



## Sport of the Month



### aquatics

# May

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

### Goals:

- Recognize the role that Special Olympics plays within the 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:

Gather students to read the lyrics to "Song of Love" (provided at the end of this newsletter or find lyrics plus a link to download the song at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>). Engage students in a discussion about the lyrics to connect them to the themes they have been exploring: *What is the song telling us about friendship? What is the song telling us about perseverance? What is the song telling us about caring? What do you think the song has to do with Special Olympics?* Fold a piece of construction paper to make a card. Ask each student to choose his favorite line from the song, then help him write it on the front of the card. Finally, have students illustrate the card and sign the inside. Have students save the cards and present them to a friend or family member who needs encouragement; contact your local Special Olympics office to see if cards can be distributed to athletes and their families; or contact a local hospital, nursing home, or veteran's office to arrange for cards to be distributed. Students' actions can really make a difference!



Note: Begin preparing for your Week 3 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 3. Also get dates, times, and locations for upcoming Special Olympics events.

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



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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.

Announce that a very special visitor will be coming to the class—a Special Olympics athlete, coach, representative, or volunteer! Tell students about the guest speaker, including his or her name; the sports the guest competes in or coaches; the number of years the guest has competed, coached, or volunteered; how the guest got involved in Special Olympics; and so forth. Follow this with questions: *How can we make our guest feel welcome? What do you want to know about Special Olympics? What questions will we ask?*

As a group, write a list of appropriate questions on chart paper. Prompt students to include questions about the role of fans and volunteers and specific ways that students can show friendship and caring. Make sure that the students' list includes questions that will provide current information about area Special Olympics events and needs. Individual students may want to volunteer to ask the guest a specific question, aided by the written list. To make the visit extra special, ask parents to donate healthy snacks that the group can enjoy during the visit.

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

## Week 3:

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 to write down important information your special guest provides so you can review this with your students and keep the momentum going for future projects.

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

## May events:

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## Week 4:

Harness the enthusiasm from the guest speaker's visit to launch ongoing service-learning projects for the remainder of the school year and continuing in the fall. 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* (continued)



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Week 4: (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!

*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

- Show support and encouragement by creating large murals or banners for area schools that include athletes participating in Special Olympics. Whenever possible, join together with Special Olympics athletes to create these murals.
- Team up with a special education classroom to create a community “Faces Book,” which is a large scrapbook in which students compile photos, captions, and drawings of themselves engaged in their favorite activities. Pass the book back and forth between the classrooms/schools and add to it as desired.
- Team up with a special education classroom to design fundraising events and donate the profits to Special Olympics. Or talk to your principal about holding a Hats Off for Special Olympics! fundraiser where students make a small donation and receive permission to wear a hat to school on a designated day.
- Team up to create group activities (not necessarily athletic) in which all students can participate, such as shared recess, a class play, or an after-school social. Designate a class photographer (parent or student) to take pictures of the activity.

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



### SONG OF LOVE

Playing together hand in hand  
Around the world with a friendship band  
Proud and strong, unified we stand  
Let's sing a song of love.

You might stumble but you'll never fall  
Your fight to victory, who can stall?  
We friends are with you, we've heard the call  
Let's sing a song of love  
Let's sing a song of love.

Sing all ye friends to show how you feel  
Respect and accept, let's all appeal  
All that hurts our love will heal  
Let's sing a song of love.

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