



Sport of the Month

April

This month's theme: **encouragement**

Goals:

- Understand what encouragement is.
- Identify the people who care for and encourage you.
- Practice giving and receiving compliments and encouragement appropriately.



golf

Golf in Special Olympics

Golf is one of the oldest sports in the world—it was originally played by Scottish kings and noblemen. Unlike most sports, you do not have to be big, strong, or fast to play golf, nor do you need to be a member of a team. Each stroke motivates the individual golfer to continue in pursuit of better shots and lower scores. Currently there are approximately 8,000 Special Olympics golfers participating in 14 nations.

How do Special Olympics activities impact students? Here's how one teacher answered:

"Reflecting back on the impact these activities have made in our community made me realize what a gift this has been! It has made a difference in the lives of students, teachers, administrators, and community members!"

Week 1:

Ask students to get out a sheet of paper and write the first thing that comes to mind when you say the words *intellectual disability*. As an alternative, conduct a "whip" activity where you say "intellectual disability," and students, in turn, quickly say the first thing that pops into their minds. Share students' answers and have students draw conclusions about class responses. Ask, *Would you characterize most responses as positive or negative? Do responses show weaknesses or strengths? Do they focus on what those with intellectual disabilities have or what they do not have? How would you describe your existing perceptions of those with intellectual disabilities? How are these descriptions different than they would have been at the beginning of the school year?*

Ask students to share how they would define an intellectual disability. Then put the following definition on the board. According to the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, a person is considered to have an intellectual disability based on the following three criteria:

- Intellectual function level (IQ) below 70–75.
- Significant limitations in two or more adaptive skill areas (e.g., communication, self-care, home living, social skills, leisure, health and safety, self-direction, functional academics, community use, and work).
- The condition manifests itself before the age of 18.

Discuss the criteria with students. Then lead a discussion of what this definition covers and what it leaves out. Challenge students to blend the technical definition with some of the experiences they've had this year with students who have intellectual disabilities to create a fuller, more illustrative definition of intellectual disability.

—adapted from *Get Into It!*, grades 9–12


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Take Action!

- Start a mentor program at your school where individuals with and without intellectual disabilities are paired together for the year to support and assist each other. Students of all ages will benefit!

Week 2:

This week, divide your class into small groups of no more than five students. On the board, write the word *encouragement* and begin a discussion of what the word is and what types of encouragement the students have received.

Ask questions such as these:

- Who encourages you?
- Can you describe a situation in which you received encouragement?
- What encouraging words do you remember someone saying to you?
- How did you feel after this person encouraged you?
- Have you encouraged someone else as a direct result?
- Who has done the best job of encouraging you?

Next, assign the groups the task of coming up with their own definition of the word *encouragement*. Give them time to think of some examples of when people need encouragement. Make sure the students also create a list of encouraging words and phrases they can use in everyday situations (such as before taking a quiz) and in unique situations (never quit!).

In preparation for next week's activity, make sure each member of the group copies the complete list in her writing journal.

Week 3:

Once again, create several small student groups, this time mixing the groups so each new group has one person from each original group. Have group members share their definitions of encouragement with the new group.

Then provide each group with two pieces of poster board. Have the group puzzle-cut one piece of poster board so there's one puzzle piece for each student. Have each student write the word *Encouragement* on her puzzle piece, adding artistic designs and words of encouragement as well. Have students put the second piece of poster board on a desk or table and then reassemble the poster-cut piece on top. Glue down the pieces. When finished, hang the posters around your room or inside the gym to create an atmosphere of encouragement. Or contact your local Special Olympics office and arrange to display the posters at an upcoming event. Remind students that they can be Fans in the Stands and put their definitions of encouragement to work!

April events:

- **National Poetry Month**



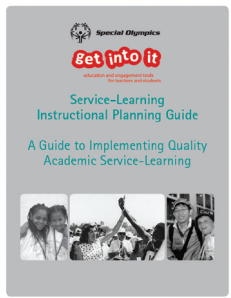


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Week 4:



Program Spotlight: Service-Learning Instructional Planning Guide

This guide to service learning assists educators in developing and implementing ideas to empower youth voices and leadership. You'll find **step-by-step lessons and extensions** that challenge at every level as well as expand students' knowledge of Special Olympics, its goals, and the difference students can make in their communities through participation in Special Olympics events. To learn more, visit <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>.

Introduce the term *social justice* to students. Explain that social justice is about making sure people in a society are treated fairly despite any differences in race, religion, economic or educational status, gender, and so forth. Ask your students, *Do you think that those with intellectual disabilities are always treated fairly and justly in our society? Why or why not? How can sports and Special Olympics help promote social justice for those with intellectual disabilities? How does social justice serve as a form of encouragement to others?*

Distribute "Quotes by and About Special Olympics Athletes," provided at the end of this newsletter or available for download at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>. Have students read the quotes and discuss how each represents the spirit of Special Olympics. Then challenge students, individually or in groups, to each choose one of the quotes and to create projects inspired by it. Their project can take any form, such as a painting, poster, collage, video, poem, photographic essay, song, or any other creative product. Then brainstorm ways to present the projects to the community. For example, you could create a display at a PTA meeting or school play; contact a local business or gallery to request permission to display the projects; create a traveling exhibit for display at local community centers, government offices, or places of worship; or arrange to have the work displayed at other schools in the area. Come up with a title for your collection and create business cards or other small pieces with the quotes on them that visitors can take home with them.

—adapted from *Get Into It!*



Quotes by and about Special Olympics Athletes

A rewarding life is filled with challenge: The effort creates fires that temper us and strengthen our spirit. So do not feel pity for me.
Give me a chance.

– Thomas Gathu, Special Olympics Kenya athlete and coach

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

– Kofi A. Annan, Secretary-General, United Nations

Let me win. But if I cannot win let me be brave in the attempt.

– Special Olympics Athlete Oath

The right to play on any playing field? You have earned it. The right to study in any school? You have earned it. The right to hold a job? You have earned it. The right to be anyone's neighbor? You have earned it.

– Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Founder of Special Olympics

My ambition in life is to turn 'no' into 'yes.'
If someone says I can't do something, I want to prove I can.

– Suzanne O'Moore, Special Olympics Australia athlete