



Special Olympics

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for teachers and students



Activity 4: 9-12 Lessons

How Can I Create Change?

Activity Overview:

In this lesson, students will be introduced to the story of Eunice Kennedy Shriver, the founder of Special Olympics, to illustrate what is possible when someone sees what is, imagines what can be, and then makes it happen. They then will reflect and make connections between her story and what is happening within their own community. They select an issue or problem from their community assessment in Activity 2 that they'd like to change or affect in some way. Students develop a plan to create change including a timeline, list of steps and stakeholders, and measures for success. They will also create a method for sharing their actions with others and celebrating their success. This lesson would work well in a unit that explores civic responsibility, social justice, or service-learning.

Activity 4:

How Can I Create Change?



"Playing sports with Special Olympics has given me the opportunity to express myself like many other athletes..."

Anthony Green, Special Olympics Athlete

Cross-Curricular Connections:

This lesson extends to social studies, particularly social justice, and service-learning. Students experience a traditional service-learning process as they identify a problem, learn about it, identify a solution, create a plan, implement that plan, and celebrate success.

Academic Skills Addressed:

- Using critical thinking to analyze texts, including identifying and evaluating multiple perspectives;
- Identifying, summarizing, and justifying an issue or problem;
- Engaging in an inquiry process that includes generating questions and conducting research to learn the answers;
- Using creative, problem-solving processes individually and collaboratively to explore and contribute to issues, problems, and questions;
- Carrying out collaborative processes for problems and projects;
- Synthesizing data to conduct an evaluation;
- Writing and following a detailed plan; and
- Summarizing and reporting information to others.

Desired Outcomes:

Students will:

- Make connections between Eunice Kennedy Shriver's vision and actions to create Special Olympics, and their own qualities and possible actions.
- Identify one problem or challenge within their community related to tolerance/inclusiveness for those with intellectual disabilities.
- Work collaboratively in the planning and implementation of a plan to change or positively impact the problem or issue they chose.
- Communicate their progress and consider how they can sustain their efforts.

Time Required:

Three to four 45-minute class periods for investigation, plus additional time (one semester or more) to implement and assess their project



Activity 4:

How Can I Create Change?



"Disabilities are yet another manifestation of global diversity. Let us always be committed to the fundamental principles of dignity and equality for all human beings."

Kofi A. Annan, Secretary-General, United Nations

Materials Needed:

- Computer with access to the Internet
- Copies of Reproducible 4.1, *What Is? What Could Be? How Can I Make It Happen?*; and Reproducible 4.2, *Creating a Positive Change in Your Community*

Background:

- Before beginning this lesson, you may want to review stories and videos about Eunice Kennedy Shriver on the Special Olympics website. The following links are recommended:

http://www.specialolympics.org/eunice_kennedy_shriver_biography.aspx

http://www.specialolympics.org/eunice_kennedy_shriver_how_it_began.aspx

<http://www.eunicekennedyshriver.org/sitemap/videos>

- For more information on service-learning and how to implement service-learning experiences in your classroom, review the *Service-Learning Instructional Planning Guide* available for download at: www.specialolympics.org
- Refer to the *Teacher Background: Service-Learning Approach* in this guide (Pages 45-46).

Important Terms:

service, stakeholder, visionary



PART ONE



"You are the stars and the world is watching you. By your presence, you send a message to every village, every city, every nation. A message of hope. A message of victory."

Eunice Kennedy Shriver

Activity 4: How Can I Create Change?

Activity Steps and Suggestions:

