



Special Olympics
Unified Champion
Schools

Whole School Engagement



Getting
Ready



Establishing a
Leadership Team



Whole School
Engagement



Inclusive Youth
Leadership



Inclusive Sports
and Fitness



Special Olympics
Resources



Whole School Engagement: Welcoming for All



Whole school engagement opportunities are awareness and educational activities that promote social inclusion and reach the majority of students and school staff members.

What does whole school engagement look like?

- a schoolwide **Respect Campaign**
- **Spread the Word to End the Word** (R-Word) campaign that encourages people to pledge to stop using hurtful words
- a **poster contest** promoting a welcoming school climate
- **Unified recess** in which students with and without disabilities engage in physical activities together
- a **Fan in the Stands** program to make posters, hold pep rallies, and attend Special Olympics events to clap and cheer
- **mini lessons** related to social inclusion, such as the ones on pages 104–124

Why is it important?

Whole school engagement

- teaches staff and students to embrace diversity.
- recognizes, supports, and honors the contributions of all students.
- expands ownership of the Unified Champion Schools program beyond a passionate few.
- enhances and develops key social and emotional skills.
- creates a climate where students, staff members, and parents feel safe and valued.



Far-reaching influence

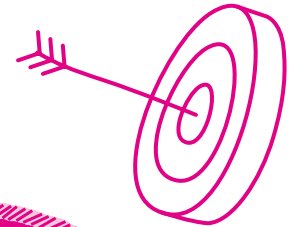
Whole school engagement activities not only reach the greatest number of students, but they also have the most direct impact on how students feel about social inclusion. A school climate that promotes respect for everyone can positively impact how students think and act at school, at home, and in the community.

Here's what a recent survey of older students revealed:

- 99% of UCS staff feel the UCS program is **valuable to the school** as a whole.
- 93% of students exposed to Unified Champion Schools and campaigns such as Spread the Word to End the Word have **improved their behavior and attitudes** toward people with intellectual differences.
- 86% of Unified Champion School staff credit the program with **reducing bullying and teasing** in their school.
- 48% of UCS staff believe there are more opportunities for general and special educators to **work together**.



What Are the Goals of Whole School Engagement?



- **Positive interactions:** Students with and without intellectual disabilities will interact socially and develop mutually beneficial friendships.
- **Respectful attitudes:** All students will have a greater understanding of each other and will hold more positive attitudes toward each other.
- **Engagement:** The school will be a community of acceptance where students with and without intellectual disabilities feel welcome and contribute meaningfully to all school activities.
- **Connections:** The school will be an inviting environment where students, staff members, and community members feel connected. It models inclusion as a community norm.

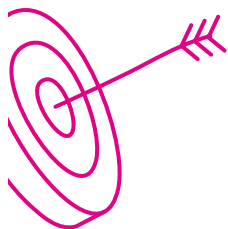


Principle of meaningful involvement

A socially inclusive school ensures that students with and without intellectual disabilities are active and valued participants in the school community.

Indicators of meaningful involvement

- **Opportunities:** All students have opportunities to use their unique skills and qualities to contribute to the success of the school, and all skills are valued.
- **Intentional involvement:** Students with and without intellectual disabilities are purposefully engaged in whole school activities in formal and informal settings.
- **Intergenerational collaboration:** Students and adults work together to promote a socially inclusive school climate by expecting, nurturing, and supporting acceptance and respect.



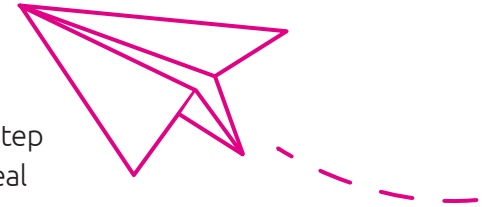
Valued relationships

It's hard for anyone to develop a lasting friendship through just a few interactions. One or two socially inclusive experiences isn't enough. Students with and without intellectual disabilities are more likely to develop authentic friendships when they have **frequent opportunities** to interact.



Get Started with Whole School Engagement

How schools implement whole school engagement varies, but a common first step is to have a planning meeting with your school's Unified Leadership Team. It's an ideal opportunity to discuss topics such as those below. Once you agree on one or more whole-school activities, use the action plan form on page 103 to organize the details.



Topics to discuss

- How do we engage students in determining the whole school activity?
- What types of whole school activities would work well at our school?
- What small activity would be great as a starting point?
- What whole school activities are already planned? How can they be revised to increase social inclusion?
- What types of whole school activities do students with and without intellectual disabilities enjoy?
- Are there any grade-level teams that might be interested in planning and leading a whole school activity?
- Who will be the adult leaders for the activities we choose?

Need ideas? Check out these suggestions.

