



the best midwestern  
high school writing:  
a celebration and  
recognition



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Best Midwestern High School Writing: A  
Celebration and Recognition of Outstanding  
Prose

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## Spread the Word to End the Word

Cassandra Ring

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Cassie Ring

Reedsburg

Grade: 11-12

Genre: Journalism

Second place winner

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Cassie Ring

Editorial

R-word

“You are so retarded,” or, “that’s retarded,” are sayings that are used loosely. It was not seen as “wrong” twenty years ago, but today it has become a very rampant saying. For example, if someone trips, a friend might call them the “R” word, but there is no reason for it. Even if you think people don’t hear you they do, and it is extremely offensive to a large portion of the people.

Do people who use the “R” word constantly, understand the real meaning? Calling someone the “R” word who does not have special needs is careless. Calling someone who has special needs the “R” word is completely de-meaning. There are many appropriate words to use, and the “R” word is not one.

The “R” word is a synonym of the word stupid, but the thing is, those with special needs are not stupid by any means. They are human-beings who have feelings, and they understand when people make fun of them. Let’s put this in a different perspective for those who don’t understand. Let’s say you were a parent expecting twins, one was born “normal” and the other was born with an intellectual disability. Would you still think it was okay for one of your children to be called the “R” word just because he isn’t what society has deemed “normal”? Would you still defend using the “R” word if your own child was being called stupid? I am sure many of people say they would, but in reality they wouldn’t. They have never been in the situation others go through daily, the heartache and the loneliness. Most people will never understand what one with intellectual disabilities deals with.

At Reedsburg Area High School, we do not take the “R” word lightly. About five years ago everything changed for the better in this school. We had an assembly to stop the “R” word, called *Spread the Word to End the Word*. This is a campaign that brings awareness to the “R” word, as they want people to realize the hurtfulness and rudeness the word portrays. After that assembly this school has never been the same; it has exceptionally improved.

I believe that once our school was informed and looked at the “R” word from someone else’s perspective, it modified how we use the “R” word. If the campaign, *Spread the Word to End the Word*, can transform one school, it can do the same in many others. I don’t think everyone who uses the “R” word is trying to put-down others, they just have not had the resources to fully understand its meaning.

Being a part of a school that is so accepting of those with special needs makes me think there is hope for others. There is absolutely nothing wrong with them. They don’t want to be called stupid, just like you, yourself, doesn’t want to be called stupid. They want what any human-being wants: respect.