1. As students enter the room, have them listen to the audio recording of an excerpt from Eunice Kennedy Shriver's opening remarks at the Opening Ceremonies for the 1987 Special Olympics World Games (<http://www.eunicekennedyshriver.org>). The recording says, *"You are the stars and the world is watching you. By your presence, you send a message to every village, every city, every nation. A message of hope. A message of victory. 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."* **(Educate)**
2. Ask students what words they would use to describe the excerpt, how the speaker's words likely made the audience feel, and what the speaker's purpose may have been. Then ask if they know whose voice they are listening to, what event the words are from, or who the audience is. Share with students that the speaker is Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Founder of Special Olympics. The excerpt was from her speech at the Opening Ceremonies from the 1987 Special Olympic World Games and the audience was the Special Olympics athletes themselves. **(Educate)**
3. Ask students: *What do you know about Eunice Kennedy Shriver? What words might you use to describe her? What do you know about her legacy? Her family? Her accomplishments?* **(Educate)**
4. Distribute Reproducible 4.1, *What Is? What Could Be? How Can I Make It Happen?* Read the directions with students. Instruct them to read articles and watch videos about Eunice Kennedy Shriver from the Special Olympics website (see Background information above) in order to complete the activity sheet. Discuss the answers. **(Educate)**
5. At the Opening Games in 1968, the Mayor of Chicago turned to Mrs. Shriver after she declared the games open and said, *"The world will never be the same."* *What did he mean by this? What type of person sees what can be, rather than what is, and works to make it happen?* Ask students for the names of others – whether they know them personally or not – who have displayed these same qualities. *What positive changes have these people created? How might the world be different had these people not made their visions a reality? Do you think you possess these same qualities? Why or why not?* **(Educate, Motivate)**

PART TWO



How would you describe "what is" with regard to tolerance and inclusion in your community?

Activity 4: How Can I Create Change?

Activity Steps and Suggestions:

1. Have students refer back to their community assessment from Activity 2. Ask: *How would you describe "what is" with regard to tolerance and inclusion in your community? Do you think "what is" is good enough? What improvements could be made to create a more inclusive environment for those with intellectual disabilities?* (**Motivate, Activate**)
2. Distribute Reproducible 4.2, *Creating a Positive Change in Your Community*. Challenge student groups to select one issue, problem, or challenge related to inclusion/tolerance in their community that they would like to change or affect in some way. Before beginning, you will want to think about whether to allow students to select their own groups or whether to assign them. As with any project, groups should be set up to work collaboratively and effectively. The activity sheet asks them to justify the issue they've chosen, conduct research, determine how they can positively change/impact the problem, and create and implement a detailed action plan and timeline for doing so. The process is broken down into steps. Below you will find tips to help you move students through the process. More information about service-learning and additional guidance about each step can be found in the *Service-Learning Instructional Planning Guide*. (**Motivate, Activate**)
3. You will notice that there are ideas for student reflection after each step below. Thoughtful reflection allows students to deliberately think about their process, their role within the project, and more importantly their role within their community. It is most useful when it is intentional and continuous throughout the experience. Students can reflect verbally or through writing, or with a combination of the two.

Step 1: Select a Problem or Issue

- The first step is often the most difficult. Some groups won't know where to start. Others will have difficulty agreeing. You may want to start this step by creating a class list of problems from Activity 2 from which groups can choose. Challenge groups to select a problem that is authentic, that they can truly impact, and that is interesting and meaningful to them. Encourage them to write a problem statement that justifies their choice.

Reflection Questions: *Why did you choose this problem? Why is it meaningful to you? What influenced your group's final decision? What will happen if no one addresses it? How can addressing it make a difference?*



Develop a club or team where high school athletes help coach children with intellectual disabilities.

Activity 4: How Can I Create Change?

Activity Steps and Suggestions:

Step 2: Learn about the Issue

- This will be one of the most time-consuming steps and likely will require time outside of class to complete. Help students understand the benefit of learning as much as they can about their issue. Give them access to as many resources as possible. Encourage students to interview students with intellectual disabilities, community members, and other stakeholders. Additional ideas to help students investigate their issue can be found in the *Action Plan* section of the *Service-Learning Instructional Planning Guide*.

Reflection Questions: *How did you feel about the research process? What went well? What challenges did you face? What surprised you? What did you learn about your community? What did you learn about yourself? How can what you've learned help you?*

Step 3: Identify a Solution

- Help students assess several options to come up with the best solution. Benchmarks are included in the worksheet. You may want to have them share ideas with each other to assist the process. Examples of solutions include:
 - *A community campaign to end the use of the R-word.*
 - *A community tolerance day where community members are encouraged to work alongside people of different abilities to accomplish a task.*
 - *Development of a buddy program where children with intellectual disabilities are paired with an older teen.*
 - *Ability Awareness Day, where those with intellectual disabilities share their strengths and talents with community members.*
 - *Elementary School Blitz, where high school students speak about tolerance at local elementary schools.*
 - *Development of a club or team where high school athletes help coach children with intellectual disabilities.*
 - *Raising money to support a Special Olympics athlete.*
 - *Decorating community store windows to encourage tolerance.*

Additional ideas to help students identify their solution can be found in the *Decision-Making Process* section of the *Service-Learning Instructional Planning Guide*.