- Morning announcements (pages 66–70)
- Ideas for promoting social inclusion during various parts of the school schedule (page 71)
- Respect Campaign (pages 72–73)
- Fans in the Stands (page 75)
- Social media posts and school newsletter articles (pages 77–92)
- “Looking for Leaders” Play (pages 93–99)
- Mini lessons that promote social and emotional development (pages 104–124)
- Inclusive bowling night for students and their families
- Schoolwide service project such as a mitten drive during the winter months

Did you know?

Sesame Street has a Muppet character named Julia who has **autism**. Learn more about Julia, view relevant videos for kids and parents, and find other resources here:

<http://autism.sesamestreet.org/>



Examples of Whole School Engagement Activities

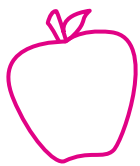
There is no limit to how you can involve the entire school community in socially inclusive awareness activities. Opportunities range from giving morning announcements with anti-bullying messages, to providing Unified Physical Education classes, to promoting respect with a weeklong campaign. Check out the wide variety of ideas that follow to find socially inclusive ideas that are a great fit for your school.





Morning Announcements

Incorporate these weekly messages into morning announcements to regularly promote a socially inclusive school climate. Classroom teachers can follow up by guiding a group discussion about each announcement and having students write or draw a response in their journals.



September: Friendship and Acceptance

Week 1: I'm excited because this month we're going to learn about friendship. Did you know that smiling at someone is a great way to start a friendship? A smile shows that you are friendly, and it can also make someone feel good. Try it this week. Let's make some new friends!

Week 2: Listen carefully to this quote: "The only way to have a friend is to be one." That's from a poet named Ralph Waldo Emerson. This week I'd like you to think about ways you can be a good friend. Try these ideas and pay attention to the results.

Week 3: September 18 is National Respect Day. When you show respect to someone, you act in a way that shows you care about them and accept them for who they are. This week I challenge you to try extra hard to treat others the way you would like to be treated.

Week 4: Did you know that people don't need to be alike to be friends? Students can be in different classes, look different, and act differently. Just think how boring it would be if everyone were alike!



October: Say "No" to Bullying

Week 1: October is National Bullying Prevention Month. A bully is mean to another person. Bullying is never okay. If you see someone being bullied, tell an adult right away.

Week 2: Have you ever felt left out at recess or during lunch? It's not a good feeling. This week I challenge you to reach out and be a friend to someone who is left out. Remember, smiling is an easy way to help someone feel better!

Week 3: This quote makes me think about bullying. Listen carefully and see if you understand why: "Wrong is wrong even if everyone else is doing it. Right is right even if no one is doing it." (St. Augustine)

Week 4: If everyone treated others with kindness, there would be no more bullying. This week, I challenge you to do something kind each day.



Morning Announcements



November: Perseverance

Week 1: Have you ever heard the word *perseverance*? It's a long word that means trying your best to accomplish something even if it is difficult. This week think about times you needed to work extra hard to reach a goal. If you encounter a challenge, use *perseverance* to get through it.

Week 2: Some people need perseverance to solve math problems, or to read, or to write a great story. Some people learn fast and other people need more time. Remember, everyone can learn and succeed!

Week 3: Last week we talked about using perseverance to complete school-work. Did you know that athletes need perseverance, too? Even famous athletes need to work really hard to get better or stronger or faster. Showing perseverance helps in many aspects of your life.

Week 4: The harder you work for something, the greater you'll feel when you achieve it. Think of a time you accomplished something that was difficult. How did you feel? Remember that feeling the next time you're faced with a challenge.



December: Leadership

Week 1: All students can be leaders. Being a leader means setting a good example, helping others, and doing the right thing. This week keep an eye out for students who set good examples. Think about things you could do to be a positive role model.

Week 2: Sometimes leaders help people by doing small things that make a big difference. For example, a student leader might invite a classmate who is all alone to join a game at recess. Look for ways to help others this week.

Week 3: When someone says they look up to a person, that means that they admire him or her. This week think about someone you look up to and why. What's one great trait that they have? Is that a trait you might have, too?

Week 4: Listen to this saying: "Be somebody who makes everybody feel like a somebody." That quote is from the YouTube sensation known as Kid President. Think about a time someone made you feel good about yourself. Wouldn't it be great if you could make someone else feel the same way? Try it this week.



Morning Announcements



January: Individuality

Week 1: There is no one at school, in our city, or even in the world just like you. This week think about what makes you unique, such as the way you dress, your favorite foods, and what you like to do on the weekends. You are unique!

Week 2: Piglet from *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne is quoted as saying, "The things that make me different are the things that make me ME." Think about this quote and what it means to you.

Week 3: Do you like basketball? How about kickball? Reading? Computer games? The activities you enjoy make you who you are. Students' different interests make our school stronger and more diverse!

