

Get Into It

**Educational Resources to Enhance
Awareness and Acceptance of Disabilities**

Evaluation Report



**Special Olympics Global Collaborating Center
University of Massachusetts Boston**



I. Overview

Special Olympics school-based programs strive to enhance awareness and acceptance of students with intellectual disabilities (ID) in school settings through sports, youth leadership, and educational activities. One of the educational initiatives developed by Special Olympics is the *Get Into It Educational Resources*. These free resources, available for anyone to download and use in their classrooms, are intended to be used in K – 12 settings to enhance awareness and acceptance of students with ID. *Get Into It* includes a consortium of educational resources: The *Get Into It K-12 Complete Lessons*, *Get Into It Active*, *Movies that Move Instructional Guide and DVD*, and the *Get Into It Online Games and Resources*. The resources are comprehensive and flexible for implementation, such that an educator may weave together any of the available resources for students, selecting from them as necessary.

At the start of the 2011-2012 school year, little was known about the adaptation and implementation of *Get Into It* among educators. For instance, were the resources used mainly by Special Olympics personnel or those associated with Special Olympics, or have others become aware of and utilized the resources and if so, for what reasons? Therefore the present evaluation sought to document the use of *Get Into It* across schools, particularly which resources are used and how they are being used with students. Moreover, the evaluation also sought to determine the general use of *Get Into It* among educators and potential areas of impact among schools, teachers, and students. There were three main methodological approaches to data collection. The first was an online survey of educators who had registered with the *Get Into It* products online (Phase 1), second was an online survey of Project UNIFY liaisons (Phase 2), and lastly observations and interviews were conducted with a select number of teachers and students who used the materials in their classrooms (Phase 3). The evaluation report will discuss the results from each methodological approach separately.

II. Phase 1

One of the first steps in trying to understand the use of *Get Into It* in schools was to gather information from those individuals who had registered and downloaded the materials from the Special Olympics website, or requested information from Special Olympics. This phase had a number of aims: specifically, to describe who downloaded or requested the materials and why, which materials they used, how they incorporated the materials into their classes, and in what ways *Get Into It* benefited both teachers and students. The online survey was developed to derive information regarding each of these areas. A total of 41 questions were divided among five sections: 1) Demographic Information; 2) Purpose for Using *Get Into It*; 3) Resources Used; 4) Logistics for Implementation; and 5) Perceived Impact for Teachers and Students.

Educators were recruited from multiple sources: 1) a list of educators who had downloaded *Get Into It* online and were registered users of the site (n = 2453); 2) a list of educators who had requested the *Get Into It* educational resources from Special Olympics (n = 103); and 3) a list of educators who had attended conference sessions with Special Olympics staff (n = 97). In total, 2,653 educators were compiled across all of the sources. These individuals were sent emailed requests to complete an online survey and were offered a stipend for their participation. To attempt to increase the number of participants, Special Olympics staff sent a reminder email as recipients might be more willing to accept a request for an online survey from Special Olympics as opposed to an outside organization. The final sample included 198 participants yielding a response rate of 7%. Of the 198 educators that responded to the survey, just over half (59%) were actual users of the resources. The remaining 41%, while having downloaded or requested the *Get Into It*, did not use the materials. In total, 116 individuals used the resources and completed the online survey. The following is a discussion of the responses from the 116 individuals.

A. Who are the educators using the *Get Into It* materials and what are their reasons for doing so?

To understand educators' use of the materials, it was first important to define the individuals who used *Get Into It* within elementary, middle, and high school environments. Among the respondents, a greater number of educators from elementary schools (n = 50) used the *Get Into It* resources as compared to middle (n = 30) and high schools (n = 31) (see Table 1). Across middle and high schools, the teacher who used the *Get Into It* resources was typically a special education teacher; in elementary schools, it was more common for a general education teacher to use the materials. Moreover, it was often the case that educators using *Get Into It* were involved with Special Olympics and were also involved in Project UNIFY. Most were from schools that were involved in Traditional Special Olympics or Unified Sports, Project UNIFY awareness and promotion activities, and an R-Word Campaign. Overall, high schools displayed greater Project UNIFY involvement than middle or elementary schools, but over half the elementary and middle schools were also involved in multiple Project UNIFY activities.

Table 1. *Get Into It* users' education, leadership roles, and schools' Project UNIFY involvement

	Elementary (n =50)	Middle (n = 30)	High (n = 31)
Teachers' Educational Background			
General Education	42%	27%	16%
Special Education	32%	47%	58%
Physical Education	4%	13%	6%
Teachers' Extracurricular Involvement			
Special Olympics	30%	53%	61%
Student Clubs	12%	7%	23%
Sports Team	9%	20%	19%
Schools' Project UNIFY Involvement			
R-Word	34%	67%	87%
PU Awareness/Promotion	54%	60%	90%
Sports/Clubs	62%	63%	94%

Furthermore, educators were asked to indicate the main reasons that they used the *Get Into It* resources at their schools. Across elementary, middle, and high schools, most educators reported that they had a general interest in the lesson content and structure, it fit the need to teach about inclusion at their schools, and it supported the school's anti-bullying program (see Table 2). Educators in elementary and middle schools also reported that they used *Get Into It* because it supported the school's character education program. In high schools, it was more common for educators to use *Get Into It* because it supported the school's Special Olympics programs. Other listed reasons for using the resources included overall themes of teaching acceptance and diversity, developing leadership skills, fostering/supporting relationships among students, encouraging interactions between students with and without disabilities, and raising awareness for disability.

Table 2. Reasons for using *Get Into It* across schools.

	Elementary (n =50)	Middle (n = 30)	High (n = 31)
General interest in the lesson content and structure	86%	83%	87%
To create inclusion opportunities for all students	76%	87%	90%
Fits the school's need to teach about inclusion	74%	80%	77%
Supports the school's anti-bullying program	74%	83%	71%
Supports the school's character education program	70%	77%	68%
Supports the school's Special Olympics program	52%	63%	84%
Supports the school's anti-obesity program	38%	23%	42%

B. Which *Get Into It* resources are being used by educators and how are they being received?

Educators using *Get Into It* can choose from the following resources: *Get Into It* K-12 lessons, *Get Into It* Active, *Movies that Move* Instructional Book and DVD, and the Online Website Games and Resources. Across the 116 schools, about half of the educators reported that they used the *Get Into It* K-12 lessons (51%), with the remaining resources used almost equally among the teachers (36%, 34%, and 36%, respectively). Teachers did use particular resources more often at particular school levels. For example, educators from elementary schools seemed more likely to use the online resources than those at the middle or high school levels (see Table 3), while there was more equal usage reported of the *Get Into It* K-12 lessons.

Table 3. Reported resources used among elementary, middle, and high Schools

	Elementary (n =50)	Middle (n = 30)	High (n = 31)
<i>Get Into It</i> K-12 lessons	58%	50%	42%
<i>Get Into It</i> Active	40%	23%	42%
<i>Movies that Move</i> Instructional Book and DVD	20%	47%	42%
<i>Get Into It</i> Online Resources	54%	23%	19%

When looking at the use of the resources separately, it was apparent that not all of the resources were used as anticipated. For example, although the ***Get Into It* K-12 Lessons** are divided for specific grade levels (i.e., Early Elementary (K-2); Upper Elementary (3-5); Middle School (6-8); and High School (9-12)), it was not always the case that the designated curricular levels were taught with those particular grades. For instance, some teachers who used the K-12 lessons taught the elementary and middle school lessons with high school students. Furthermore, teachers did not necessarily complete an entire level while teaching. Of the 59 teachers who reported using the K-12 Lessons, only a quarter (25%) reported that they taught all four lessons, with over half (60%) reporting that they taught only one to two lessons from a level. In addition, the majority of the teachers indicated that they modified the lessons by supplementing with their own instructional ideas (56%) or selecting from the lessons as necessary (41%).

When asked to share what parts of the lessons were most useful for their students, teachers offered various insights. Teachers found the reflective nature of the lessons to be engaging and important for students while others found the aspects that focused on supporting student friendships and encouraging team building to be the most useful. Some teachers referenced specific components within a lesson. For example, the Soeren Palumbo speech was often found to be “eye-opening” for students and a useful way to introduce students to disability. Others found that having a Special Olympics athlete speak with the class was particularly useful. Many teachers listed the lesson that focused on discovering similarities to be a great way to bring together groups of ‘different’ students and allow them to explore ways that they were ‘just like one another.’ Additionally about half of the teachers reported that they taught the final lesson in *Get Into It*, which is to complete a project designed to create change in their

environments. Examples of the projects that students completed included students with and without disabilities working together on designing a homecoming float or a Greenhouse Gardening project, volunteering together at Special Olympics events, participating in an Awareness Week, and starting a Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign.

The use of **Get Into It Active** mirrored the use of the complete lessons. That is, of the 42 teachers who used this shorter, condensed version, over half (60%) reported that they taught only one to two lessons from a level. Slightly under a quarter of the teachers reported that they taught all four lessons. In addition, over half the teachers indicated that they modified the lessons.