Reflection Questions: *How did you come up with your solution? How will it impact the problem or issue? How will your community look different if it works? How will this make you feel?*

PART TWO



All parties involved should be encouraged to share what they have learned, celebrate the results of the service project, and look ahead to the future.

Activity 4: How Can I Create Change?

Activity Steps and Suggestions:

Step 4: Create a Plan

- Here is where students will create their plan for making change, the timeline, and the benchmarks for success. Encourage students to present their plans to another group to help them consider possible challenges and obstacles. Additional ideas to help students create their plan can be found in the *Action Plan* section of the *Service-Learning Instructional Planning Guide*.

Reflection Questions: *What are you most looking forward to about your plan? How will you define success? Will you be able to make adjustments if necessary?*

Step 5: Implement the Plan

- This too will be a time-consuming step in the process. Students will need ample time to complete their plan. Encourage them to assess the plan along the way and to make whatever adjustments can help them be successful.

Reflection Questions: *How is your plan working? Is your group working well together? Does your plan need to be adjusted? Can anyone outside the group help you? What have you learned?*

Step 6: Demonstrate Outcomes and Celebrate Success!

- Regardless of the specific outcome, the process of trying to change “what is” to make a more inclusive community should be shared and celebrated by students. Although this step is listed at the end of the process, both sharing and celebration can be done throughout the process rather than at the end. All parties involved should be encouraged to share what they have learned, celebrate the results of the service project, and look ahead to the future.

Reflection Questions: *What can you be proud of? Who have you helped? How have you helped to get closer to “what can be?” How can you extend this to other areas of your life? Whose responsibility is it to help improve your community? What lessons can you share with others? What skills have you learned?*



Invite Special Olympics athletes to class to share input on and ideas about the projects.

Activity 4: How Can I Create Change?

Suggested Assessment:

Have students use the original three questions of the lesson (*What Is?*, *What Could Be?*, *How Can I Make It Happen?*) to report on their project to others in the school or community. Along with answering these questions, their communication should include what they've learned and how the project can extend to other areas of their life. (**Motivate, Activate**)

Cross-Curricular Extensions:

Technology

Encourage students to create a video and present what "was," what now "is," and how change happened.

Inclusive Classroom Modifications:

- Build on the community connections established in Activity Two. Those working on behalf of individuals with intellectual disabilities will have a good idea of what needs to happen in the community.
- Include the concept of Global Messengers in this activity.

General Extensions and Modifications:

- Have students generate ideas for sustained, student-led community improvements.
- Have students write press releases about their projects to send to local news media.
- Have students present their projects to school and district/county leaders; community leaders; and local government officials.
- Invite Special Olympics athletes to class to share input on and ideas about the projects.
- Have students plan a parent/community night to share what "was," what now "is," and what made change happen.
- For inclusive classrooms, ensure that students of different abilities collaborate together to create change.

Additional Resources:

- Background information on Special Olympics: <http://www.specialolympics.org>
- Additional information about service learning: <http://www.servicelearning.org>
- Information about service-learning published by the National Youth Leadership Council: <http://www.nycl.org>

Eunice Kennedy Shriver was a visionary who dedicated her adult life to making the world a better place for those who are intellectually disabled. She saw what was, imagined what could be, and did all she could to make it happen. Read the articles and watch the videos on the Special Olympics website about Mrs. Shriver (<http://www.specialolympics.org/content.aspx?id=8109&terms=eunice+kennedy+shriver>). Then complete the questions below:



WHAT IS? What was life like for people with intellectual disabilities that inspired Eunice Kennedy Shriver to want to change things?

WHAT COULD BE? In what ways did she think their lives could be better? What did she think was possible?

HOW CAN I MAKE IT HAPPEN? How did she make her vision a reality?

Creating Positive Change in Your Community

In this activity, you and your group will select a problem or issue in your community that you would like to positively impact, related to tolerance/inclusion for those with intellectual disabilities. The activity is broken down into several steps to help guide you along the way.

