Visions of a Socially Inclusive Community
Mini-Lessons

Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools**

This series of mini-lessons would be useful in a Unified Club setting, developing inclusive youth leadership into the work of the club. Through the activities provided, students will take a snapshot of their community with regard to inclusion of those with intellectual disabilities. They start by creating a picture of their community based on their perceptions. Then, they repeat this exercise as if they were someone with an intellectual disability to see how the experience changes. Ideally, the club will work with the school's Unified Champion Schools Leadership Team to assess the level of social inclusiveness of the school community using the Social Inclusion Scale.

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

- Thomas Gatu, Special Olympics Athlete

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Mini-lesson 1: What Does My Community Look Like?

Time Required
30 minutes (Discussion time can be adjusted by reducing or adding to the questions posed in the activities at the discretion of the teacher)

Materials Needed
Art materials, cameras and/or video equipment
Copies of "A Picture of Your Community" (found on the next page)

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

Students will:

- Reflect upon the current environment of social inclusion in the school

Steps

1.   Before beginning this lesson, you will want to think about what "community" looks like in your school. You may wish to research the answers to some of the questions in the discussions prior to addressing them with students. You may also want to determine if there are specific resources or staff that can help them learn the answers. For example, there may be special education staff or guidance counselors who could meet with the club.

2.   Write the word, "community" on the board and ask students to name various types of communities they might be part of, such as school, church, and the city or state in which they live. Now ask them to focus only on communities within the school, such as 4th period math class, clubs, the student body, the freshman class. Invite them to share their perceptions of different types of communities they are included in within the school. For example: Do they feel welcome in that community? How respectful and inclusive is the group? Are there rules or guidelines that tell students how to act in that community?

3.   Ask students to close their eyes and visualize the level of social inclusion in their school community. Share with them that social inclusion in schools means all students are meaningfully engaged in formal and informal settings throughout the school including classrooms, hallways and playing fields; and they have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the school community. Break students into small groups. Ask them to discuss the following questions:
- If you were asked to describe social inclusion in your school using three words, what words would you choose?
- What assets help to make it an inclusive community? What barriers exist?
- Do all students have meaningful friendships in formal and informal settings?
- How inclusive and accessible are classrooms, lunchrooms, hallways and playing fields?
- If you were choosing a place to go to school, would you choose your school? Why or why not?
- If you were to give your school a "grade," what might it be, and why?

4.   Challenge students to draw, photograph or videotape a "picture" of their school community from their own perspective. These visions of community are to be completed and ready to present at the next meeting.

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Mini-lesson 2: Understanding Perspective

Time Required
30 minutes (Discussion time can be adjusted by reducing or adding to the questions posed in the activities at the discretion of the teacher)

Materials Needed
Pictures, videos or photos students created from the last session. Copies of "Reflecting on Our School"

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

Students will:
- Reflect upon the current environment of social inclusion in the school.

- Understand how a student with an intellectual disability might see the school community.

Steps

1. Have students present the images they created. Did any students create the same or very similar images? Ask students: "Why are there variations between your pictures? How can people who live in the same community see it from completely different perspectives?" Answers could include reasons such as living in different parts or being involved with different activities, or being part of a certain peer group.

2. Challenge students to repeat the visualization exercise from Step 3 in the first mini-lesson, but this time they will visualize their school through the eyes of someone with a different perspective from their own. For example, if they are a student with an intellectual disability, they will visualize the school from the perspective of a student without a disability and vice versa. Have the students discuss the following questions:
- Was this exercise challenging or easy? Why?
- What do you know about the support, programs, perceptions and opportunities in the school for students with intellectual disabilities? How do they compare to the resources, programs, perceptions and opportunities for students without intellectual disabilities? If students don't have answers to these questions, add that to their list of questions to research in the next activity.
- Where have you seen students with intellectual disabilities being included and supported in our school? Do you see meaningful friendships developing between students with and without intellectual disabilities?
- Would knowing this information help to give you a clearer picture of social inclusion in our school?

3. Ask students to spend some time observing and reflecting on various perspectives of social inclusion as they attend classes and participate in school activities between now and the next meeting. You may want to provide them with copies of the worksheet on the following page to guide their reflections.

Reflecting on Our School

Record your observations and reflections on social inclusion in our school. Try to look at your classes, time between classes, cafeteria, and after school activities from the perspective of students with intellectual disabilities. Think about the questions we discussed in our meeting as you make your observations.