New for the 2011-2012 school year, the **Get Into It Movies that Move** is a resource for educators to use in their classrooms that features movie clips from a number of popular movies and TV shows. Because it was a new addition, the 39 teachers who used the Movies that Move resource were asked to rate each of the clips according to their usefulness on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 being 'Not Useful' and 3 being 'Very Useful'). Overall the *Glee Wheelchair* clip ($M = 2.83$; 90%), *Glee Sue and Becky* clip ($M = 2.83$; 74%) and the clip from *Remember the Titans* ($M = 2.81$; 69%) were highly rated and used frequently among teachers. The clips that had the lowest rating score and were also used infrequently included *Lord of The Rings* ($M = 2.24$; 60%), *Bridge to Terabithia* ($M = 2.50$; 62%), and *X-Men* ($M = 2.55$; 51%).

In addition to the creation of Movies That Move, the online website for *Get Into It* was revamped during the 2011-2012 school year. As such, the 39 teachers who used this resource were asked to rate each of the **Get Into It Online Games and Resources** according to their usefulness in their classroom on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 being 'Not Useful' and 3 being 'Very Useful'). Overall the resources rated as most useful among teachers were *We're More Alike Than We Are Different* ($M = 2.58$; 95%), *The Right Words to Spread* ($M = 2.24$; 77%), and *Stomp out the R-Word* ($M = 2.03$; 72%). Of the online games available, the least frequently used and ranked the lowest were the *Event Planner* ($M = 1.05$; 40%), *Support Card Creator* ($M = 1.13$; 45%), and *Heading Down the Perseverance Trail* ($M = 1.24$; 50%).

In addition to asking about which of the resources were used and how, teachers were also asked about what themes they focused on from the multiple themes presented in *Get Into It*. For example, the themes represented include: 1) awareness, acceptance, and respect for differences; 2) disability awareness; 3) equality; 4) inclusion; 5) respect and how to show respect to others; 6) service-learning; 7) Special Olympics or Project UNIFY promotion; 8) 21st century skill development; and 9) understanding diversity. Within elementary schools, it was more frequently reported that *Get Into It* was used to teach about awareness, acceptance, and respect for differences (86%) and respect and how to show respect (76%) (See Table 4). Within middle schools, teaching about differences (87%) was frequently used as well as teaching about respect (73%), inclusion (73%), and awareness of disabilities (67%). Within high schools, difference was the theme most frequently used (81%), but inclusion (65%), respect (61%), and Special Olympics promotion (55%) were also frequently emphasized.

Table 4. Reported percentages for themes taught in *Get Into It*.

	Elementary (n =50)	Middle (n = 30)	High (n = 31)
Awareness, acceptance, and respect for differences	86%	87%	81%
Respect and how to show respect	76%	73%	61%
Disability awareness	60%	67%	48%
Inclusion	58%	73%	65%
Equality	46%	53%	45%
Special Olympics or Project UNIFY promotion	30%	43%	55%
Understanding diversity	48%	47%	39%
Service-learning	22%	27%	32%
21 st century skill development	14%	13%	3%

C. How are educators implementing *Get Into It* in the classroom?

Get Into It is designed to be used with students in varying settings. Each of the educators using any of the resources were asked to indicate how they implemented the resources at their school sites. Of interest was determining if the resources were being taught school-wide, with one or more classes of students, or with a small select number of students. In addition, the frequency and duration of use was also of interest. For example, was *Get Into It* something students were taught once or twice, or did instruction occur on a regular basis?

Educators in elementary and middle schools reported similar patterns of usage than educators from the high school level. Generally educators reported that they used the material with a combination of general education and students with special educational needs over a third of the time (40%). In elementary and middle schools *Get Into It* was most often used with a small group of students (34% and 40% respectively), or with a whole class (36% and 37%). In high school, *Get Into It* was most often used with a small group of students (48%). It was least common for *Get Into It* to be used school-wide at any level (see Table 5). With regard to the classes in which *Get Into It* was used, there was variation observed across all levels. In elementary schools, *Get Into It* was most often used in Special Education, Language Arts, and Health Education subjects. In middle schools, *Get Into It* was most often used in Special Education and Teen Leadership subjects. In high schools, *Get Into It* was most often used in Special Education, Teen Leadership, and Physical Education subjects. Educators also reported that *Get Into It* was used in various other classes, such as elective courses, during club meetings, advisory/guidance courses, and homeroom time.

Table 5. Implementation of *Get Into It* across schools.

	Elementary (n =50)	Middle (n = 30)	High (n = 31)
General Implementation			
School wide	4%	10%	10%
With a small group of students	34%	40%	48%
With multiple classes	24%	13%	19%
With one class	36%	37%	23%
Class Subjects			
Language Arts	30%	13%	13%
Health Education	26%	10%	10%
Physical Education	18%	10%	26%
Special Education	30%	23%	52%
Teen Leadership	4%	27%	36%

Educators also provided information about the number of weeks that they used the materials, the number of sessions taught, and the length of the sessions (see Table 6). Elementary school teachers reported that *Get Into It* was used for approximately 8 sessions over the course of 4 weeks. Each instructional session lasted, on average, 30 minutes. Middle school teachers reported that it was used for approximately 6 sessions over the course of 5 weeks for about 34 minutes per session. In high schools, teachers reported that *Get Into It* was used for 10 sessions over the course of 10 weeks. Each instructional session lasted, on average, 40 minutes across the high schools.

Table 6. Reported averages for instructional information

	Elementary (n =50)	Middle (n = 30)	High (n = 31)
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Number of weeks used	4	5	10
Sessions taught	8	6	10
Session length	32 min	34 min	39 min

D. What was the impact of *Get Into It* on teachers and students?

As a final step in Phase 1, educators were asked to report on the benefits they perceived from *Get Into It*. This is a crucial aspect to all educational programming – if teachers take the time to use a program during their instructional day, it is important to ensure that there is a benefit for doing so. Overall the majority of teachers across levels (72%, 87%, and 87%, respectively) indicated that they planned to use *Get Into It* again in the future, so clearly there was satisfaction with the program. Beyond this however, there was also an interest in determining the ways that the *Get Into It* resources improved or assisted students including the impact on interactions between students with and without disabilities; impact on academic skills and social skills; and finally on educator confidence.

1. Does *Get Into It* foster interactions among students with and without disabilities?

Overall teachers reported that they used *Get Into It* with both students with and without disabilities just under half of the time (40%). The majority of these educators agreed that *Get Into It* provided opportunities for students with and without disabilities to interact. Teachers also indicated that *Get Into It* provided students with opportunities to learn about individuals with disabilities and helped students become more sensitive to the needs of individuals with disabilities. Specifically, teachers rated on a 4 point scale (where 1 indicates “not at all” and 4 indicates “to a great extent”) the extent to which the *Get Into It* resources increased student knowledge. Teachers reported that the material did increase students’ knowledge of ($M = 3.68$), and sensitivity toward ($M = 3.68$), individuals with disabilities.

2. Does *Get Into It* impact the academic skills of participating students?

Given the national emphasis on academic standards and high-stakes assessments, it is helpful if supplementary resources used in the classroom build upon academic skills. *Get Into It* teachers were asked to indicate which academic skills students had the opportunity to use and practice through *Get Into It*. Overall the majority of teachers did not often report use or practice of academic skills. Most notably however, teachers from across all grade levels did report that students had the opportunity to practice and use critical listening and response skills during lessons. In addition, nearly half of elementary (46%) and high school (42%) teachers reported that students practiced reading comprehension skills. Moreover in high schools teachers also reported that students gained service-learning experience. In addition to reporting on the academic skills addressed, teachers rated on a 4 point scale the extent to which *Get Into It* encouraged high-quality student discussions and fostered student engagement in lessons. Teachers reported that *Get Into It* encouraged high-quality discussions ($M = 3.40$) and fostered engagement ($M = 3.46$).

Table 7. Reported percentages for academic skills emphasized during *Get Into It* instruction across schools.

	Elementary (n =50)	Middle (n = 30)	High (n = 31)
Read and comprehend a variety of texts	46%	33%	42%
Interpret, evaluate, and analyze information from text and other sources	38%	37%	29%
Express ideas in a variety of writing compositions	36%	33%	36%
Listen critically and respond with appropriate communication	74%	63%	65%
Research skills to build and present knowledge	16%	17%	26%
Critically assess and understand perspectives from diverse groups	32%	40%	30%
Technology and digital media resources experience	34%	37%	39%
Service-learning experience	28%	23%	52%

3. Does *Get Into It* impact the social skills of participating students?

Teachers were asked to indicate whether students had the opportunity to practice particular social skills through *Get Into It*. Specifically, teachers rated on a 4 point scale (where 1 indicates not at all and 4 indicates to a great extent), the extent to which *Get Into It* helped students learn skills such as how to get along with one another and encouraged positive and respectful attitudes in and out of class. Teachers reported that that *Get Into It* helped students get along with others ($M = 3.46$), encouraged positive and respectful attitudes in and out of class ($M = 3.69$ and 3.65 , respectively).

