



# Special Olympics and Bullying Prevention

Bullying is a problem that transcends geographic, racial, ethnic and economic borders and is an issue closely connected to our movement of acceptance and inclusion that has been going on for the past 44 years at Special Olympics.

Special Olympics believes that positive, supportive and socially inclusive attitudes, policies, programming and resources are the keys to creating safe and accepting school and community climates for all, and provide the best path to prevent bullying and encourage positive behaviors.

While not strictly a bullying prevention program, Special Olympics applauds the efforts of a growing movement among parents and youths to change how bullying is handled in schools, in communities and in society as a whole, seeking to create a safer, more accepting and respectful world for all.

**“60% of students with special needs reporting being bullied compared to 25% of general education students.”**

Statistics like this demonstrate the severity of this issue for the specific population of students with disabilities. In March, the White House hosted a conference on bullying prevention. Tim Shriver, CEO of Special Olympics, attended the event, representing the voice of those with intellectual disabilities and the mindset that it was time for a change.

Through efforts such as Spread the Word to End the Word, Project UNIFY® and Unified Sports®, Special Olympics has actively worked with youth, schools, educators, families and the communities to create climates of inclusion, respect and understanding. These initiatives encourage engagement, character-building and positive youth leadership, and are preventive mechanisms to discourage stigmatizing and abusive language and behavior.

The power of Unified Sports (where students with and without intellectual disabilities compete together as teammates) has extended beyond the playing field. In a 2011 survey, of Special Olympics Maryland high school Unified Partners who observed their teammates with disabilities being bullied or teased, **91% reported standing up for them!** Through Unified Sports, we are taking steps towards more positive and inclusive school environments as young people establish friendships and recognize the value of ALL students!

In discussions related to the topic of bullying in the classroom or among friends, parents, children or students, Special Olympics offers a collection of resources that can help as we all work towards real change in school climate:

- [\*\*Project UNIFY Website\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Get Into It Curriculum\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Spread the Word to End the Word Website\*\*](#)
- [\*\*New York Times article on Unified Sports \(2012\)\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Loretta Claiborne: Video on Bullying\*\*](#)
- [\*\*CNN Health, Kids and Aggression: Popularity Matters\*\*](#)
- AbilityPath.org report, [\*\*Walk A Mile In Their Shoes\*\*](#)
- [\*\*StopBullying.gov\*\*](#)
- [\*\*National School Climate Center\*\*](#)
- BULLY [\*\*Official Website\*\*](#) and [\*\*Facebook Page\*\*](#)
- [\*\*A Guide to the film BULLY\*\*](#)

You can also join our conversations here on our blog or through Special Olympics and Project UNIFY social channels:

- [\*\*Project UNIFY Facebook\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Special Olympics Facebook\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Special Olympics Twitter\*\*](#)