



Sport of the Month



figure skating

January

This month's theme: **individuality**

Goals:

- Help students understand the value of individuals.
- Help students spread the word about valuing the individual.
- Help students invest in their sense of self-worth and share that ability with others.

Figure Skating in Special Olympics

Figure skating is a sport in which individuals or pairs perform spins, jumps, footwork, and other intricate and challenging moves on ice skates.

Week 1:

As a class, watch Special Olympics' video *Be a Fan of Confidence*, which introduces Charles Howard, a medal-winning snowboarder and someone who shows his individuality with pride. You'll find the video at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>.

Ask your students to describe what Charles's talents are (athlete, artist, actor, singer). Then ask, *How do these talents contribute to Charles's individuality? Does he seem like a confident person, one with positive self-esteem? Does he seem like a fun person to spend time with? What does his coach say about him? How did his participation in Special Olympics contribute to the person he has become?*

Be sure to make connections between the individual performance of the athlete and the team of coaches and supporters who help make the competition successful for the athlete. Remind students that everyone can play a role in supporting the athletes, including volunteering, cheering, coaching, and spreading the word about the impact that Special Olympics has.



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

"I was able to bring the rest of the teaching team on board to do activities together. It has helped me build partnerships within our school."



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Week 2:

Take Action!

- **Take the Plunge!** Most Special Olympics State Programs have exciting fundraisers where individuals raise money and then do crazy things (like jump into the ocean in February, rappel off a 10-story building, pull a plane, and more!). Contact your local or state Special Olympics Program to see what opportunities are available.



Now that students have seen the *Be a Fan of Confidence* video, students will understand that the best way to see an individual's uniqueness is by getting to know that person. Pair your students for this partner exercise. If you have an odd number of students, create several groups of three.

Assign each pair or group to interview one another; then have each student create a biography of his or her partner. Encourage your students to find a narrative thread, or common theme, for the partner's biography by thinking through questions like these:

- *What is the overarching theme behind each student's experiences?*
- *Did the student come from another town, state, or country?*
- *Does the student have challenges to overcome?*
- *What challenges does the student face each day?*

Encourage students to interview people who know their partners to gain a well-rounded view. When all of the biographies are complete, assemble them in a binder that students can take home and share with their families.

Week 3:

Now that partners know one another's stories, it's time for them to become each other's coaches. First, each student in the pair needs to determine a goal to reach. Allow students to brainstorm in pairs or as a whole class. Goals can be large or small, such as being a better student, getting a better grade on a social studies test, becoming a stand-out baseball player, or playing piano with the local symphony.

Once student pairs have determined their separate goals, partners should each write a goal statement—what they want to achieve. Then student partners use the "Assessing Goals Checklist" from the Special Olympics Athletics Coaching Guide (available at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>) to fine-tune their goals.

Finally, give each student the opportunity to create a motivational mini-poster to encourage his or her partner to succeed in achieving the goal. Students place these posters in their lockers, tuck them inside notebooks, or hang them up at home—anywhere where the poster will help give them that extra bit of momentum to meet their goal!

January events:

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Week 4:



Spread the
Word to End
the Word
r-word.org

Spread the Word to End the Word is a campaign to end the use of the terms *retard(ed)* and *mental retardation*. This campaign is a grassroots and social-media effort that engages young people across the country to pledge to end the use of the *R*-word. Your class is planning a Spread the Word to End the Word event for March. Be sure to work on those plans this month so your event is ready to roll in March!

This week's exercise should be fun and informative at the same time. Once again, refer to the partnerteams you created in Week 2. Students should now be familiar with their partner's story, whether they were close friends at the beginning of the month or not. Direct each student to write a brief 250-word news story about his partner, with every news story starting with the words, "News bulletin: An important individual in my class is _____ because..."

When all of these news stories are complete, gather them and put them into a single binder that students can share with each other and their families.

