buddies, or Special Olympics events and talk about why inclusion is important to you.
- Be sure to tag our account and use **#PledgeToInclude**.



BLOGS, TIKTOK, AND MORE

- These channels can be powerful storytelling tools. There are conversations taking place every day about inclusion, people with intellectual disabilities, sports, or friendship.
- Find a topic you care about and share your perspective. Engage online communities and spread the word about inclusion.
- Keep interactions respectful and moving forward by always encouraging people to join in taking the pledge to include.



USE OUR SOCIAL MEDIA TEMPLATES TO HELP SHARE YOUR STORY.



SAMPLE TEXT FOR ANY PLATFORM

Everyone needs to be heard. Everyone needs to feel included. Everyone needs to be included. Join me in building truly inclusive schools, workplaces, and communities, where we can learn and grow together. Visit <https://www.spreadtheword.global/> to go all in.

We are celebrating 15 years of Spread the Word, but the work continues. We're eager to inspire change, one word at a time. Join me in taking the pledge and commit to acknowledging the hurt caused by disparaging words towards people with intellectual disabilities. #PledgeToInclude

When was the last time you totally committed to something? Bring that level of courage and commitment to our movement for a more inclusive world! Learn more at <https://www.spreadtheword.global/>.



ONLINE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

RESPONDING TO NEGATIVITY ONLINE:

- It is important to keep yourself safe. If you feel like you need to, hide negative accounts from your feed.
- If you see bullying or negative comments online, respond with positivity and information. Lead with compassion and kindness. Arm yourself with your honest feelings. Try to foster understanding.
- Use those comments as an opportunity to engage the person in conversation. Prepare a few lines of text expressing why inclusive words and actions matter to you. Have it ready to engage in positive conversation. We cannot effect change without confronting the attitudes we hope to change.
- Most people will respond to this positively. Those who don't, brush it off! It's likely they've heard your message and it sticks with them – maybe they will pledge to include next year! You know why you

STAYING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE ONLINE **INTERNET SAFETY AND WELL-BEING** IN A TIME OF VIRTUAL CONNECTION

- Keep your accounts private.
- Mute, unfollow, or block accounts that make you feel uncomfortable.
- When responding to hurtful behavior, lead with **compassion** & thoughtful counterpoints.
- Invite others to take the **#pledgetoinclude**
- Follow accounts that **inspire** you or bring positivity to your feed.
- For more resources, go to spreadtheword.global



RESOURCES FOR ONLINE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING

- The Trevor Project's [guide for protecting your own space and well-being on IG.](#)
- <https://www.stopbullying.gov/>



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **2024 Spread the Word Resource Dropbox**
- Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools: **Build Back Inclusive Guide**
- Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools: **Back to School Resources**
- Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools: **Inclusion For All Toolkit**
- Best Buddies: **Resources for Advisors**
- Special Olympics **Resources for Educators**
- Special Olympics: **The Importance of School Climate**
- **Special Olympics and Bullying Prevention**
- **Spread the Word >> Fact Sheet**
- Advocacy and Inclusion Opportunities from Best Buddies International
- Intellectual Disabilities and Language and Terminology Fact Sheet: A **one-page reference about intellectual disabilities** and the language to use when talking about people with intellectual disabilities



THANK YOU EDUCATORS!

Educators are a vitally important part of Spread the Word >>. Thank you for all you do to make your schools more inclusive! We would love to hear from you with any questions, ideas, or suggestions at spreadtheword@specialolympics.org.