



# Shredding the “R” Word TOOLKIT

A Step-by-Step Guide to  
Planning an Interactive  
Student Presentation  
Negating the Power of the  
“R” Word, Stereotypes,  
and Bullying

# Negating the Power of the “R” Word, Stereotypes, and Bullying...

It all began with a partnership between the *Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC)* and *The Arc Maryland*, the leading statewide advocacy organization dedicated to the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Both organizations faced the challenge of doing something about BULLYING.

What can you do – what can your school or youth group do? Awareness of the damage bullying can do; the forms it takes; when is teasing really bullying; even if you don’t mean to hurt someone, ***it hurts.***

What better way to show visually, up close and personal - **stop the use of hateful and shameful names –SHRED the “R” Word!**

## TOOLS and MATERIALS NEEDED

Here are tools you will need – along with photos of people who actually made up their mind to shred the “R” word and other hurtful names:

- Paper Shredder(s)
- Paper (enough sheets for all audience members)
- Markers
- Sample Welcome Script (page 4)
- Sample Script (by Ken Capone on page 5)
- Student Script (page 6)
- Videos (see page 8 for details)
  - “Offense Taken” – 30 minute or 10 minute versions available
  - “R” Means RESPECT – 30 seconds (details page 7)

# Presentation Agenda



1. Student and a person with intellectual or developmental disability welcome students to the event. (See sample script for Assembly Coordinator on page 4.)

2. The person with an intellectual disability or developmental disability presents awareness about their disability – to put a face on a real person with disabilities and help students identify with a real individual.

*Note: Ken Capone, Coordinator of Public Policy for People on The Go, is often available to participate in assemblies. His contact information and a sample script are on page 5.*

3. Student Script on Shredding (*page 6*) and introduction of Video presentation.

4. Video presentation (*page 8 for more information*)

**“Offense Taken”\* (30 minute or 10 minute versions available)**

5. Shredding Demonstration – students are asked to write a word they have used or been called and shred it! Students are invited to share their word and feelings behind experience.

6. Video Presentation

**“R” means Respect - BlueBerryShoes (30 seconds)**

[www.blueberryshoes.com](http://www.blueberryshoes.com)

7. Student and person with intellectual or developmental disability thank everyone for their commitment and participation.

# Sample Script for Assembly Coordinator

By Cristine Marchand, Former Executive Director, The Arc Maryland

Why are we doing this now? October is proclaimed by our Governor as Disability Education and Awareness Month. Throughout history, we know that when people seem different to us that it is easier to make fun of them, discriminate against them, and make them seem 'less than' us. We do this out of ignorance and fear of someone different. Once we learn about or meet a real person with new traits, our fear and ignorance can turn into respect and friendship.

People with disabilities for centuries have been teased, hurt, isolated from society, and even killed because of their disability. Hundreds of thousands of children were once locked away in large institutions simply because of their disability. There was no support to their family – and many families were ashamed and put their child in an institution or kept them at home isolated. New laws and rights to public education have changed that! Today we see people with disabilities in our classrooms and schools, jobs, church, and community groups. But still – even today – people with disabilities are looked at as a target for bullying – simply because they appear or act differently.

Bullying – pair bullying with disability and you have the perfect storm. Today we want to do something about it. As we use October to learn about disabilities, we will learn about how a simple word many of us use many times a day – the word 'retard' is all about bullying, a way to make someone feel 'less than,' and hurts. People with disabilities are not the only people who experience bullying – and today we will learn what each of you can do to change hurtful words into positive change. Thank you.

## The “R” Word by Ken Capone



*Ken Capone is the Coordinator of Public Policy for “People on The Go of Maryland” – a self-advocates program of The Arc Maryland. To make arrangements for Ken to participate in your assembly, please contact him at [ken@poqmd.org](mailto:ken@poqmd.org) or call (410) 571-9320.*

Hello everyone. My name is Ken Capone. I live in Prince George’s County. First, I would like to tell you a little about my disability. My disability is cerebral palsy. The term cerebral palsy refers to any one of a number of neurological disorders that appear in infancy or early childhood and permanently affect body movement and muscle coordination but it doesn’t worsen over time. Throughout my life I have used a head stick. It acts like my hands, I do everything with it. I operate my power chair. I text on my cell phone. I type with it. I also use my head stick to talk through my communication device. I prepare my presentation in advance on a computer and then I type it letter by letter with my head stick into my communication device. Yes, it is time consuming, but it is well worth the time so I can educate people about disability issues.

