



# GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



Contributed photo

(from left) Guillermo Reyes Suarez; Daniel Fitzmorris, special education teacher, and Ramon Galvez take time to "Spread the Word to End the Word" between classes at Ross S. Sterling High School.

## Spread the Word to End the Word

Ross S. Sterling High School Peer Assistance and Leadership (PAL) students teamed up with Life Skills students to "Spread the Word to End the Word" Wednesday, March 9, which was their version of the youth-driven national campaign supported by Special Olympics and Best Buddies International.

"Our goal is to end the use of the r-word, which is 'retard' or 'retarded,'" said Kelley Start, PAL sponsor.

During passing periods at RSS Wednesday, PALs and their friends from the Life Skills program, wearing t-shirts they created together, passed out flyers and t-shirts as well as encouraged their peers to sign pledge forms to eliminate the use of the word.

The pledge forms reads, "SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD. Language affects attitudes. Attitudes affect actions. Make your pledge to use respectful people first language and help eliminate the use of the r-word in



RSS PALs (from left) Suhani Bhatka, Sarah Hix and Nathan Harper show that "Respect" is the r-word that should replace hurtful, offensive words during the recent "Spread the Word to End the Word" campaign at Ross S. Sterling High School.

language and help eliminate the use of the r-word in everyday speech,”

Students were given other words, such as “intellectually disabled,” to use to avoid being hurtful and offensive. After the event on campus, PALs traveled to Cedar Bayou Junior and Gentry Junior to talk to students at lunch about the importance of not using the r-word to avoid offending those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“The campaign started with youth at the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games,” said Jennifer Malpass, RSS special education teacher.

Malpass and Ann Reilly, also a special education teacher, agree that the work the PALs do with their students weekly, including the service projects, such as recycling and preparing for Relay for Life, helps the Life Skills students connect with the campus and their peers. They were pleased to collaborate with Start and the PAL group for this project. “This is a good campus-wide awareness program for their peers and the adults. They can take this information out into the community,” said Reilly. For more information about the program, visit [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org).

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