• What can you find out about the support, programs, perceptions and opportunities in the school for students with intellectual disabilities? How do they compare to the resources, programs, perceptions and opportunities for students without intellectual disabilities?

• Where have you seen students with intellectual disabilities being included and supported in our school? Do you see meaningful friendships developing between students with and without intellectual disabilities?

	Activity	Observations	Reflections or Thoughts
Unstructured time (such as hallways or the cafeteria)			
Classroom Instruction			
Structured After- School Activities			
Other			

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Mini-lesson 3: Digging Deeper

DESIRED OUTCOMES:
Students will:
- Reflect upon the current environment of social inclusion in the school.
- Understand how a student with intellectual disabilities might see the school community.
- Work with the school's Unified Champion Schools Leadership Team to assess the community's current attitudes, access, programs and climate using the Social Inclusion Scale.

Time Required
30 minutes (Discussion time can be adjusted by reducing or adding to the questions posed in the activities at the discretion of the teacher)

Steps

1. Tell students that this activity will help them get a clearer picture of what their school community looks like. Have students create a list of questions that will help them form a clearer picture. Possible questions include:
    - Do students in our school think it's okay to use the R-word?
    - Do people in our school community know what an intellectual disability is?
    - Do students know anyone with an intellectual disability?
    - What evidence is there that students in our school are tolerant and inclusive of those with intellectual disabilities?
    - Are there specific programs for those with intellectual disabilities?
    - Are students with intellectual disabilities encouraged to sign up for sports teams, clubs and special programs? If so, do they participate?
    - What are the perceptions of students regarding those with intellectual disabilities?
    - Are there opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to interact and get to know one another?
    - What programs bring people together?
    - Are there opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to share their talents and strengths with other students? How do they compare to opportunities that students without intellectual disabilities have?
    - Do students with intellectual disabilities feel welcomed and included in the community? What strategies are used to help them feel welcomed and included?

2. Work with students to develop a plan to contact the school's Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss assessments of the social inclusion in the school. Students may be able to help distribute the Social Inclusion Scale to gather input, compile results and/or communicate results to the community.

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Mini-lesson 4: Social Inclusion in Our School

NOTE: *This mini-lesson is designed to be used following the assessment of social inclusiveness in the school.*

Time Required
1 Hour

Materials Needed
Copies of "Social Inclusion in Our School" (found on next page)

Steps

1. Separate students into groups of three or four. Distribute copies of "Social Inclusion in Our School," which challenges students to use the information gathered in the assessment process to develop a plan to make a change that will result in greater social inclusion in their school.

2. Give students ample time and assistance with resources to help them develop their plan. This may require two or more club meetings in order to keep progress moving along.

3. Have each group of students present and explain their plan to the rest of the club. As a whole group, decide if you are going to all work together to carry out one of the plans presented, or if each small group will work on their own plan.

4. Be sure to take time to revisit the plans as they progress and to reflect meaningfully on how they are progressing, what obstacles they might have encountered and how they might work through them, and what they are learning along the way.

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

Students will:
- Work with the school's Unified Champion Schools Leadership Team to assess the school community's current attitudes, access, programs, and climate using the Social Inclusion Scale.

- Develop action plans for strategies that could be implemented to improve social inclusion in the school.

Social Inclusion in Our School

During the first two mini-lessons, you created a picture of your school community, with a focus on social inclusion. You also gathered some data on how others in your school community perceive social inclusion. Now your challenge is to identify an action your group might take to help your school become more socially inclusive and then develop a plan to put your idea into action. Complete the action plan below to guide your efforts. You will share your plan with the whole group to determine which action plans the club will implement.

Envision the Change

We will help our school become a place where…
This is important to us because…
In order to become a more socially inclusive school, we have identified the need to…

PLAN FOR THE CHANGE

ACTION STEP	POSSIBLE CHALLENGES/OBSTACLES	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

ASSESS THE PLAN - *Rate your plan based on each criteria below:*

Rating System: 4 = Excellent 3=Good 2= Okay 1= Low or poor	Rating
Saleable (Can we convince others it's a good idea?)	
Affordable (Is the cost reasonable? Will we be able to find any necessary funding?)	
Workable (Is it an appropriate solution, and are we able to implement it?)	
Effective (Will it be likely to increase social inclusion in our school?)	