4. Does *Get Into It* impact teacher confidence in creating inclusive opportunities for students?

Finally, teachers were asked to indicate how confident they were in creating inclusive environments before and after using *Get Into It* with their students. Specifically, teachers were asked to rate themselves on a 4 point scale (where 1 indicates not at all confident and 4 indicates very confident), the extent to which *Get Into It* helped them feel more confident in creating inclusive opportunities for their students. Teachers reported that before using *Get Into It*, they were only somewhat confident in creating inclusive opportunities ($M = 2.30$). After using *Get Into It* however, teachers reported that they felt very confident in creating inclusive opportunities ($M = 3.03$). Although asked retrospectively, teachers identified positive change within themselves in regard to creating inclusive environments for students.

Phase 1 Summary

The goals of the evaluation in Phase 1 were to determine who used *Get Into It*, what parts were used and how they were used, and what the benefits were for students and teachers. Overall among the sample of teachers who completed the survey, it was more common for *Get Into It* to be used in elementary schools by general education teachers. In middle and high schools, it was more common for *Get Into It* to be used by special education teachers. Regardless of the school level or educational background of the common user, the majority of the educators who completed the online survey were involved with Special Olympics in some manner. While it is possible that those individuals with ties to Special Olympics were more likely to complete the survey, it is also possible that *Get Into It* is a resource that is staying mostly within the realm of Special Olympics affiliates.

Across elementary, middle, and high schools the complete *Get Into It* K-12 lessons were the resource most frequently selected and used by teachers. Teachers found the reflective nature of the lessons to be engaging for their students. Aside from the K-12 lessons, there was variation across grades in terms of the *Get Into It* resources selected and used. It is clear that across grades, *Get Into It* appears to be used mainly with selected classes or small groups of students and has not reached a point where it has become widely used across a school.

Despite any variation in use, educators overall had positive feedback about *Get Into It*. Teachers felt that students were able to practice a number of national academic standards during instruction and that it promoted students' opportunities for social skill development, especially with regard to knowledge and

sensitivity toward disability. Teachers themselves reported feeling more confident about dealing with inclusive environments and fostering interactions between students with and without disabilities. Overall, there appear to be merits to using *Get Into It* within schools as a supplementary educational resource and the majority of the teachers are likely to continue to use it in the future.

III. Phase 2

The second step in trying to understand the use of *Get Into It* was to gather information from educators using the resources in Project UNIFY schools. Similar to Phase 1, this phase also had a number of aims; specifically, how widely was *Get Into It* used among Project UNIFY schools, who used the resources, what did they use, and how was it generally implemented. To gather information about the use of *Get Into It* in Project UNIFY schools, 20 questions about *Get Into It* were included as part of a larger online survey administered to all Project UNIFY liaisons¹ participating in the Year 4 evaluation of the Project UNIFY program. In total, of the 1,073 Project UNIFY liaisons who filled out the survey, 278 (or 26%) were using the *Get Into It* resources.² The following is a discussion of the responses from these individuals.

In Project UNIFY schools there was varied use among the liaisons. In about half the schools (56%), the Project UNIFY liaison was the only person who used the *Get Into It* resources; in the other half (44%), there was a number of individuals who used the materials. In schools with individuals other than or in addition to the liaison using the materials, other teachers included a special education teacher (62%), general education teacher (58%), or physical or adaptive education teacher (42%). This demonstrates that in almost half the cases of *Get Into It* usage in Project UNIFY schools, there were a number of individuals who used the materials. Importantly, this team often included individuals from both the realm of special and general education, suggesting that the *Get Into It* resources provide the opportunity within schools for teachers across fields to collaborate and work toward a common goal, in this case teaching awareness and acceptance of disabilities.

Across the 278 Project UNIFY schools, the *Get Into It* resources most commonly used were the *Get Into It* K-12 Lessons (67%) and *Movies that Move* (56%). However, there were some differences across school levels (See Table 8). Liaisons from middle schools were more likely to use *Movies that Move* than liaisons from either the elementary or high school levels. Liaisons from elementary, middle, and high schools reported similar patterns of usage. *Get Into It* was typically taught during special education, physical education, or used during club meetings. In some instances *Get Into It* was incorporated into morning message/announcements in elementary schools, and leadership/guidance classes in middle and high schools. In each of these settings, liaisons reported that they taught the materials to a combination of students in general and special education.

Table 8. Resources used in elementary, middle, and high schools

	Elementary (n = 91)	Middle (n = 73)	High (n = 104)
<i>Get Into It</i> K-12	70%	70%	64%
<i>Get Into It</i> Active	44%	49%	39%
<i>Movies that Move</i>	42%	71%	58%
Online Resources	41%	45%	47%

¹ The liaison is the person responsible for the implementation of Project UNIFY activities taking place in a school.

² The Project UNIFY Year 4 evaluation report stated that 29% of the 1,073 schools providing liaison surveys implemented *Get Into It*. 26% of liaisons who completed the survey used *Get Into It* themselves.

Phase 2 Summary

The goals of Phase 2 were to determine how *Get Into It* was being used in Project UNIFY schools in the 2011-2012 evaluation year. Results indicated that in approximately half the cases the liaison was the sole user of the resources while in the other half there were multiple teachers who came from general education, special education, and physical education. In Project UNIFY schools, it was common for a combination of resources to be taught with students with the complete K-12 lessons and the Movies that Move DVD used most often across levels. Lastly, *Get Into It* was used in special education classrooms, during physical education, and during club meetings. In the upper grades *Get Into It* was prominently used in leadership classes. Therefore it appears that teachers in Project UNIFY schools use multiple *Get Into It* resources in various settings to encourage awareness and acceptance of disability.

IV. Phase 3

The final step in understanding the use of *Get Into It* among schools was to gather information from classrooms in which the resources were used. Although the surveys provided general information about how the *Get Into It* resources were used among schools, in Phase 3 of the evaluation a more in-depth look at the actual use in practice was explored. This phase had a number of aims: specifically, to gather first-hand information about teachers using *Get Into It* including the resources they selected and used; to observe teachers use the *Get Into It* K-12 lessons; and to gather feedback from students about the impact of *Get Into It*. To gather information, observations and interviews were conducted with a select group of teachers and students. Overall 10 teachers (3 elementary school teachers, 2 middle school teachers, and 5 high school teachers) and 37 students (33 middle school students and 4 high school students) participated in Phase 3.

A. Elementary Schools

1. Who are the elementary educators using the *Get Into It* materials and what are their reasons for doing so?

Of the three elementary schools that participated in this phase of the evaluation, two were participating in Project UNIFY (Schools A and B) and the other was not participating in Project UNIFY (School C) (see Table 9). The majority of the school population in School A and C were white and English-proficient. The majority of students in School B were African American and English-proficient.

All three teachers participating in the evaluation were special educators who worked in self-contained classrooms (See Table 9 for descriptive information for each teacher). Teacher A was in her second year of teaching special education and her present teaching assignment was in a self-contained environment for 12 students in grades 4 - 5. Although School A is a Project UNIFY school, Teacher A had no prior involvement with Special Olympics before teaching at the school. Teacher A began using *Get Into It* as a requirement for a Special Olympics grant.

Teacher B taught special education for 12 years and also worked in a self-contained environment for 6 students in grades K – 4. She personally became involved in Special Olympics when she was in middle school, and brought Special Olympics into her school as a teacher. Teacher B used *Get Into It* as a supplement for the Project UNIFY activities taking place at her school.

Teacher C taught special education for 7 students identified as severely disabled or medically fragile in grades K-6. Teacher C was unique in that she had no prior or present affiliation with Special Olympics. Teacher C discovered the *Get Into It* program independently as she was searching for ways to teach ‘Disability Awareness’ on her campus. Specifically Teacher C shared, “Even though the (general education) kids have seen people with disabilities, not everyone has. There is only one program for the district, and the students sometimes have a deer in the headlights look because they are not used to seeing the (special education) kids on their school campus.”

Table 9. Elementary school teacher and class assignment information

	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C
State	So. Carolina	So. Carolina	Wisconsin
Project UNIFY	Yes	Yes	No
Education Setting	Special Education SDC*	Special Education SDC	Special Education SDC
Classroom	TMD**	TMD	Severe/Medically fragile
Class size	12	6	7
Grade	4-5	K-4	K-6
SO Involvement	No	Yes	No
Motivation	Grant Stipulation	Supplement Project UNIFY	Disability Awareness
Resource	<i>Get Into It</i> Active	<i>Get Into It</i> K-12	<i>Get Into It</i> K-12

*Special Day Class

**Trainable Mentally Disabled

2. Which *Get Into It* resources are being used by the elementary educators and how are they being implemented?

Each of the three elementary school teachers interviewed used the resources in distinct ways, one of which was a partnered relationship between special and general education, another was in a club setting, and the last was an attempt at whole-school implementation.

Teacher A used *Get Into It* by partnering her special education class with a fourth grade general education class. Students participated in *Get Into It* Active during 20 minute morning meeting sessions. It was hoped that students from the general education class would learn and understand more about the students from the special education classroom, relationships would be formed between students, and a certain level of comfort between the two groups would be established. One of the initial challenges Teacher A faced was finding a partner class to work with as there were few teachers on the campus who were willing to do so. Teacher A continually stressed that special education was a separate entity at her school: *"We are self-contained. Our recess and lunch is separate. Our school doesn't have any inclusion classes. Our class isn't invited to anything. Our class is invited after the fact. There is an LD self-contained class that does get more included... even the teachers are scared of my kids. It is sad."* Despite this overall feeling about the school, Teacher A had a unique implementation scenario; although she was present in the room, Teacher A did not teach the lessons herself. Rather, the fourth grade general education teacher delivered the *Get Into It* instruction. After the four lessons were completed, Teacher A brought her students with disabilities into the fourth grade class and the students did a number of activities together over a one week period.