Step 1: Select a Problem or Issue

In this step, you and your group should identify a problem or issue in your community related to inclusion/tolerance for those with intellectual disabilities. Along with identifying the problem, you must also justify why you chose it as a problem or issue to change/impact. You may want to refer back to the community assessment you completed in Activity 2. Or you can conduct interviews with people who could help you select an issue. This may include your parents, neighbors, those with intellectual disabilities, family members of those with intellectual disabilities, government and community leaders, those working in related organizations, and teachers at your school. Since you are working as part of a group, it may be difficult to agree on one issue. Therefore, you may want to take some time to list all options and discuss the pros and cons of choosing each. Don't forget to listen to all group members and compromise when possible. The issue you choose should:

- Be important and meaningful to all group members.
- Be something that you can truly impact or change.
- Be an authentic need or problem in your community.

The issue/problem we have chosen is: _____

I know it is a problem because: _____

Step 2: Learn about the Issue

Knowledge is power! Now that you have selected the issue, spend time learning about it. You can learn from online or written resources, human resources (people), and community resources. Develop a list of questions and find the answers. This will help lead you to a solution. The research can include:

Creating Positive Change in Your Community

- What you already know.
- The history of your issue or problem, and what's already been done.
- The current situation.
- Interviews with potential stakeholders/collaborators.

Step 3: Identify a Solution

Here's where you begin to move from "what is" to "what can be!" First brainstorm several ideas for solving/impacting the problem with your group. Then evaluate how each idea will positively impact the problem, foster an environment of tolerance/inclusion, help those with intellectual disabilities, whether it is feasible, whether you have the resources and time to implement it, and whether you will enjoy doing so, etc.

Our solution is: _____

Step 4: Create a Plan

Now it's time to create a plan to implement your solution. Your plan should include the steps you will take, your timeline, who can help you, what you will need to implement your plan, what challenges you may encounter, how you will overcome them, and how you will know when you've reached success.

Step 5: Implement the Plan

Follow the steps and timeline you've developed. You will want to assess your plan along the way to make sure that you are moving toward your goals. Your plan may need to be adjusted as you implement it. Just make sure that all group members are aware of any changes.

Step 6: Demonstrate Outcomes and Celebrate Success

In what ways have you moved from "What Is?" to "What Can Be?" What specific progress can we identify along the path toward, "What Can Be?" What challenged you, and what can you learn from those challenges? How can you share your progress and strategies with others within and outside of your school?

Background on Service-Learning (NYLC Standards)

National K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice guide educators in their integration of service-learning experiences. These lessons include all of the elements that are necessary for a meaningful and effective service-learning experience. What follows are suggestions for using these resources as a launching point for service-learning.

The Standards include:

1. Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities.
2. Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards.
3. Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society.
4. Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants.
5. Service-learning provides youth with a strong voice in planning, implementing and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from adults.
6. Service-learning experiences are collaborative, mutually beneficial and address community needs.
7. Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for improvement and sustainability.
8. Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs and meet specified outcomes.

For more information on service-learning and how to implement service-learning experience in your classroom, review the **Service-Learning Instructional Planning Guide** available for download at: www.specialolympics.org

Suggested Steps to Develop Service-Learning in this Unit

Work Collaboratively

- Students collaborate with each other throughout the activities but also collaborate with those in the community in Activities 2 and 4.

Capturing Student Voice

- From Activity 1: **SO...What's the Challenge?** Introduce the Soeren Palumbo story. Consider beginning with Steps 1 and 2 from Part One and then jumping to Steps 1 and 2 from Part Two.

Promote Understanding and Diversity

- All lessons are designed to promote understanding and diversity, particularly for those with intellectual disabilities. However, Activities 1 and 3 focus on reflecting upon and expanding existing perceptions.
- Complete all of Activity 2.

Addressing Community Needs

- Complete Steps 4 – 7 in Part Two of Activity 1.
- Consider Activity 3 for students to better understand the subject of intellectual disabilities. Note: Students may not need the entire activity, but part of the process for addressing the community needs will have to include some work on researching the topic and interviewing people whose experience and insight will help students better understand intellectual disabilities.
- Complete Activity 4, as well as consider elements from the end of Activity 1.