When people use the word “retard” it is very hurtful and harmful to persons with a disability. It makes us feel stupid. The word retard is no longer acceptable. It is a very demeaning word. Sometimes people say it directly against someone with disabilities; other times it is just a word that people use to make fun of someone and they really don’t mean to be mean. But it is still hurtful when we hear people say it. We think having students meet to learn gives us an opportunity to educate you about the “R” word.

# Students' Script: The "R" Word Shredded –

*By: Pooja Mehta and Jigisha Srivastav*

"RETARD!"

"Don't be so retarded."

"You're a retard."

"That is so retarded."

You've heard it used everywhere.

Do the words mean to hurt?

Sometimes – but it always hurts someone, even if you don't mean it.

We want to learn and change something about ourselves to better our society. With that in mind, we want you to watch this video and see how people across the country did the same.

**30 Minute or 10-Minute VIDEO PRESENTATION**

**"Offense Taken"**

The people in this video let go of the hurt and their pain- symbolized by the shredding of the "R" word. So now I want to ask you a few questions and I want you to raise your hand if your answer is yes. How many of you have used the "R" word as an insult? How many of you have been called the "R" word even if it was just a joke? How many of you, before today, have thought about how those with intellectual disabilities feel about the derogatory word and especially its colloquial use? And how many of those with their hands up have done something about it?

## Students' Script (continued)

Take a look at the room around you. Every single one of you raised your hands to the first two questions and very few of you have done something about it. We, without always thinking about it, hurt certain people around us.

All of you should have a blank sheet in front of you and a marker.

On it, I want you to write in big letters something you have said that hurt someone else, or something you have been called. We want you to take it and come to this/one of these shredders.

If you would like to, please tell everyone what word you chose and a story to go along with it, and then shred it as a promise to think twice before you insult someone and promise to do your best to eliminate the negativity around you because you never know who you might be hurting.

## Note to Event Planners:

*Students are invited to the front to shred their word and to share something about their experience and the word. Be prepared! Students have shared these words – retard, stupid, gay, wetback, the “N” word, slut, Jew, terrorist, fat, fag and more.*

# VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

*“Offense Taken”* A documentary about how one community responded to the “R” Word

<http://rtc.umn.edu/rtcmedia/offensetaken/>

Web site developed by the [Research and Training Center on Community Living](#) with support from the [National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services](#), the [Human Services Research Institute](#) and the [Administration on Developmental Disabilities](#) - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information, e-mail [lawl0035@umn.edu](mailto:lawl0035@umn.edu).

*\*A DVD copy of the video “Offense Taken” may be borrowed from The Arc of Maryland – please contact Shaneka Harris at [sharris@thearcmd.org](mailto:sharris@thearcmd.org) or (410) 571-9320.*

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*Blueberry Shoes Productions “30-second Public Service Announcement”*

*“R” Means RESPECT*

Written and produced by Will Schermerhorn; Photos by Will Schermerhorn

Music created by Will from guitar loops licensed from [GuitarWavs.com](http://GuitarWavs.com)

Many thanks for the Spanish translation by Sandra Baker, [Down Syndrome Association of Los Angeles](#)

ENGLISH - <http://www.blueberryshoes.com/psa/index.html>

SPANISH - <http://www.blueberryshoes.com/psa/espan/index.html>

# PHOTOS OF SUCCESSFUL SHREDDING ASSEMBLY

Poolesville Middle School in Montgomery County



The Arc Maryland works to create a world where children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities have and enjoy equal rights and opportunities.

For more information, visit our website at [www.thearcmd.org](http://www.thearcmd.org), call (410) 571-9320, or email [info@thearcmd.org](mailto:info@thearcmd.org).

