



Sport of the Month



SOCCER

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:

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*



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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 week's pillowcase soccer game and the lessons students learned about perseverance, the support of friends, and cooperative play.

Next, assign your students into pairs or small groups and have them create their own game that teaches the lessons of perseverance. Remind them that their games can involve just a few people or an entire class. The games do not have to be based on regular games, although they can be. You may want to brainstorm different kinds of activities and existing sports students can draw upon to create their own activities.

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

- ▶ How many people will be involved?
- ▶ What can be done to make the activity equally challenging for all participants?
- ▶ How can the activity be designed so that it is inclusive for people of all abilities and skill levels?
- ▶ What kinds of equipment will be needed to make the activity a success?
- ▶ What is the duration of the activity?
- ▶ How are winners decided?
- ▶ What rules are required to guarantee fair play?
- ▶ Is there a minimum age or skill level required for participants?

Once your students have completed planning their activity and written the rules, allow them time to test it. After they've tested the game, encourage them to make further adjustments to the plan as needed.

October events:

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Week 3:

Now that your students have planned and tested their new games/activities, it is time to get the school community involved. Plan a field day that features the new activities and sports created by your students, as well as a schoolwide pillowcase soccer tournament. Call this the Perseverance Day Games. Be sure to invite teachers, administrators, friends, and others to join in and to demonstrate that people need to practice perseverance throughout their lives. Contact your local Special Olympics to invite area athletes to participate as well, and invite a Unified Sports team to do demonstrations or play a short game.

Most important, be sure to have fun!



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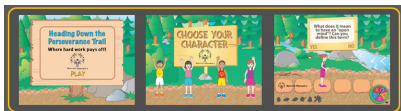
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Week 4:

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>.