Week 4: This week, say something positive to someone about a trait that makes them unique. Maybe they're always smiling, they're very helpful, or they're fabulous at jumping rope. Let them know that you value their uniqueness!



February: The Power of Teamwork

Week 1: There's a big football game coming up. (Add information about the Super Bowl teams.) Now's a perfect time to talk about being a fan. Some people show support for their favorite team by wearing team colors, waving a pennant, or cheering for them. Think about ways you can show support for students who participate in sports.

Week 2: Athletes on a team have different roles, but they work together toward the same goal. Think about your favorite sports team. How does teamwork make them stronger?

Week 3: The letters T, E, A, M spell the word *team*, but they also stand for "Together everyone achieves more." Think about how we can apply that saying to our school. What can you do to make our school a true team?

Week 4: Teamwork isn't just for sports; it's for classrooms too. Sometimes students team up to do a project or everyone pitches in to meet a goal. See how many things you can think of that are easier or more fun to do as a team.





Morning Announcements

March: The Power of Words



Week 1: Did you know that words are powerful? Some words make people feel good. Even short phrases such as “Great job!” and “Way to go!” can make a huge difference to someone. Think about a time someone’s words made you smile.

Week 2: Here’s a great thought for the week: “It’s nice to be important, but it’s more important to be nice.” That quote is from John Templeton, a man who donated money to help others. Look for ways that you can follow this advice.

Week 3: Some words, such as mean nicknames, are extremely harmful. The hurt they cause can last forever. Remind people that teasing isn’t funny, and it isn’t kind. Be sure to use people’s real names unless they tell you a nickname that they like better.

Week 4: This week’s challenge is to use only positive words. Don’t say any put-downs. I’m sure you and the people around you will have a happier week!



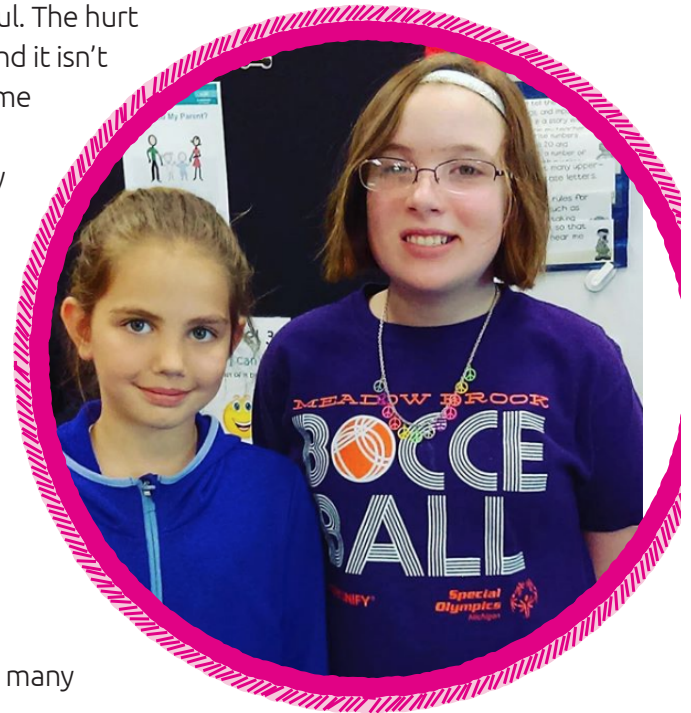
April: Encouragement

Week 1: Do you know what *encouragement* means? It means giving someone support or hope. Picture someone running in a race who is so tired that he doesn’t think he can keep running. The people on the sidelines call out, “You can do it!” That’s encouragement. This week look for encouragement in your classroom, in PE, and other places at school.

Week 2: People encourage others in many ways. They might give a thumbs-up, smile, or say, “Keep trying; you’re almost there!” See how many ways you can think of to encourage someone.

Week 3: Here’s a challenge for you: This week demonstrate an encouraging attitude. Keep an eye out for anyone who seems discouraged. Be ready to say or do something that will cheer him or her up and inspire them.

Week 4: This quote makes me think of encouragement. Listen carefully and see if you can tell why. “Never get tired of doing little things for others; sometimes those little things occupy the biggest parts of their hearts.” What does that tell you about encouragement?





Special Olympics
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Schools



Morning Announcements



May: Taking Action

Week 1: This month we're going to talk about making a difference. That means doing something that helps people. Remember this quote from former President John F. Kennedy: "One person can make a difference, and everyone should try."

Week 2: In 1962, a woman named Eunice Kennedy Shriver did something that made a big difference. She held a summer day camp in her backyard for people with special needs. That led to the start of Special Olympics, now a worldwide program!

Week 3: Before athletes participate in Special Olympics, they say this oath: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me brave in the attempt." This week think about why athletes and others should be brave.

