



Sport of the Month



December

This month's theme: **inclusion**

Goals:

- Students will understand the meaning of *inclusiveness* and *acceptance*.
- Students will understand how including others positively impacts their community.
- Students will recognize how excluding others negatively impacts their community.
- Students will be able to identify ways in which they can promote inclusion and acceptance.

Alpine Skiing in Special Olympics

Alpine skiing is a demanding sport, and athletes must be in good physical condition to compete successfully and safely. Also called downhill skiing, alpine skiing requires endurance, strength, and quickness. Special Olympics offers cross-country skiing as well.

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

"Some of the most positive outcomes came through the students working together."

Week 1:

Ask students to close their eyes and think about their school. Have them answer the following questions:

- If you were asked to describe your school using three words, what words would you choose?
- What does the school look like when you see it from the street, as you enter it, and as you move from place to place?
- How does your school look different now than it did on your first day?
- How might it look different once you've graduated?
- What aspects of the school make it unique?

Next, challenge students to draw, photograph, or videotape a "picture" of their school from their own perspective. (You may wish to give students time to walk around the school.) Have students present the images they've created. Did any students create the exact same image? Ask students: How can people who go to the same school see it from completely different perspectives? If you were to give the school a grade related to your own picture of it, what grade might you give and why?





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Week 2:

Take Action!

- Have a mix-it-up day at lunch! Randomly assign every student a table to sit at during lunch. This provides them with a great opportunity to meet new people, share ideas, and start friendships with students they might not otherwise get to know.

Begin by reminding your students about the Week 1 discussion and have a brief few minutes to refresh your students’ memories about the images they developed. Now ask students to think about how their school may “look” to someone with an intellectual disability. You may want to review the definition of intellectual disability: someone who has a lower IQ, has limitations in the skills needed for daily living, and who shows these traits as a child.

Now ask your students the following:

- What three words might students with intellectual disabilities use to describe the school?
- Would the classrooms look the same to someone with an intellectual disability?
- What about the cafeteria? The gym? The other kids?

Week 3:

Begin by reminding your students about the Week 1 discussion during which you talked about inclusiveness and acceptance. Remind them what these terms mean, particularly when talking about people. Then read to your class Troy Daniels’ speech “Inclusion Is Not a Place, It Is a Feeling” below. When you have finished reading the speech, ask your class how it makes them feel about people they see as different from themselves.

Inclusion Is Not a Place, It Is a Feeling

My name is Troy Daniels, but my friends call me TD. I have Down’s syndrome. Because my heart is bad I use a wheel chair, I do not speak very good.....

I am a person with disabilities and when I say “my friends” I mean friends, real friends just like everyone else, I have friends. Most of you think all people have friends but for people with disabilities friends are not always real. I want you to know why I have friends.

Not too long ago people with disabilities could not go to school with other kids, they had to go to “special schools”. They could not have real friends; they call people like me “retard”. That breaks my heart.

When I came to school there is a law that says all kids go to school in the place they live. I started school right here in Northfield with all of the senior class, we were little kids together. The law says that I can come to school but no law can make me have friends.

But then some kids started to think that I was ok, first it was just one or two kids who were nice to me. They found out that I cared about them and I loved my school. I told them I want to have real friends. Others started to hang out with me and they found out we could be friends. We started to learn together that in some ways we were

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December events:

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Week 3 (continued):



Program Spotlight: Movies That Move

The Movies That Move project, designed through a partnership between Special Olympics Project UNIFY® and Film Clips for Character Education, uses clips from popular films and TV shows to spark meaningful discussion in the classroom. The four themes explored on the Movies That Move DVD include

- different abilities
- the power of words
- acceptance
- youth leadership

To request a free DVD with the Movies That Move film clips, visit <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>.

different but in some ways we were the same. They called me *friend* and made sure that I was in everything at school. I cared about them and they cared about me.

I want all people to know and to see that these students I call my friends, are the real teachers of life. They are showing you how it should be. They are the teachers for all of you to follow their lead. Yes, I am a person with a disability. The law says that I am included but it is my friends who say...“TD come sit by me.”

Now, have your class respond to Troy in their writing journals. You may want to prompt them with some ideas to think about and explore in their journals, such as *What is your first response emotionally? Do you have any friends or family members with intellectual disabilities? If so, does this change your perception of them and how? Will Troy's words change your perception of people with intellectual disabilities?*

Week 4:

Gather your students together and, after a brief reminder about the value of inclusiveness and acceptance, prepare them for a game of Frozen Bean Bag. Here's how it works: All players have a bean bag that they balance on their head. The students walk around the designated playing area trying not to drop their bean bags. If a student drops his bean bag, he is frozen. To be freed, another player must try to replace the bean bag on the frozen student's head without dropping her own bean bag. When the game is finished, discuss how this activity related to the ideas of inclusiveness and acceptance. Point out that students who might not know each other well benefited from helping one another, rather than only having friends help each other.

Finally, give your class time to explore the online games available at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>. Have students pay close attention to “We're More Alike Than We Are Different,” which offers students striking visuals of various Special Olympics sports and inclusiveness in action. For additional reinforcement, randomly assign students to work in pairs to help each other with the game.