Teacher B used *Get Into It* with her Project UNIFY fan club which included a group of 5th grade students. Teacher B used the *Get Into It* K-12 lessons and *Get Into It* Active with the fan club. These students also came to the special education classroom once a week where they worked with the students with disabilities on sport skills and other activities. After a period of time, the fan club expanded to include more time during the school day, such as recess and lunch. Teacher B commented, “The popular girls at school didn’t want to go to recess and wanted to spend their recess with my students and eat lunch with them, read and play with them.” Teacher B also allowed the student members to select and teach from the material with guidance and assistance from her. These students taught a lesson to general education students in the lower grades and another lesson to general education students in the upper grades.

Teacher C used *Get Into It* K – 12 Lessons with multiple classrooms across grades at her school in an effort to educate the students in the general education program about disabilities. Teacher C taught all of grades K – 3 and also taught half of the 4th and 5th grade classrooms. Teacher C visited each classroom about 4 times. She adapted the original material to incorporate more information in regard to specific disabilities represented at her school, for instance, teaching what to do if someone has a seizure and about different communication devices. Throughout the lessons Teacher C tried to establish and continually stress the similarities between students with and without disabilities. She taught the other students ways to interact with her students. For example she commented, “The kids didn’t think if they would say hi, my students would say hi back.”

3. What was the impact of *Get Into It* on the elementary school teachers and schools?

As on the surveys, the teachers were asked to report on the benefits they perceived from *Get Into It*. Although Teacher A reported working in a difficult school environment where she felt that students with disabilities were treated as “second-class citizens” in the school, she did perceive some positive impacts of *Get Into It*. Specifically she stated, “I didn’t know the kids before, so it is hard to say if it changed them. They were nice to my students.” Teacher A found that the students in the general education class were scared to talk to the students with disabilities at first, and they would only talk to the adults who were with the students. However as the *Get Into It* lessons were presented, the students without disabilities became curious and started to ask questions.

Teacher B stated that since Project UNIFY and *Get Into It* were implemented at the school there has been a change in how students with disabilities are perceived across the campus. She stated, “People would always see us, they would see us, and show respect for the students, but to me, it was as though when they would see us they would look through us.” Teacher B said that although she had tried different activities to make her students visible on campus, for example delivering fruit to the classes, she always felt that they went unnoticed. However, once the school began participating in Project UNIFY and she began to use the *Get Into It* materials, she saw a shift in how others responded to the students with disabilities in her class. Teacher B stated, it was as if “all of a sudden, they were noticed.” As the students without disabilities learned about Project UNIFY and *Get Into It*, they gained a respect for students with disabilities and the challenges they face. Teacher B commented that the students without disabilities became curious, would ask about her special education class, and some would even

stop by to visit and spend time with her students. Moreover, Teacher B commented that over time the students in general education learned the names of all of her students and interacted with the students with disabilities more often: "There was more respect and friendship as a result." Teacher B also stated, "when they see my students, they don't treat them like fragile little children -- they treat them like peers. Instead of 'Oh, she looks like a little baby' now it is 'Oh, hey Sally,' they are treating them as a peer and not a special fragile entity that attends their school." When the students were asked why they joined the club, their responses were similar. Most stated, "Because the kids looked fun and interesting and I wanted to know more about them." One student shared that she used to be afraid of the students with disabilities and didn't know if they would hurt her. After participation in the club, she said "Now I know they are just like me."

Teacher C's goal was to make sure students and teachers in general education at her school would be comfortable with students with disabilities. Similar to Teacher A, Teacher C found that some teachers were often intimidated by her students and were not overly welcoming. *Get Into It* was a positive for her school, "A major impact was that it took the fear and unknown part away from the students; everyone, students and staff, started to become more comfortable with the [special education] students." After she used the program, she saw changes among the adults at school. Teachers would talk to her more about the students with disabilities and she even felt more comfortable asking if her students could go to the other classes, "They aren't just there to deliver snack. When you [teachers] do science experiments, we can come down and help out." Some of the general education teachers even told Teacher C, "I would love to have them in my classroom, I know so much more about what to do."

Although these teachers used the resources in different settings, each were trying to accomplish similar goals. First, each saw a need to teach the general education staff and students about students with disabilities. Secondly, there was some form of partnership established between special education and general education. For example, in the 4th grade class the special education students worked with the other students for a period of time; in the club setting, both students in general education and special education worked together through club meetings and worked on lessons; in the whole school setting, the partnership was between the special education teacher who was striving to educate the whole-school about students with disabilities in order to allow relationships to begin to form. This last point, allowing relationships to form, is the final goal each of the teachers had in mind while using the resources. All teachers hoped to enhance the lives of the students with disabilities in their special education classrooms. Overall, the three teachers found that the *Get Into It* resources helped make both staff and students more aware of the students in their special educational programs. Each of the teachers brought up how staff and students were often uncomfortable with the students with disabilities attending special education classrooms, but as the information was disseminated the students began to become curious and ask questions, even teachers felt more open to working with the students with special needs. Furthermore, it was this notion that the students with disabilities were no longer invisible to the school. Each teacher strived to foster an environment where their students with disabilities were recognized as individuals and had relationships with their peers - they had friends, and it appeared that these roots were beginning to grow across the schools.

B. Middle Schools

1. Who are the middle level educators using the *Get Into It* materials and what are their reasons for doing so?

In addition to the three elementary schools, two middle schools also participated in this phase of the evaluation. One of the middle schools was a Project UNIFY school from South Carolina (School D) and the other was a non-Project UNIFY school from Wyoming (School E). The majority of students in these two schools were white and English-proficient (See Table 10).

The major difference between the two middle school teachers who participated was their educational background. Teacher D was in her eleventh year of teaching special education and her present teaching assignment was in a self-contained environment for 10 students with learning disabilities. Teacher D had a prior relationship with Special Olympics and this was the school's third year as a Project UNIFY school. Teacher E taught general education for 19 years and her present class assignment was 8th grade English and the 7th/8th grade Teen Leadership elective course. Teacher E is unique in that she had limited to no prior experience with students with disabilities or special education, and no prior experience with Special Olympics. She learned of *Get Into It* through a character education conference and thought this resource would be perfect for the Teen Leadership classrooms. Furthermore this school was unique because it was the only school that the evaluation team worked with where students with moderate to severe disabilities were not present at the site.

Table 10. Middle school teacher and class assignment information

	Teacher D	Teacher E
State	So. Carolina	Wyoming
Project UNIFY	Yes	No
Education	Special Education	General Education
Setting	SDC	General education
Classroom	LD	Teen Leadership
Class size	10	3 periods of 20 students
Grade	7-8	7-8
SO Involvement	Yes	No
Motivation	Material for Be a Fan Club	Material for Teen Leadership class
Resource	<i>Get Into It</i> K-12	<i>Get Into It</i> K-12

2. Which *Get Into It* resources are being used by the middle level educators and how are they being implemented?

Each middle school teacher interviewed used the resources differently. One used only some of the resources during Special Olympics club meetings which took place after school while the other used all of the materials with whole classes throughout an entire semester.

Teacher D used *Get Into It* with her Be a Fan Club once per month after school during club meetings. The club is responsible for a number of Project UNIFY activities throughout the school such as peer tutoring, activities in the special education classroom such as playing games or assisting the students with disabilities, after-school field trips, etc. The Be a Fan Club had grown in popularity at the school over the last few years from 28 student members in the previous year to 70 students at the time of the evaluation. Because it was a club meeting, they were only able to fit various pieces of the *Get Into It* lessons into their agenda. Therefore Teacher D modified the *Get Into It* lessons by selecting activities or videos from them as necessary. Furthermore, since the materials were used in a club setting, group discussions were used more often. Students in Teacher D's setting shared that one of the most impactful activities was the Soeren Palumbo video. Whenever new students join, Teacher D uses this video to help them understand the purpose of the club. She stated that there often are students crying in the room after watching it, "like they never got it before and then the lights turn on."

Teacher E used the *Get Into It* middle school lessons with three periods of Teen Leadership students (approximately 60 students). She adapted the material in numerous ways throughout implementation. One of the major modifications Teacher E made was to focus instruction around general information about disabilities. Teacher E often stated that she could not have some of the discussions in her class because the students had no framework or understanding of disability. These were 7th and 8th grade students that could not talk about disability in the way required in *Get Into It* because they had limited knowledge of what it meant. Teacher E used a blend of information dissemination, thinking activities, journal writing, and student discussions during classes. She also brought the idea of disabilities into the classroom by extending student knowledge on discrimination and other marginalized groups through history and then focused student attention on individuals with disabilities. Because it was a Teen Leadership course and was designed to enhance student's abilities to be strong leaders, she also advocated issues around civic responsibility and how students can make a difference in how others are treated.