Week 4: Eunice Kennedy Shriver is honored each year on July 20. It's a day for people to celebrate the work she did to make a difference for so many people. Remember Mrs. Shriver as you think about ways you can make a difference.





Inclusion Throughout the Day

Social inclusion doesn't happen with just one event; it needs to be a regular part of the school experience. Use these suggestions to promote social inclusion during various parts of the schedule.

Arrival

- **Safety Patrol:** Recruit older students with and without intellectual disabilities for the school safety patrol. Have pairs of students carry out their assigned responsibilities.
- **Welcoming Club:** Station a pair of students at the entryway and have them welcome students, parents, and visitors each morning with smiles and friendly greetings. It's sure to start everyone's day on a positive note!

Lunch

- **Mix-It-Up Day:** Randomly assign every student a table to sit at during lunch. This will provide students with a great opportunity to meet new people and start friendships with students they might not otherwise get to know.
- **Lunch Bunch Book Club:** Every week or two, meet with a group of interested students. As students eat their lunches, read and discuss books with positive messages about topics such as friendship, perseverance, and diversity. See the list on page 72 for a few great books as a starting place.



Recess

- **Unified Recess:** Work with your school to set up Unified Recess in which students with and without intellectual disabilities use their recess time to engage in physical activities together. It's more fun when everyone plays! Your local Special Olympics office and your state's Special Olympics website have information to help you get started.
- **Recess Buddies:** Pair students with and without intellectual disabilities. Provide playground balls, jump ropes, and noncompetitive games to ensure the buddies have ample choices.

Specials

- **Unified Physical Education:** Work with your school to get a Unified PE class in which students with and without intellectual disabilities play and train together. Your local Special Olympics office and your state's Special Olympics website have information to help you get started.
- **Schoolwide Display:** In art class, have all the students in the school contribute to the same hallway display. For example, you might display student-decorated fish cutouts with an inspirational title such as "We are all swimming together toward a great year!"
- **Being a Friend Means:** In art class, invite students to create a poster or a T-shirt design expressing what it means to be a good friend. Students can write a song about the topic in music class.

Dismissal

- **Great Goodbyes:** Give each student a high-five as he or she leaves school for the day. Older students will enjoy coming up with a good-bye signal or a handshake that they can exchange with classmates and friends from other classes when they see them in the hall.
- **Dismissal Buddies:** What better way to end the day than with a friend? Pair students with and without intellectual disabilities who are headed to the same dismissal location in the school.

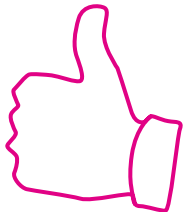




Respect Campaign

A respect campaign is one of the most popular and effective Unified Champion Schools activities for elementary schools. The campaign is designed to promote acceptance and respect for students of all academic abilities.

Some schools have a weeklong awareness campaign, while others declare one day Respect Day. Activities vary from school to school, but are often planned to coincide with the Spread the Word annual day of awareness (held yearly the first Wednesday in March). Check out the ideas below and use the checklist on page 74 to plan your school's event.



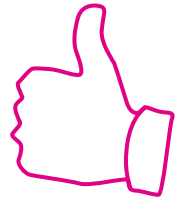
- **We're alike but different days:** Designate a different theme for each day of the school week, just as you might for a spirit week. For example, you might have a "Dare to Be Different Day" and invite students to wear silly accessories or outfits, a "Unity Day" on which students wear their teacher's favorite color, and "Literature Lovers Day" when students dress like a character from one of the books listed below. Each day, point out how students are different but also have traits in common.
- **Lessons from books:** Share books about respecting individuality, such as the ones below. Guide students to discuss what each book teaches them.
 - *It's Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr
 - *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes
 - *Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun* by Maria Dismondy
 - *Spoon* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal
 - "The Sneetches" from *The Sneetches and Other Stories* by Dr. Seuss
- **Special Needs Awareness Day:** Events for the day might include activities such as visiting with therapy dogs and their owners or trainers, learning about sign language and braille, listening to a Special Olympics adult athlete tell about his experiences, and watching kid-friendly videos about living with disabilities. Classroom teachers might also read aloud books about children with special needs such as *My Best Friend Will* by Jamie Lowell and Tara Tuchel, a photo-illustrated book about an 11-year-old girl and her friend who has autism.





Respect Campaign

- **Rally:** Have a schoolwide assembly to generate enthusiasm for promoting a respectful school climate. Consider incorporating elements like these:
 - a motivational speaker such as a Special Olympics athlete.
 - a pledge for staff and students to use respectful words and actions.
 - students performing a song that celebrates individuality.
 - a student performance of the play “Looking for Leaders” on pages 93–99.



- **Banner:** Check with your state’s Special Olympics office to get a campaign banner. Ask all students and staff members to sign the banner and pledge to use words of respect. Display the banner in a prominent school location. Create a smaller version that the “class of the week” can display outside their classroom.

