



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 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:

Before beginning this lesson, familiarize yourself with "My Brother's Special Olympics Medal" (provided at the end of this newsletter or available for download at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>) so you can read it with expression.

Read the story aloud to your class. Pause periodically to reflect on the characters' feelings. *How do you think Ben feels when the kids tease him? How does Angie feel?* Then, after the story, discuss questions like these: *In what ways are Angie and Ben different? In what ways are they the same? Why are soccer and Special Olympics important to Ben? How do the soccer team members support one another? How do the fans encourage the team? How can words of encouragement impact an athlete's performance?*

Ask students to role-play the part of fans in the stands. Note their responses on the board. What would they say to Ben if...

- he slows his running and looks like he is ready to give up?
- he and his team win the competition?
- he and his team lose the competition?
- he is crying and says that he never wants to play soccer again?

Have your students write the encouraging words in their writing journals for use next week. For younger students, copy the list and provide a photocopy for each child.

—adapted from *Get Into It!*, grades K–2



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Week 2:

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!

Revisit the story “My Brother’s Special Olympics Medal” from Week 1. Review the list of encouraging words that your students had for Ben. Then tell your students that these words are also ones they can use with each other. Instruct students to work in cooperative pairs to create a poster that illustrates one or more words on the list. As they choose which to illustrate and create their posters, remind students to use encouraging words as they work. When completed, have students share their posters with classmates. Arrange to display the posters near the gym or playground exit to set a tone of encouragement and promote caring at your school. Or contact your local Special Olympics office to display the posters at an upcoming competition. Remind students that they can be Fans in the Stands at local Special Olympics events and put these words of encouragement to use!

—adapted from *Get Into It!*, grades K–2

Week 3:

In advance, construct a simple Heart of Gold medal by covering a cardboard heart with gold foil or yellow paper and adding a ribbon. For a fancier medal, use gold spray paint on a wooden craft store heart and thread a ribbon through it.

Write the word *gold* on the board. Tell students that you know a rule that has the word *gold* in it. Ask, “What might the word *gold* tell you about the rule? Would it be a valuable rule?” Model turning the word *gold* into the word *golden* and write the rule as students watch: *Treat others the way you want to be treated*. Recite the rule together. Remind students that even if people are different in some ways, they all want to be treated the same way you do. Tell students, “Treating others the same way we want to be treated is a great way to show caring.”

Show students the special Heart of Gold medal. Ask them to guess what this medal is awarded for. Then have students sit in a circle for a medal ceremony. Present the medal to one student to wear and demonstrate how to give him or her a compliment, citing something that student has said or done that demonstrates kindness or caring: “Lilly, I really liked the way you offered to help carry the chart over for our group meeting.” Then pass the medal to each student, in turn, and lead classmates in complimenting that student. During the activity, model how to receive compliments as well. If students are highly motivated by this circle of caring, make it a weekly activity.

—adapted from *Get Into It!*, grades K–2

April events:

● National Poetry Month





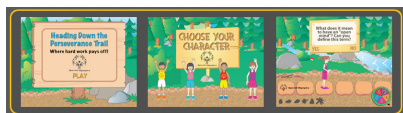
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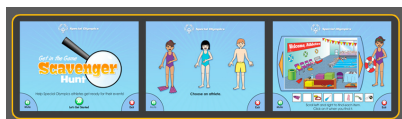
Week 4:

Program Spotlight: Get Into It® Games for Grades K–2



Heading Down the Perseverance Trail

In this free online game, students collect items along the trail and learn about the mindsets and attitudes that contribute to the quality of perseverance. Plus, students will learn about Special Olympics athletes and facts about the games!



Get in the Game Scavenger Hunt

Players build visual-discrimination skills while helping the athletes get ready for their events. Students choose from three different Special Olympics sports—swimming, tennis, and basketball.

Find links to these games and others at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>. Students will ask to play these engaging games again and again!

Discuss with students how people use simple items to remind them to do things. For example, some people tie a string around their finger, others write notes or send themselves emails, and, as a more recent fad, others wear rubber bracelets with slogans. Explain to students that you're going to demonstrate how everyday items can trigger reminders to use words of kindness.

Using the concept of a grab bag, place a number of items related to caring about and encouraging others in a big bag or box. Make sure the bag or box conceals the identity of the object but allows students to reach in and explore the objects. For example:

- A small mirror might prompt kind words about a person's appearance or encourage a smile.
- A pencil or sheet of paper might suggest encouraging remarks about something a person has written.
- A ball might conjure thoughts about a student's play in a game during gym class or recess.
- Glasses might encourage appreciative words about a student's perspective or way of looking at things.