3. What was the impact of *Get Into It* on the middle school teachers and students?

Since using the material and being involved in Project UNIFY, Teacher D has found that kids in the school have embraced students with disabilities more and treat them better. Prior to the club, although her students were not being picked on, they often were ignored: "The kids never talked to the students in special education, it was kind of like being a nerd in school where no one will talk to you - no one acknowledges you, that you are alive." This year Teacher D noticed a big difference in the interactions between students in general and special education: "Now they would go up to them in the hallways, now they dance with them at dances. Before they would sit on the side, now they are out there dancing with everyone and having a good time." Teacher D has received emails from parents that inform her how the club has made such a huge difference in the lives of their children with disabilities: "The kids are excited to go to school now – the difference is night and day." She shared that there is no amount of money that can make your students have friends and now, her students have friends – they write

letters, they form relationships, they make friends. Overall, she found that, “One of the best things from this experience is that regardless of these ‘differences,’ everyone gets treated the same.”

It is important to point out that similar to the elementary school, the issue of adults at the school having difficulty with students with disabilities and special education surfaced again in both School D and School E. In Teacher D’s club, the students wanted to do the *Get Into It* activities with staff members to enhance their awareness of disability. At Teacher E’s school, there was resistance among the teachers about having students with disabilities in their classrooms. Many of the teachers complained or were upset because they did not want to have “those students” in their room or do “more work.”

In addition to interviewing teachers about the perceived impact of the *Get Into It* resources, the evaluation team had the opportunity to interview select students regarding their experience with the materials. School E was one of the sites selected for student interviews. The major goal of the student interviews was to hear from the students, in their own words, what they learned from *Get Into It*. In prior evaluations, student surveys had been used to capture this information, but students’ messages were often unclear. By speaking directly with students, they were able to clearly share their thoughts regarding *Get Into It*. Teacher E’s students were interviewed across all three classes of Teen Leadership to gather an understanding of what they learned from the material. A total of 33 students were interviewed out of the 53 students that were available. Content from the interviews was consolidated and the results will be discussed surrounding the themes: 1) What students learned about people with disabilities; 2) What students learned about the treatment of people with disabilities; 3) What students learned about the R-word; and 4) The reasons why other students should receive *Get Into It* instruction.

What Students Learned About People with Disabilities. During the interviews, students were asked to share what they had learned from the *Get Into It* class sessions. In each interview, students immediately began to provide insight into what they learned about specific disabilities – what the names of the different disabilities were, some facts about the different disabilities, and how it might impact a person’s life. It is important to remember that Teacher E had modified the resources and geared instruction to provide students with information about disabilities, therefore the students demonstrated that they retained the specific content. Furthermore, the students shared whether this was new material or if they knew about it previously. Some students shared that this was the first time that they learned and talked about disabilities – it was brand new and that they had not heard of certain types of disabilities previously such as Asperger’s Syndrome (see Table 11). Other students shared that the information presented added to an already established awareness of disability, “I’ve known about them [disabilities], but I didn’t really know what they meant - what caused them and stuff like that.” Students often repeated the idea that they heard about some disabilities or disabilities in general, but that they did not necessarily understand the details. When it came to the actual details about disabilities, not all students retained correct information. While the majority of the time students demonstrated concrete knowledge about disabilities and could associate certain disabilities with certain characteristics (e.g. autism and difficulties with social interactions), other times students had difficulty demonstrating correct knowledge about disabilities. In these cases, students had confused or incorrect knowledge – for instance, thinking that intellectual disabilities and learning disabilities were the same thing, or assuming that all people with Asperger’s are experts on model cars and dinosaurs.

Table 11. Examples of student knowledge about disabilities from interviews.

Theme	Examples
Built my own knowledge about disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I actually never knew there was an Asperger syndrome. So when I came into class one day, and they were like Asperger syndrome, I was like ‘What are you talking about?’ I didn’t know what they were talking about. Then I got online and actually looked it up. It was actually a disability that you could have and there’s a lot to learn about it. So, we got to learn about all different kinds like Down syndrome, autism, and stuff like that.” • “I knew about them but I didn’t know what they were. I didn’t understand it. Like with autism, I thought it was interesting to actually know what it was instead of not knowing. [Be]cause I felt really weird that I didn’t know, when they’d be like ‘Oh, so-and-so has autism’ and I don’t really know what that is, and like on TV they are all, ‘Autism awareness’ and I didn’t know what that was and now I do.”
Established Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I [was assigned] ID and they have a lower IQ, learn slower. There are mild and severe cases, so some people don’t need help and others need help.” • “We learned about Asperger’s and autism and how they have trouble speaking and interacting with other people.” • “I had to research LD and I learned that it can affect your reading and writing.”

What Students Learned about the Treatment of People with Disabilities. Coinciding with their knowledge of different disabilities, students focused their discussions during the interviews on how to treat people with disabilities. Overall, students continually expressed themes of kindness and acceptance of individuals with disabilities (see Table 12). Students shared that people with disabilities are human just like everyone else, and that having a disability did not make the person any different. Students stressed that others should accept them as such and continually emphasized that we should not judge others especially based on superficial traits without knowing that person first. Furthermore, students echoed the idea that as people, we must treat others how we would want to be treated. One student shared,

“People with disabilities, they didn’t choose to be born with disabilities, and I’m sure it is already hard enough for them to live and everything without [other] people being like ‘Oh, so-and-so is weird.’ Just look at them as normal people because you could have been born that way with that kind of disability. So, just look at them as normal people instead of treating them like a kid or something, just treat them like normal people.”

Students suggested that people should get to know the person with a disability as an individual; they should interact with the person, make friends with them, even stand up for them if they were in trouble. These were mature responses coming from a group of students who had not necessarily had the opportunity to interact with individuals with disabilities at their school.

Table 12. Student examples of lessons learned about the treatment of individuals with disabilities.

Theme	Examples
We are the same, differences don't matter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "That everyone is just the same, even if they have a disability, it doesn't make them any different." • "We talked a lot about disabilities and how to accept people with them and instead of looking at them as somebody different because they aren't really that different from us, they just have a disability."
Don't judge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Not to judge people. They are human beings, they have feelings too, and we judge people right off the bat. You know, I judged, but then I caught myself, and said she is a human being, and just has challenges." • "I think that you can't judge a book from its cover. You can't really judge a person unless you personally know them."
Treat people with respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Everyone is the same, so treat everyone equally." • "Not to treat other people differently just because they have a disability. They are people exactly like you, and you should treat them how you treat everyone. Just be nice."
Get to know the individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Show everyone who these people really are. Can't just go based off the one single person. Just like if we put one single race together. You don't look at the race based on one person. You get to know each person as an individual. Look at them for their characteristics."
Interact and make friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We should get people to know them more because they don't interact with them in school. If we tell our friends to help spread the word, and then people would interact with them more." • "We could try to be a better friend and introduce ourselves to the kids with disabilities."
Stand up for what is right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We should try to help, kind of stick up for them. Maybe we could make a club to help people with disabilities, or to do volunteer work so everyone can understand." • "If I did know a kid with a disability who was being picked on, I would stick up for them, and be friends with them. Although it is not really socially acceptable, but it is different in 7th vs. 8th grade."

What Students Learned about the R-Word. Students also focused their responses on what they had learned about the term "retarded," which was discussed during their *Get Into It* lessons. Overall, students expressed that 'retarded' is accepted and is a norm in our society, "You hear the r-word every day, it's just another word for 'you're acting stupid.'" (see Table 13). Although the use of the term is the norm, students stated it was still wrong and people should not use it. "No one really cares about how people say retarded, but it's really offensive. We hear about other words that are very offensive and no one really cares if we use retarded and stuff. We never really think about that." Often students likened the term to other derogatory words, such as "faggot," "gay," or "the n-word" all of which they knew should not be used. Students shared how *Get Into It* has helped them to understand what the term means, "I've known it's not nice to call people stuff, but this class actually got really into it. I understand the meaning and how hurtful it can be." Furthermore, students often brought up what they would do if

they heard another person use the r-word now. Many students shared that they personally have made an effort to not use the word anymore and that they speak out to others who do use it. One student captured the entire message during his interview,

“It is so common and people don’t think anything of it, but if you said ‘Hey, watch what you’re saying,’ if you make them think about it, then that’s when it will stop. If you know what the definition of the word is and if you know what they go through every day and what they’ve been through, but right now they just see it as stupid.”

Table 13. Student examples of R-Word lessons learned from *Get Into It*.

Theme	Examples
Accepted as the norm, but it shouldn’t be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I realized how much people use the R-word.” • “It’s more socially acceptable, but it is really not. People just kind of let it go because they know that someone means, ‘this is stupid’ it doesn’t mean someone actually is retarded, they just mean it sucks or something.”
It is offensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You don’t want to say that cause people get offended.” • “I don’t use the r-word anymore because I know it is insulting to people with mental challenges.”
My actions now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I can go down the hall and I’ll hear like ‘Oh, that’s so retarded’ or ‘This is so retarded.’ Then after I learned about this stuff, I was like that really is kind of a messed up word. I try not to use that word that much, but you know it’s a habit. I’ve done better about it, or I’ll use alternative words, like ‘Oh, that’s so stupid.’ But if I hear someone around me, I’ll be like ‘Don’t use that around me.’” • “I knew about disabilities, but I wasn’t the nicest person. I used to call people retarded just talking to friends, but I don’t do it anymore. I try to be a good example for my sisters and tell people to stop saying it. I feel more comfortable standing up to my friends, and this class has really helped me.”