- **Displays:** Ask each class to come up with a way to showcase the idea that we should treat others the way we want to be treated. Students might create a poster, a bulletin board, or a sign for the classroom door, for example. Invite other staff members, such as the kitchen staff and media specialist, to display those, too. The message will be clear—respect is a schoolwide expectation.



- **Kindness rocks:** Start a schoolwide hide-a-rock project. Invite every student to bring in a small rock and paint a kind word or a cheerful picture on it. Have students hide the rocks around the school or in the community. When someone finds the rock, the painting is sure to brighten his or her day. Search online for tips about tagging the rocks and using social media to enhance the project.

Words Matter

Instead of a Respect Campaign, some Unified Champion Schools have a **Spread the Word to End the Word** campaign. The campaign is committed to eliminating the use of the R-Word, which includes the terms “retard,” “retarded,” and “mental retardation,” while promoting words of respect and acceptance.

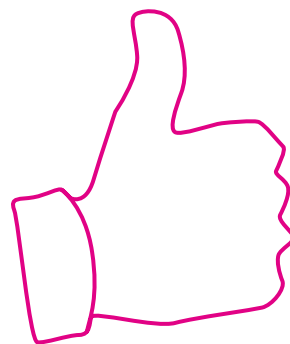
Some elementary students are familiar with these words, while many others aren’t. Since every school is different, it’s up to you to decide whether a Respect Campaign or an R-Word campaign is a better fit for your school. For information and resources for an R-Word campaign, go to <https://www.r-word.org/>



Checklist for a Respect Campaign

Use the ideas on pages 72–73 and the checklist below to make your school's Respect Campaign a success.

1. Meet with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss holding a Respect Campaign in your school. Discuss whether to include a Special Needs Awareness Day. Develop a timeline for organizing and planning the event.
2. Meet with the principal to discuss plans for the campaign and ensure the administration's support and approval.
3. Check with your state Special Olympics office for resources.
4. Communicate with school staff about the purpose of the campaign. Seek their input on activities to include. Invite student input, as appropriate.
5. Decide what activities the campaign will include. Clear the activities with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.
6. Develop a plan.
 - Schedule the campaign activities.
 - Invite members of the parent-teacher organization to help plan or carry out activities.
 - Create a plan for each task that needs to be completed, including deadlines and a list of who is responsible for carrying out each step.
7. Share the details of the event with the school staff. Consider asking staff to assist with communication through announcements, the school website, letters sent home, the school newsletter, and local news media.
8. After the event, thank everyone involved in making it a success.





Fans in the Stands

Fans in the Stands ensure that every athlete and school team has supporting fans who cheer at every game or competition. If your school doesn't have sports teams, promote service learning by starting a Fans in the Stands club for local Special Olympics competitions or Unified Sports teams. Check out the ideas below for sparking enthusiasm and team spirit among students. Then, use the checklist on page 76 for planning.

Go
Team!

- **Get students ready:** Many young students do not understand that a sports fan can have a powerful and positive impact on a team. Discuss different ways that fans encourage a team and how words of encouragement influence an athlete's performance. Then, invite students to brainstorm what fans could say in scenarios such as the ones below:
 - A runner slows down and looks like he is ready to give up.
 - A basketball team wins a game.
 - A bocce team loses a game.
 - A soccer player is crying and says that he never wants to play soccer again.
- **Brighten the stands!** Have students make a variety of posters, pennants, and banners. Encourage students to personalize them with the team name or athletes' names. (If athletes' names are included, be sure all athletes you're cheering for are recognized equally.) Keep fans' interest high by providing different poster-making materials from event to event.
- **Give a grand send-off:** If your school has a Special Olympics team, give them a memorable send-off when they depart for a competition. Encourage students to make posters and banners. Line the halls or the school sidewalk and have students cheer for the athletes as they leave the school. Continue the celebration after the event by congratulating participants and commending students for their sportsmanship and school spirit.
- **Make some noise:** Help students come up with a few simple cheers. Cheering together is a fabulous way to build unity, and the athletes love to hear their fans.
- **Dress the part:** Use fabric paint and markers to decorate T-shirts prior to the event or have every fan wear the same color. It's a surefire way for the athletes to notice their fans in the stands.
- **Include family and friends:** At sports events, set out a table with pom-poms, noise-makers, and sign-making materials for family and friends to use in cheering on the athletes.





Checklist for Fans in the Stands

Fans in the Stands is a campaign designed to tap into core values and powerful attributes, such as unity, acceptance, empowerment, respect, inclusion, dignity, courage, strength, pride, and confidence. It's also fun! Use the ideas on page 75 and the checklist below to get started.