Taking turns, have students reach in and feel an object, use descriptive language to describe it to their classmates, and try to guess what the object is. Take out the object and discuss what the object is and how it relates to being kind, caring, and encouraging toward their classmates. Then brainstorm specific compliments for each item and discuss other items to add to the bag. Explain to students that anytime they see one of these items, whether they're at home or at school, it can serve as a quick reminder to the student to use words of encouragement and kindness.

—adapted from *Get Into It!*, grades K–2



get into it

My Brother's Special Olympics Medal



Special Olympics

get into it

education and engagement tools
for teachers and students



**MY BROTHER'S
SPECIAL OLYMPICS MEDAL**



This book belongs to:

MY NAME IS ANGIE.

This is a picture of me.

I like to play soccer.

I'm just learning how.

It's really fun to play soccer.



THIS IS A PICTURE OF ME AND MY BROTHER BEN.

I'm 8 years old and Ben is 10.

Ben isn't just my brother.

He's one of my best friends.



BEN AND I LIKE TO PLAY SOCCER TOGETHER.

Sometimes I have to help him.

My Mom and Dad say Ben
needs all of us to be more
patient with him because he
learns more slowly than
other kids his age.



**SOMETIMES OTHER KIDS
MAKE FUN OF BEN
BECAUSE HE'S DIFFERENT.**

They think Ben doesn't
understand but he really does.

I never make fun of him.

I love my brother Ben, and
I want him to have fun and
friends just like other kids.



**IT HURTS *MY* FEELINGS
WHEN I'M PLAYING WITH
OTHER KIDS AND THEY
WON'T LET BEN PLAY
BECAUSE HE'S DIFFERENT.**

That really makes me feel sad.
I don't want Ben to be left
out and feel bad.



**MY PARENTS AND I WERE
SO HAPPY WHEN ALEX,
A TEENAGER WHO LIVES
ON OUR STREET, TOLD
US ABOUT SPECIAL
OLYMPICS AND UNIFIED
SPORTS.**

Alex said Special Olympics
has a way for people like Ben
and me to play sports on the
same team.

That's why it's called "Unified
Sports."

Unified. Together. Get it?



**MY FAMILY AND I WENT
WITH ALEX AND SOME
OF THE OTHER SPECIAL
OLYMPICS ATHLETES TO
WATCH A UNIFIED SOCCER
GAME.**

It was so exciting!



ALEX IS THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED SOCCER COACH.

He never yells and he's
never mean.

He really likes all kids
no matter how quickly
or slowly they learn.



I REALLY LIKE ALEX.

Because of Alex, Ben and lots of other kids are learning how to play soccer.

We all help out the team.

When I get older I want to be a Special Olympics coach, too.



**BEN REALLY WANTED
OUR UNIFIED TEAM TO
WIN THEIR FIRST SOCCER
GAME.**

He practiced over and over again how to kick and pass the ball.

He worked so hard at it that he was just as good as I was at kicking and passing the ball.



BEN SAID IT BEST:

“I want to get better and be a champion. And I want to try my best and help my teammates.”

I think Ben knows more than some kids who they call normal!



OUR TEAM PLAYED THEIR FIRST GAME WITH ANOTHER TEAM AND WE WON!

Everyone tried their best and
all got a chance to play in
the game.



**AFTER THE GAME,
EVERYONE GAVE “HIGH
FIVES” TO EACH OTHER.**



I WATCHED AS THE OTHER TEAM'S COACH SPOKE WITH THEM.

Sometimes when a team loses a game, they look sad.

He said in their own way, they *were* winners too and he was proud of them all.

The important thing was they were playing the game, having fun and trying hard to do their best.



WE WERE ALL SO EXCITED.

At the end of the game Ben and our teammates got their own Special Olympics medal for playing so well.

“We’re all champions now” said Ben.

Our whole team went out for ice cream after the game.



**BEN REALLY EARNED
THAT MEDAL BECAUSE
HE WORKED HARD AND
GOT REALLY GOOD.**

Ben doesn't win every time
he plays, but he keeps trying
to do his best.



**I SURE AM PROUD OF
MY BROTHER.**

Go Ben!







Special Olympics



education and engagement tools
for teachers and students

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The voice and vision of special education

www.specialolympics.org/getintoit

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