

# CORE MESSAGING TOOLKIT



**CELEBRATING 15 YEARS**

**THE SPREAD  
WORD**



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## INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is for Special Olympics and Best Buddies Programs, partners, and participants around the world working to promote inclusion in their communities. Below you will learn how to write and talk about Spread the Word >>. Utilize this messaging to educate others about Spread the Word, encourage those around you to take the pledge to include, and build a more inclusive world for all.



**PLEDGE TO INCLUDE  
AND COMBAT THE  
HURTFUL AND  
DEHUMANIZING  
EFFECTS OF  
EXCLUSION.**

[WWW.SPREADTHEWORD.GLOBAL/PLEDGE](http://WWW.SPREADTHEWORD.GLOBAL/PLEDGE)

## TOP LINE MESSAGING

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.

In our commitment to breaking down barriers and fostering acceptance, we recognize the importance of adaptability and relevance.

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.

**SHARE YOUR PLEDGE BY TAGGING**

**@PLEDGETOINCLUDE**

**ON FACEBOOK, X, AND INSTAGRAM AND USING  
#PLEDGETOINCLUDE**

**USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO INVITE OTHERS TO JOIN YOU.**

## ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS



# 1

## Why is this campaign so important?

Excluding, dehumanizing, and demeaning language has a hurtful impact on people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Therefore, cultivating a respectful and inclusive language is an essential part of our inclusion movement. Spread the Word >> also means speaking up against the wrong and demeaning use of the R-word in conversations. It is part of an education effort that showcases that language informs attitudes and attitudes impact actions.

## ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS



## 2

### What does the Spread The Word campaign stand for?

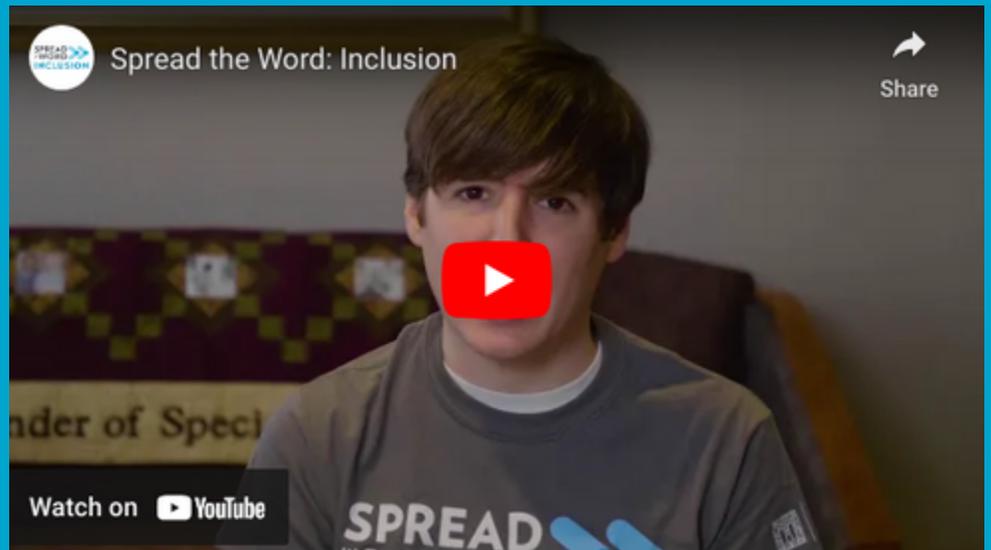
People with intellectual and disabilities (ID) still face exclusion, social isolation, and social abuse in schools, workplaces, and communities. This prevents us from building truly inclusive societal structures, where we can learn and grow together.

To drive change and help create a more inclusive society, Spread the Word to End the Word® was founded in 2009 by college students Soeren Palumbo (Notre Dame 2011) and Tim Shriver (Yale 2011).

The Spread the Word Inclusion campaign - as part of Special Olympics and supported by Best Buddies and our partners - is aimed at showcasing the impact of inclusive language and actions so that the discrimination of people with intellectual disabilities can come to an end.

Spread the Word is led and continuously re-imagined by our youth activists. Their efforts are designed to rally schools, organizations, and communities to commit to the inclusion and acceptance of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

## SPREAD THE WORD



Founded by youth leaders Soeren and Tim in 2009 as Spread the Word to End the Word®, the campaign focused its first 10 years on addressing a particularly powerful form of exclusion: the word 'retard(ed)'. Over 10 years, leaders and self-advocates collected millions of digital and physical pledges from supporters committing to end the R-word. Each pledge was a personal commitment to acknowledge the hurt caused by the R-word and to be respectful in the words and actions taken towards people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

With leadership from Special Olympics and Best Buddies, and support from hundreds of other advocacy organizations, the campaign grew from a handful of events in 2009 to reaching thousands of schools by 2018. In 2019, Spread the Word to End the Word became Spread the Word®, with a focus not just on the elimination of a word but on the creation of a new reality: inclusion for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The global engagement campaign remains committed to empowering grassroots leaders to change their communities, schools, and workplaces, now through a call to their peers to take action for inclusion. With this change, Spread the Word will give community leaders around the world the tools needed to create socially inclusive places to learn, work, and live.

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**WHAT WILL  
INCLUSION  
LOOK LIKE  
IN 10 YEARS?**

**VISIT OUR DROPBOX  
FOR MORE RESOURCES**