- 1. Meet with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss implementing Fans in the Stands in your school. Develop a timeline for organizing and planning the event.
- 2. Meet with the principal to discuss plans for Fans in the Stands and to ensure the administration's support and approval.
- 3. Organize individual students, classes, or clubs who are interested in becoming Fans in the Stands. Use the ideas on page 75 or brainstorm your own to teach students about the influence of sports fans and how to be a fan.
- 4. Develop a calendar of all school sporting events, Special Olympic competitions, and Unified Sports events that will take place each semester. Share the calendar with the school parent-teacher organization and invite their support.
- 5. Publicize Fans in the Stands. Communicate with school staff about the dates of events. Ask staff to attend, if possible, and to assist with communication through announcements, the school website and social media, letters sent home, the school newsletter, and local news media.
- 6. Prior to each event, create items such as posters and banners. Determine who will take them to the event and distribute them.





Social Media Posts

Whether your school uses Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, these suggested social media posts provide an easy way to keep your school community aware of, and involved in, Unified Champion School activities. We've included images sized to use on Facebook; however if you have images of students from your school, be sure to use them.





September: Friendship and Acceptance



Week 1: This month we're focusing on friendship. Share a story with your child about the different ways you've made friends over the years. There's not just one way to do it!



Week 2: Share this quote with your child. Has your child heard those words before? What do they mean?



Week 3: September 18 is National Respect Day. Discuss the meaning of the word "respect" with your child.



Week 4: Show your child this image. Is it good for our friends to be all alike? What's the benefit of having friends who are different from us?

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



Special Olympics
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Schools



October: Say “No” to Bullying



Week 1: October is National Bullying Prevention Month. Remind your child that if he or she witnesses bullying, it’s important to tell an adult right away.



Week 2: No one wants to feel lonely or left out. Challenge your child to be a friend to someone who needs a friend.



Week 3: Share this quote with your child: “Wrong is wrong even if everyone else is doing it. Right is right even if no one is doing it.” (St. Augustine)



Week 4: Ask your child what act of kindness he or she has done today.

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



November: Perseverance



Week 1: This month we're focusing on perseverance. Share with your child goals that you have for yourself. How will you need to use perseverance to achieve them?



Week 2: Some people need perseverance to solve math problems, read, or write a great story. Remind your child that everyone can learn and succeed!



Week 3: Even famous athletes need to work really hard to get better or stronger or faster. Encourage your child to use perseverance to meet a goal this week.



Week 4: Describe for your child a time you accomplished something that was difficult. How did you feel?

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



December: Leadership



Week 1: Anyone can be a leader. Being a leader means setting a good example, helping others, and doing the right thing. This week challenge your child to be a leader.



Week 2: Sometimes leaders help people by doing small things that make a big difference. Compliment your child when he or she helps others this week.



Week 3: Who is someone you admire? Tell your child about him or her.



Week 4: Talk with your child about what this quote means.

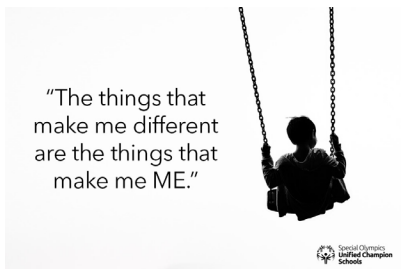
Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



January: Individuality



Week 1: Share this with your child: There is no one at school, in our city, or even in the world just like him or her. Celebrate what makes each member of your family unique!



Week 2: Check out this quote from Piglet in *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne. Discuss with your child what it means to you.



Week 3: Do you like dancing? How about basketball? Doing puzzles? The activities you enjoy are part of what makes you who you are. This month we're talking about how students' different interests make our school stronger and more diverse!



Week 4: This week, demonstrate for your child how to say something positive to someone about a trait that makes them unique. Be sure to let your child know that you value his or her uniqueness, too!

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



February: The Power of Teamwork



Week 1: Who are you cheering for in the Super Bowl? Now's a perfect time to talk with your child about being a good fan. Some people show support for their favorite team by wearing team colors, waving a pennant, or cheering for them. Think about ways you can show support for students who participate in sports.



Week 2: Athletes on a team have different roles, but they work together toward the same goal. Talk about a time you were a member of a team. How did teamwork make the group stronger?



Week 3: The letters T, E, A, M spell the word "team," but they also stand for "Together everyone achieves more." Talk with your child about how that saying applies to school.



Week 4: Teamwork isn't just for sports; it's for classrooms, too. Sometimes students team up to do a project or everyone pitches in to meet a goal. Talk with your child about what it's like to work on a project as a team.

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



March: The Power of Words



Week 1: Words are powerful. Ask your child about a time when someone's words made him or her smile.



Week 2: Here's a great thought for the week. How can you and your family follow this advice?



Week 3: Students are learning how powerful words can be. Challenge yourself to watch the words you use, being sure not to use nicknames or terms that could be hurtful.