The Reasons Why Others Should Learn Get Into It. Finally, the middle school students offered insight as to why others should learn from *Get Into It*. Students thought it was important for a number of reasons. In general, they thought it helped them to gain life skills and taught them how to get along and help others. One student shared,

“I think it is pretty important. People at our school, a lot of them, are extremely mean. And, there are some kids who, I don’t know for sure, but I think they might have a special disability, and those are the ones that they are all ‘Oh gosh, those kids are so weird.’ If more people knew, even the kids might have more friends, and it could help them a lot because everyone might try and be their friend instead of being like ‘Oh, you are so weird,’ and so I think if everyone was educated about it they’d be more open to talking to them and actually getting to know them.”

The following captures a sentiment shared by many students. That is, once people begin to understand and are aware of disabilities, then they can begin to change their attitudes and behaviors. Another student offered an astute statement exemplifying that through education we as a society can change how others think and act:

“As a society, it is important. I think it should be standard within schools - all kids should be taught about [disabilities], just so that they are more aware. I don’t think the problem is going to go away as the years go on. So the more educated people are about it though the more like I said earlier, the more open they’ll be to it. I also think it shouldn’t just focus on special needs kids. It should be for everyone...That’s what I kind of think. I definitely think that people should be educated, and if in the schools kids were brought up more, starting with everything equal and whatever, then when they grow up they’ll have those morals and they’ll teach it to their kids and so on and so forth and then it will improve with that...”

In summary, one middle school teacher was involved with Special Olympics and used the resources to supplement Project UNIFY activities. All of the activities used at the school came together to highlight the students with disabilities on her school campus so they would belong within the school and not be an outside group. She wanted her students to be visible, accepted at school, and to have friends. The other teacher was unique in that she did not have any prior involvement with Special Olympics and the school did not provide services to students with moderate to severe disabilities. From her perspective, she wanted students to know and be aware of different disabilities that they may come across in their lives, although they may or may not have done so already. Also important she wanted her students to treat those individuals with respect. The students mirrored much of what their teacher tried to teach and felt as though the class was a meaningful experience. They had gathered some knowledge about specific disabilities, they could share how they are supposed to treat people with disabilities, and they offered insights as to why it was an important lesson to learn. The students were brave to share that they often thought of someone with a disability as weird and that they might not want to be friends with that person, and these students were also courageous to state that people need to stand up for people with disabilities, interact with them, and make friends. In order to build upon these hypothetical experiences, it would have been useful to see these particular students meet and work with individuals with disabilities.

C. High Schools

1. Who are the high school level educators using the *Get Into It* materials and what are their reasons for doing so?

Lastly, five Project UNIFY high schools (Schools F-J, see Table 14) participated in this phase of the evaluation. All of the teachers from these schools were special educators in a range of classrooms that included moderate to life skills and were responsible for Project UNIFY activities at the school.

Teacher F has taught special education for several years in South Carolina and has personally been involved with Special Olympics since college. Teacher F used *Get Into It* because the department chairperson asked if she would try it out with her students as part of a grant requirement. This was the first year the *Get Into It* resources were used at the school. Teacher G had taught adaptive physical education for over 30 years in Illinois and has had a long-standing relationship with Special Olympics. Teacher G stated that inclusion is highly supported at her school. Teacher H is a special education teacher in Hawaii and also had an established relationship with Special Olympics, starting the Special Olympics program at her school about 10 years ago. Her reason for using *Get Into It* was to educate the students without disabilities, faculty, and the community about individuals with disabilities and to foster an inclusive school environment. Teacher I is a special education teacher in Texas and has been in the field for 11 years. Teacher J works at a high school in Colorado and has taught for just over 5 years.

Table 14. High school teacher and class assignment information

	Teacher F	Teacher G	Teacher H	Teacher I	Teacher J
State	So. Carolina	Illinois	Hawaii	Texas	Colorado
Project UNIFY	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education	Special Education	Special Education	Special Education	Special Education	Special Education
Setting	SDC	Phys. Education	SDC	SDC	SDC
Classroom	Mod. Special Needs	Inclusion PE	Life Skills	Life Skills	Significant Limitations/ Unified PE
Class size	15	20-30	12	12	13
SO Involvement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Motivation	Grant requirement	Assist with inclusion	Assist with inclusion	Assist with inclusion	Grant Requirement
Resource	<i>Get Into It</i> K-12	<i>Get Into It</i> K-12	<i>Get Into It</i> K-12	<i>Get Into It</i> Active	<i>Get Into It</i> K-12

2. Which *Get Into It* resources are being used by the high school educators and how are they being implemented?

Each of the five teachers used the *Get Into It* resources with a blend of students with and without disabilities. The setting in which it was used varied from a club setting, PE classes, and a period that blended leadership students with special education students. The following section provides more detail about implementation of the resources in the settings.

Teachers F, H, and I used the *Get Into It* resources with students in a classroom setting. Teacher F used the K-12 lessons with 24 students in the Teen Leadership elective class and the 15 students with disabilities who attend the moderate special-needs class. The students in the Teen Leadership class were

considered to be leaders of the school – mostly upper classman who attend advanced academic classes, are involved in athletics, and/or involved in student council. Teacher F met with the students 1 to 2 times per week for 45 minutes. Typically, the structure involved the delivery of a lesson followed by a sports activity. Overall, she used the lessons as a way to build relationships among students in general and special education. Teacher H took ideas from the *Get Into It* K-12 lessons and modified it for her classroom needs. She presented the material in two settings; first the material was presented to the Project UNIFY club and she also presented the material to a Pathways class that included students without disabilities working alongside students with disabilities. Lastly, Teacher I used *Get Into It* Active with the 12 students with disabilities attending the Life Skills class alongside 6 athletes without disabilities that came into her classroom during their study hall time as members of the Meet In the Middle club. Her goal was to encourage students to get to know one another on a personal level rather than only doing sports together.

Teachers G and Teacher J used the *Get Into It* K-12 lessons as part of a physical education class that enrolled students with and without disabilities, and also had a Special Olympics focus. Teacher G's implementation was varied and often changed depending on the demands of the environment. For instance, sometimes the students did activities straight from the lessons while other times they added to the lessons based on student concerns. Teacher G continually challenged her students to think about what they could do to encourage social progress for students with disabilities and also stressed the similarities between students with and without disabilities and educated her students about disabilities. Similarly, Teacher J used the *Get Into It* K-12 complete lessons with the Unified Sports PE class which had 17 students without disabilities (16 girls and 1 boy) and 13 students with disabilities (1 girl and 12 boys). The students without disabilities were referred to as "the leaders of the school - the students who were cheerleaders, on sports teams, or were in student council." Teacher J would teach 45 minute *Get Into It* lessons once per week in the classroom and then all of the students would come together to work on various activities. She started with the lessons designed for K – 2 and progressed through each of the grade levels throughout the year. Teacher J incorporated her own content similar to Teacher G. For instance, her course started with an introduction to special education including the history and laws surrounding special education, and also included student reports and presentations on disabilities, and class projects that extended to the whole school.

3. What was the impact of *Get Into It* on the high school teachers and students?

Since working with students and the *Get Into It* resources, the teachers all witnessed a number of positive changes. First, many of the teachers reflected on changes that occurred among the students without disabilities toward their peers with disabilities from their first encounter at the beginning of the year to the end of the school year. Commonly stated was that the students without disabilities felt uncomfortable and even scared when they first began to work with students with disabilities. Specifically, Teacher F commented that students without disabilities were often uncomfortable and at first it was difficult for them. Many of her students even shared that they were scared of the students with disabilities and reluctant to work with them. Teacher I reported that initially students were unsure

about how to react to the students with disabilities and they felt uncomfortable. Similarly, Teacher H stated that, “At first they were so frightened by them. They thought the inappropriate behavior looked different and they were really scared.”

Although the initial reactions among the students without disabilities were at times negative, the teachers shared how the students without disabilities changed as they became more familiar and comfortable with the students with disabilities. Students in Teacher F’s class reflected on their experience and reported that it had changed their lives. Students reported that they learned to not judge others because everyone deserves equality. Teacher F commented that after *Get Into It* she would go in the hallway and see students with and without disabilities giving each other high fives and greeting one another. Teacher F also reported that two of her students without disabilities were now interested in becoming special education teachers. Overall, she saw that the students without disabilities would go out of their way to say hi to her students. Teacher H echoed this sentiment with her Pathways class. By the end of the program, the students would have fun together; they had discovered their similar interests in music and/or sports, and they became more accepting of the students with disabilities, “even saying hi to them on campus.”

