



Sport of the Month



October

This month's theme: **perseverance**

Goals:

- Define *perseverance* and understand situations where it is required.
- Identify specific words and language that encourage others to show perseverance.
- Recognize that Special Olympics athletes often work longer and harder to learn new skills, demonstrating their perseverance.

Soccer in Special Olympics

Played in just about every country, soccer can be enjoyed by children and adults of almost any physical build and ability. The sport requires little in the way of specialized equipment and is organized using simple, intuitive rules. Soccer is so fundamental to the future of Special Olympics' growth that it is the focus of a worldwide initiative. Soccer is perfect for Special Olympics Unified Sports, where people with and without intellectual disabilities play on the same teams.

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:

Obtain a copy of *The Tortoise and the Hare* by Janet Stevens. Tell your students that you're going to read a special kind of fiction book called a *fable*. Make sure they understand that many fables feature animals as the main characters, and be sure to show students the animals featured in the book. Ask your students how they think each animal will behave. Also, let them know that a fable often has a specific lesson to teach.

Before you finish reading the entire book, stop to ask your children what they think the fable's lessons might be. (*Hard work and perseverance bring reward.*) When you have finished the reading, write the word *perseverance* on the board. Read the word to your class and ask students if they know what the word means based upon the story.

Finally, ask your class questions about the fable that will expand their understanding of the word *perseverance*, such as the following:

- ▶ What are some ways that Tortoise showed perseverance and hard work?
 - ▶ What is determination? Where do you think it comes from?
 - ▶ How was Tortoise able to win the race when Hare was a much faster runner?
 - ▶ What did Tortoise's friends do to encourage and help him in the race?
 - ▶ Have your friends done something recently to encourage you to persevere?
- adapted from *Get Into It*, grades 3–5



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Week 2:

Take Action!

- Encourage students to gather a group of friends, make posters, bring their team spirit, and be **Fans in the Stands** at a local Special Olympics event!
- Work with your school to get a **unified physical education class** that students can elect to join where both students with and without disabilities play and train together.

Remind your students about the previous weeks' reading of *The Tortoise and the Hare* and the lessons they learned about perseverance, the support of friends, and the nature of fables.

Next, assign your students into pairs or small groups and have them create their own fable that teaches the lessons of perseverance. Remind them that fables usually use animals as characters and that the character traits of the animals are very important. You may want to have a variety of animal picture books around for your students to look at.

Make sure that students ask themselves some of the following questions as they plan and write their fables:

- ▶ What animals will they use?
- ▶ What challenge or competition is central to the plot of their story?
- ▶ What kinds of words do the friends of the main characters use to encourage their friends?
- ▶ What is the lesson in perseverance the fable will teach?

Once your students have completed writing their fables, give them the opportunity to illustrate the stories as well. Afterward, have students assemble their fables and give them the opportunity to share them with the rest of the class, with their families, and with children in lower grades. This is a great way to build the community spirit and understanding of perseverance.

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

Week 3:

Ask students to bring old pillowcases to class. (Warn parents that pillowcases won't be returned!) You'll need one pillowcase for every two students and a soccer ball. Take students outdoors. Divide your class into two teams and pair the students on each team. Give each pair a pillowcase. Instruct students in each pair to put one of their legs into the pillowcase, similar to a three-legged race.

Explain to your students that they must work together—as teams and as pairs—using encouraging words, understanding, mutual support, and perseverance. Then begin a game of soccer, encouraging players to work together and overcome the difficulties in this new version of the game.

After the game, bring your class together to talk about the experience of playing this new type of soccer. Ask them what they did to encourage each other. Make a list of encouraging words and actions on the board.

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



October events:

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Week 4:

Program Spotlight: Get Into It® Games

It's More Fun When Everyone Plays!



Combine students' love of technology with important lessons about perseverance, respect, and acceptance with free online games from Special Olympics. Designed for general education classrooms, this new selection of online games allows you to teach **important skills, address standards, and demonstrate to students how to treat one another.** Games include

- **Heading Down the Perseverance Trail**—Students collect items along the trail and learn about the mindsets and attitudes that contribute to the quality of perseverance.
- **Get in the Game Scavenger Hunt**—Players build visual discrimination skills while helping the athletes get ready for their events.
- **The Right Words to Spread**—Players unscramble letter tiles to discover positive words and build word skills.
- **We're More Alike Than We Are Different**—As students identify subtle differences between photos, they build visual discrimination skills and get a glimpse into Special Olympics events.
- **Stomp Out the R-Word**—Students get a concrete reminder not to use offensive terms, delivered in a fun maze-game format.

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

Everyone faces challenges. Get students thinking about the mindsets and attitudes that help you succeed by taking a trip down the Perseverance Trail. This easy-to-use online game is a perfect way for students to reflect on the importance of perseverance. The game requires reading, so display it on a whiteboard and play with your entire class.



Check out Heading Down the Perseverance Trail at <http://specialolympics.org/educators>.