Week 4: Today's challenge is to use only positive words. You can do it!

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



April: Encouragement



Week 1: Who encourages your child? This week take a moment to thank those important people in your child's life.



Week 2: Challenge your child to think of different ways to encourage others. Can you think of five different ways? Ten?



Week 3: This week demonstrate an encouraging attitude. Make it your goal to try to cheer up anyone who seems discouraged.



Week 4: What does this quote tell you about encouragement? Share these words with your child.

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



May: Taking Action



Week 1: This month we're talking about making a difference. Share these words with your child.



Week 2: In 1962, a woman named Eunice Kennedy Shriver did something that made a big difference. She held a summer day camp in her backyard for people with special needs. That led to the start of Special Olympics, now a worldwide program!



Week 3: Before athletes participate in Special Olympics, they say this oath: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me brave in the attempt." This week think about why athletes and others should be brave.



Week 4: Eunice Kennedy Shriver is honored each year on July 20. It's a day for people to celebrate the work she did to make a difference for so many people. Remember Mrs. Shriver as you think about ways you can make a difference.

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



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News to Use

Another way to keep your school community aware of, and involved in, Unified Champion School activities is through brief articles on your school website or in your school newsletter. Use these articles as is or modify them to include specifics from your school; be sure to add important dates about upcoming events as well. Whenever you can, include photos of students participating in activities.





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September: Friendship and Acceptance

As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we work to make sure all students have the opportunity to work, play, learn, and grow together. This year during morning announcements, we are sharing weekly messages to reinforce that goal.

This month's theme is friendship. Here are a few ways to start a discussion with your child about what it means to be a friend:

- Share this quote from poet Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The only way to have a friend is to be one." Talk about what that means.
- Share a story with your child about the different ways you've made friends over the years.
- What are the benefits of having friends who have things in common with us? What are the benefits of having friends who are different from us?

Did you know? September 18 is National Respect Day.

October: Say "No" to Bullying

October is National Bullying Prevention Month. As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we'll be sharing messages during morning announcements to talk about how bullying hurts us all.

Here are some questions you can ask your child to start a conversation about how we should treat others:

- What act of kindness have you done today? (Share your own examples too!)
- Can you think of someone you know who needs a friend? What could you do to help?
- What do you think this quote means? "Wrong is wrong even if everyone else is doing it. Right is right even if no one is doing it." (St. Augustine)

And finally, remind your child that if he or she witnesses bullying, it's important to tell an adult right away.





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November: Perseverance

This month we're focusing on perseverance. The ability to keep going when things get difficult is a life skill that will serve your child well.

As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we want each student to understand that something that is easy for him or her might be difficult for someone else, and visa versa. Through perseverance members of our school community can support one another as we all learn and grow.

Here are a few conversation starters you can use when talking about perseverance with your child:

- Share with your child a story about a time you worked extra hard to reach a goal.
- Ask your child what's easy for him or her. What's more difficult?
- Who helps your child when things are difficult? In turn, who does your child help?
- Does your child have a goal that he or she wants to meet? How could perseverance help?

December: Leadership

Being a leader doesn't mean your child has to go on to be class president or valedictorian (though he or she might!). As we work to build a socially inclusive school climate, we want students to realize that being a leader means setting a good example, helping others, and doing the right thing. That's what being a Special Olympics Unified Champion School is all about.

Try these thought starters to talk about leadership with your child:

- Sometimes leaders help people by doing small things that make a big difference. Watch for examples of this and point out to your child what you noticed.
- Who is someone you admire? Tell your child about him or her.
- Talk with your child about this quote: "Be somebody who makes everybody feel like a somebody."





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January: Individuality

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools celebrate each child's individuality and strive for a socially inclusive school climate. We want all children to know they are valued.

To support this goal at home, here are some conversation starters you can use to talk about individuality:

- What makes you unique? What makes me unique? What about other members of our family? Is being unique a good thing? What would our family be like if we were all the same?
- Share these wise words: "The things that make me different are the things that make me ME." That's a quote from Piglet in *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne. What does this mean?
- What activities do you enjoy? In what are you interested? That's part of what makes you who you are.
- Demonstrate for your child how to say something positive to someone about a trait that makes them unique. For example, what might your child say to someone who is full of smiles? Good at making foul shots in basketball? Good at playing the piano?

February: The Power of Teamwork

Are you planning to watch the Super Bowl? No doubt we'll see lots of examples of excited fans and stories about how the players must work together to win the game.

As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we work together and cheer for one another. Take a few minutes this month to talk with your child about teamwork:

- Talk with your child about a time you were a member of a team. How did teamwork make the group stronger? Has your child been on a team? What was the experience like?
- The letters in "team" just happen to stand for "Together everyone achieves more." Talk with your child about how that saying applies to school.
- Have you heard about Fans in the Stands? This program encourages students and families to attend a local Special Olympics event. Does this sound like something our family could do together to have fun and make a difference?