All of the teachers shared that the students with disabilities were recognized at the school and were included more after this experience. Teacher H found that at first her class was treated as a separate entity on the school campus, like “You guys do your own thing and we are the other population,” while now they are included as part of the school. She emphasized that, “Our special needs population at School I are students FIRST, that is how they are treated – not separate like we are the regular education and you are special education. They are pretty much accepted.” Teacher H noted that she tries very hard to ensure that the students with disabilities are visible on campus by, “eating lunch with the other students, going to assemblies.” She feels that, “The more they educate others and the more others understand them and that they are just like them with the same desires and interests, then they are more accepting.” Before Teacher I started the Meet In the Middle club she would volunteer the students with disabilities attending her class to do things in the school but often these efforts were unsuccessful in providing opportunities for students to form relationships among students without disabilities. Teacher I commented that during bake sales, for example, students without disabilities would come up and talk to her instead of her students. After Meet in the Middle activities, she finally had the tools to bring the students with and without disabilities together and relationships were formed:

“Now when we sell cookies – they talk to my students, they know them by name – it is a world of difference. They sit with the athletes and they are accepted. I’ve been doing this[teaching for] 11 years and that just didn’t happen. My kids didn’t mix. It’s just not like that anymore. It is awesome. We have kids come in the classroom and they’ll come in and want to get cookies. Before you wouldn’t have a typically developing kid come in the life skills classroom - they were scared to do that.”

Some of the teachers found that *Get Into It* provided a unique opportunity to reach out to and involve the students that had the potential to make a difference. For instance, Teacher H felt that the students without disabilities who participated in the Project UNIFY club or Pathways club were those who had the

capability to deliver the message to the rest of the student body due to their roles on campus. Teacher H discussed the impact of “leaders” at school. She hoped to try and “get the ‘popular’ kids on campus to work with our students, so their peers visually can see them do it. Just think if we got the football team on board. If peers see it, they would think ‘Wow, I want to get involved with it too.’” Teacher J reiterated this sentiment and suggested that the students without disabilities in her Unified PE class were considered the leaders of the school. They, both the students without disabilities and Teacher J, worked to spread the Unified message throughout the school.

Some of the high school teachers and students without disabilities raised concerns about adult and other students’ behaviors at the school. Teacher H found it hard to get the general education teachers involved at her school. Furthermore, even though School J is regarded as a pioneer in the district for inclusion and are regarded as aggressive in pursuing inclusionary models, some staff are not even aware of what the R-word is or why it is considered inappropriate. Additionally, some students were concerned about the treatment of students with disabilities; in particular, how some individuals would ‘overly help’ the students, hold their hands, and use baby talk.

Overall, the high school teachers agreed that the experience of bringing together students with and without disabilities was an extremely positive experience. The students with disabilities became more visible within the schools and were more accepted by their peers without disabilities. The students without disabilities learned a valuable lesson in how to treat others who may be perceived as ‘different’. Every teacher involved hoped that this was a lesson the students would keep for the rest of their lives and spread to their peers in the future.

As mentioned previously, in addition to interviewing teachers, the evaluation team also had the opportunity to interview select students from Teacher J’s school. A total of 4 high school students without disabilities were interviewed from the Unified PE class. These students echoed much of what was shared by teachers, but did so in their own voice. The following is a brief discussion of the student responses and themes with student examples presented in Table 15.

“When you don’t know anything about disabilities, you don’t know how to act when people with disabilities are around you.”

The students interviewed continually referenced how individuals with disabilities are treated in society and that many of the barriers that exist are due to ignorance. Commonly discussed was ignorance in general about disabilities, and also in regard to how to react to and treat a person with a disability. The students often spoke about how people are scared and are unsure how to respond to a student with a disability. For example, one girl mentioned, “We learned how people, how society, sees everything. If a student walks by and someone is having a tantrum outside, the person will start freaking out because they don’t understand. I think we all have our moments, they [students with disabilities’] just have them in different ways.” It is this process she refers to that demonstrated her mature understanding of disability.

“This class opened my eyes, I see things differently.”

The students without disabilities continually shared how the Unified PE class had brought awareness to their lives that they did not have previously. For instance, one student shared that she had previously volunteered with people with disabilities. However, during the volunteer work she tended to baby them. After taking the class, she did not baby the students with disabilities anymore. She treated them no differently than she would treat herself or her peers without disabilities. Furthermore, students stressed the importance of spreading awareness to others. All the students shared that people should be educated about disabilities either through assemblies or classes. Something important to each of these students was how they could work to try to change how others think. The class legacy project was important to them and focused on the use of the r-word.

“What stands out to me is how to treat people with disabilities.”

A common theme discussed among the students was that everyone should be treated fairly. The students with disabilities should be treated just as you would treat another person whether it means accepting them into your social lives or if it means establishing appropriate social boundaries for the students. Obviously each of the students shared that they wanted other students and people in the world to accept people with disabilities and to not “sit there and stare at them,” or be “scared and intimidated” but rather to feel comfortable with saying hello and making friends.

“Before I was in this class, I wouldn’t really interact with [students with disabilities], like I would see people being scared, and honestly, I was a little too. I wouldn’t know what to do and so I learned don’t judge them based on how they look and when I got into this class – there’s nothing to be scared of. They are just normal people. And so I just help other people understand that they are really nice.”

At the same time, the students also brought up that the students with disabilities often need behavioral reminders as to what is and is not appropriate, and that it is not always appropriate to, “just be nice and let them get away with it” nor should they treat them as babies. The students without disabilities also reflected on their personal experience interacting with the students with disabilities attending the class. All thought that the interaction component is critical to allow other people to understand disability and to begin to see those who have disabilities are just like themselves. The students felt that the class had personally changed them, and to hear the pride and joy in their voices when they speak about the class and their friends in the class was remarkable:

“People should be more educated on it... [be]cause these kids, they can change your life, and they just, instead of you helping them, they kind of help you, too. This is my favorite class during the whole day and it’s like, when I’m having a bad day and I come to this class, I can’t help but laugh and smile because they bring joy to me.”

One student reflected on her entire experience with students with disabilities from childhood, at other schools, to the present. Her story is poignant in that she touches on many issues that come up in special education:

“Well, I moved to Colorado my freshman year. Growing up, I think there was 1 student with a disability and I’d known him ever since I was little. I would look at him differently; I would think he was so different. But it was cause, I didn’t really interact with him. At my last high school, we had special education students, but I wasn’t in any classes with them, like I didn’t really talk to them. They just keep the kids in this hall by themselves, no one really knows them. I would look at them so differently, and I didn’t really understand, I didn’t know. If another kid would say hi to me, I wouldn’t say hi, I would be scared to. And that was how it was when I first came to [School J] cause the kids are all over the school here. They are really involved in everything. So when I would see them and they would say hi to me, I would be scared to and wouldn’t say hi back and I wouldn’t know...I would treat them like little kids [but] they are literally just like us. Yea, they are different, but we are still the same.”

This young woman was willing to admit that she used to look at students with disabilities differently and was sometimes scared of them. She even noted that at her last school the students receiving special education services were down the hall away from everyone where no one knew them. She was able to see the difference at her high school now because the kids were everywhere and in the “normal” classes. She learned to not be afraid of the students with disabilities and they are similar to everyone else. All of these details combined into one experience for this student is priceless and if all 13 students in the Unified PE class walked away the experience she had, then they all have had an exceptional learning experience from *Get Into It*.

Table 15. Themes in high school interviews and student examples.

Theme	Examples
Ignorance in Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I feel like people do notice them, I mean, they say hi to them, but they don’t really take the time to talk to them and interact with them. There are either ignorant people, who really don’t know about it, and there are people who try to be nice, but they don’t really know how to act.”
Awareness and Spreading Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “We have this campaign we do every year, kind of like a legacy we leave behind, and this year we were really big on the R-word, we made bracelets and sold them, and I think it really, the whole school has got into that.” “People should be educated on how to interact with the kids, not to be scared, cause like a lot of students, when they see them in the hall, they won’t say hi to them or if the kids say hi to them, they are scared to respond to them and like we think they should know how to treat them. I think everyone should have to take these classes even for 1 semester.”
Equal Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I think it is very important. Cause when, us seniors, that are graduating, go to the real world and we see people with disabilities, we will know how to treat them, interact with them, instead of just standing there and staring like other people do.” “I used to go to the rec center and there was a family that had 2 disabled kids in their family. This boy came out of the room and he punched me in my face. I got really mad. But I didn’t do anything. You think you are supposed to be really nice to them, but they are supposed to get some sort of discipline, and now I know that. I know Teacher J says, “No, you do have to tell them, so they know not to do it to other people or to you.” Before, you know, you see them, and you either stare, and now I see, when they talk to me and stuff, it is different. It’s just, you don’t really, you think you are supposed to act a certain way with them, but you are just supposed to be yourself with them.” “It’s not exactly what I thought it would be, cause before I didn’t have any knowledge whatsoever about how to work with the kids, and now it’s like we don’t baby the kids and that is what I thought it was, you know what I mean. I didn’t have any knowledge whatsoever. At first I was like “Oh yea so-and-so” (in baby voice) like a baby, but now it’s like they are no different from us. So you know, you just have to have a whole lot of patience with them.”
Experiences and interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I just think interacting with kids with disabilities will help, make it like a bigger concept for the community. I think it has to do a lot with experience. I mean, you could tell a story and people would be like ‘oh, ok’ but they won’t get it [be]cause they wouldn’t have experienced it.” “I feel like when we interact with the kids and others see us, they are like “Whoa, that is kind of cool.” This class is taking part and we interact with the kids and if people knew just a little bit more about it, they would understand more. People need to be ready to have this class...have some kind of education. Cause some people, I feel like, come to this class unprepared and they don’t have the patience.”

