

Grades 6–8

December

Sport of the Month

Special Olympics



alpine skiing

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 strength, quickness, and endurance. Special Olympics offers cross-country skiing as well.

Dear Family,

Your child's class continues to work with Special Olympics to reverse discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities. This month we'll focus on the issues of acceptance and inclusion in our own lives and in the lives of persons with intellectual disabilities.

A child's understanding of inclusiveness and acceptance can help create a more peaceful and open classroom environment, as well as a more friendly and welcoming school community. During the month of December, we will engage in a number of activities designed to help students

- understand the definition of inclusiveness
- use acceptance and inclusion in their daily lives and with friends, newcomers, and people with intellectual disabilities
- behave in appropriate ways that demonstrate inclusiveness and acceptance

You, your family, and your friends can reinforce learning that is going on in our classroom. We appreciate the time and attention you give to helping our school community with this important effort.

teacher signature

This month's theme: **inclusion**

A big part of our lessons on inclusiveness and acceptance will begin with an autobiographical note from Troy Daniels, a Special Olympics athlete. Troy's story is important because he talks about how significant it was for him to attend classes in a general education school setting. His friends weren't simply other kids with intellectual disabilities, but all kinds of kids. For Troy, it was important that he feel real friendship.



For a fun twist on the importance of acceptance and inclusion, we will play a game called Frozen Bean Bag. Here's how it works: Each player has a bean bag that he balances on his head. The students walk around the room, 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 his or her own bean bag. Sounds simple, right? However, because of each child's different ability to balance the bean bag and because of obstacles in the play area, students will find that the game works best when everyone helps each other and players don't simply rely on a few friends for assistance. We'll then equate that to other situations in which working cooperatively with many different people is more effective than just a few.

What you can do:



The Special Olympics sport we're spotlighting this month is skiing. Not every family can afford ski equipment, nor does every family have access to a ski area. Instead, why don't you plan a game of Frozen Bean Bag the next time your extended family gets together for a celebration? You'll find that the cooperative learning and inclusiveness essential to a good game of Frozen Bean Bag gets everyone—young and old, short and tall, happy or grumpy—involved in the fun! Then share some special one-on-one time with your child and discuss the ideas of inclusiveness and acceptance. Talk to your child about what these mean to you and share experiences from your own life when you found yourself being accepting of—or being accepted by—someone who is different than you. Tell your child what the experience was like.