



Sport of the Month



aquatics

May

This month's theme: **taking action**

Goals:

- Recognize the role that Special Olympics plays within your community.
- Identify actions that support and encourage Special Olympics athletes and peers with special needs.

Aquatics in Special Olympics

Swimming is one of the most popular sports in the world. Unlike other sports, swimming is a life skill. People learn to swim both for safety and for sport. Swimming competitions include everything from short sprints to longer endurance events and relays. Special Olympics includes swimmers of all abilities, from strong, fast competitors to swimmers who are still learning.

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

"We were able to provide several leadership opportunities for students with and without disabilities. Each reached out to a different population of the school, which created a more lasting impact in our work toward a more unified school!"

Week 1:

Begin preparing for your Week 2 lesson now. Visit <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators> to get contact information for the Special Olympics program near you. Make arrangements for a Special Olympics athlete, coach, representative, or volunteer to visit your classroom during Week 2. Also get dates, times, and locations for upcoming Special Olympics events.

Announce the upcoming visit from a Special Olympics guest. Tell students that the purpose of the visit is for students to learn firsthand what's happening in their own community and investigate how they can respond to their community's current needs.

Instruct students to work in pairs to brainstorm a list of questions for the guest speaker. Prompt them to include questions about the roles of fans and volunteers. They should also ask for specific ways students their age can reach out to peers with intellectual disabilities and promote inclusion. Make sure that the students' lists include questions that will provide current information about area Special Olympics events and needs.



Each student should be prepared for the visit with his/her own list of written questions on topics of interest. Make sure students take notes on the speaker's responses.

—adapted from *Get Into It!*, grades 3–5



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Week 2:

Take Action!

- Share dates for Special Olympics events now and throughout the summer in your class newsletter. You can also feature information and links about Special Olympics and Project UNIFY so parents can learn more.

This week, your special guest will come to your classroom and meet your students! Make sure that as many of your students' questions are answered as possible. Be sure that both you and your students write down important information your special guest provides so you can review it together and keep the momentum going for future projects.

—adapted from *Get Into It!*, grades 3–5

Week 3:

Harness the enthusiasm from the guest speaker's visit to launch ongoing service-learning projects for the remainder of the school year. Engage students in a discussion about what they learned from the speaker. Ask your students, *As you learned about Special Olympics, did you have ideas for ways you could get involved? How can we work together with Special Olympics athletes or other students/classes? How can we best show our friendship and caring to the athletes?*

Brainstorm ideas and list them on the board. Then combine similar ideas and determine which require more information before you can act on them. Break the ideas down into practical steps. *What would you need to implement the idea? Is it feasible? What can you still complete this school year, and what would work best in the fall?* Guide students through the process of whittling down the ideas to those that the class can act on. Take a vote to determine which idea generates the greatest interest. (See below for project examples.)

Sample service-learning projects

- Students with and without intellectual disabilities work in pairs to photograph the same Special Olympics event from both an athlete's and a spectator's point of view. Several pairs then combine their photographs for a PowerPoint or multimedia presentation to be shared with an inclusive audience.
- Team up to create group activities (not necessarily athletic) in which all students can participate, such as a class play or an after-hours video party at school. Students work in pairs to create posters promoting the event, prepare refreshments, set up chairs and equipment, etc.
- TV coverage of local Special Olympics events can generate a lot of attention—and your students can help convince local television stations to cover the events. Have students write letters and create petitions to convince local media to cover the Special Olympics events.
- Become a one-on-one PE Buddy for students with intellectual disabilities, assisting in that student's physical education class each week. (continued)

May events:

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Week 3: (continued)

Program
Spotlight:
Get Into It®
Games



We're More Alike Than We Are Different

Students put on their thinking caps to identify subtle differences between photos and build visual-discrimination skills. These captivating photos give them a glimpse into Special Olympics events.



The Right Words to Spread

Students choose their level of play, then unscramble the letter tiles to discover positive words. Beginners can click to get hints and unscramble words like *help*, *hope*, and *fair*.

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

- Attend a local Special Olympics practice. Interview a Special Olympics athlete, take photographs of him/her practicing, and create a photo essay to display in the athlete's school.

—adapted from *Get Into It!*, grades 3–5

Week 4:

Reflection is key in connecting this year's learning experiences with students' personal development and awareness. Have students think and write about questions like these:

- What did you learn?
- What is the most satisfying aspect of working together?
- What surprised you?
- Have we accomplished our goals?
- How did the experience make you feel?
- How could this project be better?
- What was the hardest part of this project for you?
- How have we helped others?
- Are there other ways that we can continue to help?
- What have you learned from your partners in the project?

—adapted from *Get Into It!*, grades 3–5