V. Conclusions

With so much focus today placed on academics, meeting standards, and what students need to learn to be successful adults in the twenty-first century, it is easy to forget about the social development of students. Although academics are crucial for success in today's workforce, teachers should still encourage all students socially - to get along with one another, to be compassionate, and to foster appropriate social environments. Individuals with disabilities are a group that, historically, has been marginalized. Special educators are known to fight for the rights of their students; not just their right to a free and appropriate education, but also their right to be treated as individuals and not second-class citizens in their schools. The common message taken away from all of the educators who used *Get Into It* is that it provides a much-needed forum within schools; a forum for general educators to gain confidence in creating an inclusive environment, a forum for students without disabilities to learn about disability, a forum for students with and without disabilities to come together and build relationships. It is this awareness that starts with a teacher or group of teachers who have a personal mission for the rights of individuals in special education and then cascades to the students in the class. The lessons learned from the experiences of the individuals who participated in the evaluation are summarized in this section including future recommendations.

The voices of the students involved in this evaluation resonated loudly. The students in middle and high school shared that while they may have known about disability, they did not really understand it. This is an unsettling thought; there are cohorts of students without disabilities leaving school that do not understand, or are not even truly aware of the various disabilities that exist in our schools and society. Specifically, there were teachers who noticed, and students who shared, that they felt uncomfortable, were scared of people with disabilities, and were unsure as to how to act toward a student with a disability. This was common across multiple states. How do we expect youth to join a workforce made up of people with differentiated needs or be a responsible member of society if this is how they truly feel? Surely, educators are doing students a disservice if they do not know how to respond and react to disability. *Get Into It* was beneficial for schools because it provided a forum for students to begin to talk - to start to ask questions and to learn about something that was unknown to them before. Having that door open, allowing the honest conversation to begin, and having discussions about prejudices and discrimination all demonstrate that these particular teachers were taking critical steps forward.

Information gathered from the surveys demonstrated that it was typical for the teacher who used the *Get Into It* resources to be affiliated with Special Olympics. Although it is great to see that Special Olympics affiliates find the materials useful, this is a resource that can be extended and used by non-Special Olympics affiliates since there are messages contained within it that are important for all people. Educators used the resources due to their ability to foster acceptance for individuals with disabilities, assist with inclusion, promote acceptance of diversity, and to foster relationships among students with and without disabilities. Special Olympics should consider marketing *Get Into It* to more educators through the use of conferences and/or organizations to expand their audience. One of the first steps in this direction has been the use of recruitment at character education conferences. Future conferences that might be appealing are those that deal with issues on diversity and tolerance education, and also presenting information about *Get Into It* at national special education conferences.

In terms of implementation of the resources at school, the responsibility of teaching the resources often fell upon the shoulders of one teacher. However, there were cases when collaboration was built between special and general education. As Special Olympics begins to talk about *Get Into It* to other teachers, they should stress the benefits of such a union in the schools. It is collaboration among a team of adults that allows the program to build. If teachers in schools need recommendations in terms of when to implement the resources, lessons from the teachers in the evaluation demonstrate that *Get Into It* can be incorporated into physical education, teen leadership, and special education partnership courses. Even the morning announcements are used in many schools to deliver the *Get Into It* message. The main message from many teachers was that they did not want the use of *Get Into It* and its messaging to be limited in the school but rather wanted the information to be spread to all staff and students. The goal should be to reach a large population of students in order to realize the wide-spread effects of the resources.

Previously, there were no particular recommendations as to with whom *Get Into It* should be used. However based on information during this evaluation the materials were often used with both students with and without disabilities. In these instances the blend of both content and experience created a unique learning experience for all students presenting an ideal scenario for *Get Into It* implementation. Content can be taught to students without disabilities about others with disabilities, similarities between students with and without disabilities can be recognized through the lessons, and relationships can be maintained as students with and without disabilities work together on activities. It is this unique blend of instruction and experience that makes *Get Into It* an advantageous program to incorporate into schools, especially schools where inclusion is fostered.

VI. Instructional Recommendations

A. General Lesson Guidelines

When using the *Get Into It* resources, many teachers seek advice or inquire as to how best to incorporate their materials into their classrooms or schools. The teachers in the in-depth classrooms were asked to share their instructional techniques in regard to the educational resources. What did they adjust in their lessons? What concepts resonated well with their students? The present section aims to describe some general instructional aspects of the *Get Into It* lessons.

Classroom Management. As any teacher will share, effective classroom management is essential in a classroom. In each of the classes the evaluation team worked with, the teacher had clear and effective classroom management with minimal behavioral challenges presented in the class. Many of the concepts discussed require maturity and reflection among the students. In classes where student behavior is not maintained, then the ability to have adult-like discussions is limited by lack of engagement or ability to take the concepts seriously.

Lesson Structure: Reviews and Clear Learning Targets. Student schedules are full with the various subjects they attend throughout the day. As expected, students in these classes had a difficult time distinguishing *Get Into It* content from other content they received in class. Teacher reviews at the beginning of the lesson helped to focus student thoughts and remind them of the specific content they will learn from *Get Into It*. Furthermore, the most effective *Get Into It* lessons were those that were streamlined and had clear learning targets. Some teachers presented instructional goals for their students and always made them known to the students by asking reflective questions such as “What are our targets for today?”; “Tell me why we are learning this?”; all of which helped to focus student energy, especially among elementary and middle school students.

B. Common Pitfalls

As teachers began working with the content in *Get Into It*, there were some potential areas that became pitfalls or difficult areas while teaching. This is something to consider for future development because *Get Into It* does not come with any guidelines or “warning labels”. The following section discusses some common pitfalls that are easily fixed while teaching.

Special Education Knowledge. A lack of specific knowledge about special education is sometimes problematic among teachers using content from *Get Into It*. Special educators go through specific credentialing programs that are geared to teach them about special education and how to work with individuals with disabilities. Given that many general educators do not have this core fundamental knowledge, they may have certain challenges while teaching. Although these teachers may have good intentions, it is unclear if a teacher with limited special education knowledge can begin teaching from *Get Into It* without consulting special education personnel. For instance, two key areas that came up this year dealt with Special Education Terminology and Special Education Content.

Terminology: Anyone involved in the field of Special Education knows that they are a number of terms, phrases, and acronyms in the field involved (e.g., IEP, IDEA, FAPE, RtI). Many terms, phrases, or concepts that are known among special educators are not appropriately addressed during instructional lessons if the general educator is teaching. For instance, people-first language is a known concept among special educators. However while general educators are teaching about disabilities or leading discussions about disabilities they are often referring to the individual with a disability as the “autistic kid” or “the mentally retarded kid” which is perpetuating a cycle of language that *Get Into It* is trying to avoid among a new generation of students. Furthermore in many classrooms, teachers referenced “Mental Retardation” as opposed to “Intellectual Disability” when discussing cognitive impairments. Some general educators were unaware of the language shift in special education. Additionally, teachers often flipped back and forth between referring to individuals with disabilities as “Handicapped,” “disabled,” or “special needs.” For students who are learning about disabilities for the first time, all of these terms are confusing for them, which was often exemplified in their interviews. For example, some students would ask, “How do you refer to them?” Teachers should stick with clear, concise, and correct language, especially for younger students.

Special Education Content: Continuing the Cycle of Misinformation. Without having the personal framework of fundamental special education knowledge to refer to, it was often hard for some teachers to provide students with information, answer student questions, and divert students away from incorrect information. For instance, students were discussing how certain toxin exposure causes autism, however, we know that this is not the case, yet the students were not corrected. Another example involved a student describing Asperger’s to his peers as “This is when you get obsessed with things and don’t stop talking about it for two weeks or so.” Giving students the responsibility to research and learn about a disability independently or in groups is an excellent way to have the students be active and start to ask questions. However, special guidance or scaffolded techniques should be provided to avoid student misinformation, especially given the student’s personal knowledge or awareness of disability. For instance, limit the websites that students can search for disability knowledge, limit the questions asked to those that are specific and concrete such that students can easily find the answers. Moreover, it is necessary that difficult word definitions are explained before they are encountered while doing research. Use videos and pictures to assist in understanding what a disability is.

Driving Similarities, Not Differences. It is a fine line to walk, but many special educators will tell you how important it is to highlight the similarities between students with and without disabilities as opposed to the differences among them. However differences can quite easily be inadvertently highlighted when discussing disabilities, what they are, and how it makes that person function differently than you. Although fundamental knowledge is important, it is also important for teachers to bring these lessons full circle and end with the clear message that regardless of the aspects of this particular disability, this person is still like you and these are the reasons why.

The Goldilocks Lesson: “It was just right”. There should be an equal blend between both content and experience in order to create a meaningful learning environment. In the situation where only *Get Into It* content is given with limited to no experience, students have an extremely difficult time concretizing what they are learning especially if they have never seen or spoken to someone with a disability. There is absolutely no frame of reference for them to understand, which makes the message somewhat meaningless for the students. On the other hand, sometimes only experience with individuals with disabilities is given and no content is provided. This does not provide students with the opportunity to learn about disabilities, the appropriate ways to interact with someone, and it does not provide a place to discuss what they are learning while working with the students. The classroom should function to provide a place that provides both experience and content that is “just right.”