



Sport of the Month



September

This month's theme: **acceptance**

Goals:

- Help students get acquainted and recognize each other's similarities and differences.
- Help students understand how to take a leadership role in activities with their peers.
- Help students learn something about their classmates that they didn't know before to build a stronger classroom community.

Cycling in Special Olympics

Cycling requires good physical condition, balance, endurance, and tactical thinking. Special Olympics includes time trial and road race events in different distances.

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

"The most significant change is that there is now awareness that every student, those with or without disabilities, has a voice and contributes to school programs."

Week 1:

How well do your students know each other? Are all students the same, or are they each different? Demonstrate for students that their different interests and abilities help to build a more diverse, lively, and interesting classroom community.

Gather your students in an area of your room where they can stand in a circle. Explain that they need to listen carefully and respond to ways in which you describe them---by their traits, experiences, opinions, and more. When they hear something that applies to them, they should step forward into the circle. Next, call out traits and other directives from the list provided (see box at the bottom of the page). Explain that when someone steps forward, two different groups within the class are created and, while some students are different, they all remain part of the same larger group. To end the activity, call out a directive that includes everyone and then direct students to applaud for themselves.

After the game, discuss

- ▶ Which traits could be easily seen and which were more difficult to see (internal traits)
- ▶ How much you can tell about someone just by looking at them
- ▶ How much more you can learn about someone by taking the time to get to know them
- ▶ Why some groups are large and some are small
- ▶ That no matter what smaller groups they belonged to, they were also part of a single, larger group

—adapted from Get Into It, Grades K-2

Step forward into the circle if you...

- Are wearing sneakers
- Have dark hair
- Like pepperoni pizza
- Can stand on one foot without falling over
- Like the color green the most
- Enjoy being around dogs
- Like to spend time staring at the clouds
- Are wearing a blue shirt
- Eat the icing off a cupcake before you eat the cake
- Like to swim in a cold swimming pool
- Like the beach
- Wish you could have a snake for a pet



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Week 2:

Take Action!

- **Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day (September 24) honors the founder of Special Olympics.** Plan and host a Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day event at your school to get staff and students excited and educated about the amazing opportunities that inclusion can bring! Visit <http://specialolympics.org/educators/> for more information.
- **Work with your school to set up Unified Recess,** in which students both with and without disabilities use their recess time to engage in physical activities together. It's more fun when everyone plays! Contact your local Special Olympics Program for more information.

Build on Week 1's activity, but this time be more specific about the ability the class is discussing. It's time to find out who rides a bike. To further your students' understanding of ideas about leadership, you may ask for one or two volunteers to help you with this activity.

Gather your class once more in a circle and remind them of how Week 1's activity went. Ask students to step forward into the circle if...

- They can ride a bicycle on their own
 - They can ride a bicycle with help
 - They can ride a tricycle
 - They have a horn on their bikes
 - They have a flag on their bikes
 - They ride a blue bicycle
 - They ride a red bicycle
 - They go on long rides with their families
 - They like to ride their bicycles in the woods
 - They like to ride their bicycles anywhere and anytime
- adapted from Get Into It, Grades K-2

Week 3:

Share with your students an easy-reader book or picture book that focuses on the theme "you don't have to be like me to be my friend." (Suggested books include *Friends* by Rob Lewis for grades K-1 and *Chester's Way* by Kevin Henkes for grades 2-3.)

Following the general format of the activities from Weeks 1 and 2, discuss with your students ways in which the book's main characters are similar and different. Write students' suggestions on a whiteboard or a large sheet of chart paper. Discuss how the characters in the selected story overcome or embrace their differences to foster the strength of their relationship. Do they act as leaders?

Remember to spotlight both clearly apparent differences (do the characters look different?) as well as internal differences (do they like different kinds of food?).

—adapted from Get Into It, Grades K-2



September events:

- Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day, September 22
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Week 4:

Program Spotlight: Get Into It®

Get Into It® is a free web-based, interactive curriculum for children in grades K–12. Part of Special Olympics Project UNIFY®, this unique program delivers online resources that include lessons, activities, videos, athlete stories, and supplemental materials designed to be used in general classrooms.

Get Into It is designed to:

- ▶ Educate students in how they can become change agents in their communities
- ▶ Motivate young people to use their creative energy in leadership roles
- ▶ Teach students to accept, respect, and advocate with and for persons with intellectual disabilities
- ▶ Activate young people with new approaches for sharing experiences, engaging in community action, and making a difference

To request your free copy of the Get Into It activities and lessons, email getintoit@specialolympics.org.

Bring together the activities from Weeks 1, 2, and 3 to create a picture book that focuses on differences and similarities within your class. As a class, create two characters and assign a random selection of traits to each, making sure that some are shared between the two. Brainstorm with your students to develop a quick and easy story that students can illustrate on their own. When the illustrations are complete, gather them and assemble them into a class book that each student can take home over the course

of the following month. Your students can show their parents how they have learned the importance of sharing similarities and differences and how differences shared between two characters can help to form bonds of understanding.

Discuss with students in your class what they have learned from the activities they've done this month. Reinforce the value of similarities and differences in groups and how these differences and similarities can help produce different group leaders depending on the situation.

Lily and
Alex Are
Friends