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March: The Power of Words

Sometimes a single phrase can make all the difference in whether someone feels like they're part of the group or an outsider. As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we work to use the power of words to create a positive, socially inclusive school climate.

Talk about the power of words with your child. Here are some ways to get started:

- Ask your child about a time when someone's words made him or her smile.
- Share these wise words: "It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice." Challenge your child to point out examples he or she sees and hears.
- Challenge your child to use only positive words today. Take the challenge yourself, too.

April: Encouragement

We all benefit from encouragement. Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools teach students to appreciate and support one another from an early age.

Let your child know that our school is focusing on encouragement this month. Launch a discussion with questions like these:

- Who encourages you?
- How do you encourage others?
- Can you think of five more ways to encourage others?
- Have you ever cheered up someone who seemed discouraged?
- How do small gestures of encouragement add up?





May: Taking Action

As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we're making a difference every day. Let's wrap up the year on a positive note and take a few minutes to think about just how powerful that mission is.

Talk about the power of words with your child. Here are some ways to get started:

- Share these words from President John F. Kennedy, whose sister, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founded Special Olympics: "One person can make a difference, and everyone should try."
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver held a summer day camp in her backyard for people with special needs, and that led to the start of Special Olympics. Why was this a good idea?
- Before athletes participate in Special Olympics, they say this oath: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me brave in the attempt." What does that mean? Why might athletes and others need to be brave?

Did you know? Eunice Kennedy Shriver is honored each year on July 20.





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Looking for Leaders

An elementary school play
inspired by “It’s Our School, Too!” by Suzy Messerole and Aamera Siddiqui

About this play

“Looking for Leaders” is a play designed to promote respect and empathy among all students. It works well as a kickoff event for a Respect Campaign (see pages 72–73). It can also be presented on its own any time of year.

Here are a few things to know:

- The play has six short scenes. The parts are brief, making it ideal for elementary students with and without disabilities to perform.
- Students may perform all parts, or adults may take the narrator and teacher roles.
- The play includes 30 parts, allowing for all students in a class or another large group to participate. As an alternative, a smaller group may present the play, with students performing in more than one scene.
- Consider having older students present the play to younger students or to parents as part of a school meeting or at an assembly.
- The only props that are needed are chairs and a table, but students may create additional props.



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Scene 1: OPENING

All performers enter the stage one by one. Each performer will say,

When you see me, I want you to see... *and then complete the sentence to describe one of their talents, hobbies, or attributes.*

Examples:

When you see me, I want you to see a friend.

When you see me, I want you to see a nice person.

When you see me, I want you to see that we are alike.

When you see me, I want you to see a soccer player.

When you see me, I want you to see that I'm friendly.

When you see me, I want you to see an artist.

When you see me, I want you to see a happy person.

When you see me, I want you to see a person who shows respect.





Scene 2: THE BUS RIDE

Roles:

Bus driver

Narrator 1

Students 1–4 (Student 1 is female.)

Narrator 2

Eight chairs are arranged in rows of two to represent seats on a school bus. One chair is in front of the paired chairs to represent the bus driver's seat. The bus driver and Students 2 through 4 are seated, with one empty chair beside Student 4 and the remaining empty chairs behind Student 4.

Student 1 is standing outside the bus. The bus driver pantomimes opening the bus door.

Bus Driver: Good morning!

Student 1: Good morning!

Student 1 smiles as she gets on the bus. The other students look at her with curiosity.

Student 2: *(Speaking softly)* Who's that?

Student 3: *(Speaking softly)* I don't know.

Student 4: *(Speaking loudly)* She's not sitting with me!

Student 1 glumly walks past Student 4 and then sits in an empty seat in the last row.

Student 3: *(Speaking to Student 4)* That was mean. She heard you. You shouldn't have said that.

Student 2: Well, she's not in our class. She doesn't need to sit with us.

Student 3: That doesn't matter. How would you like it if no one wanted you to sit with them?

Student 2: *(Slumps in seat.)* I guess I wouldn't like it.

Student 4: *(Slumps in seat.)* I guess I wouldn't either.

Student 2: I bet she's really sad now. We should do something.

Student 4: I'll say, "Sorry" when we get to school.

Student 3: I have an idea! Let's ask her to play with us at recess.

Students 2 and 4: *(Sitting up straighter in their seats)* That's a great idea!

Narrator enters the stage.

Narrator 1: When you hear other kids making rude comments, don't join in.

Narrator 2: Be kind as you let them know that being rude is not okay.





Scene 3: PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS

Roles:

PE teacher

Narrator 1

Students 1–3

Narrator 2

The PE teacher and students enter the stage.

PE teacher: Okay, class. Today we're going to practice kicking. I want you to kick the soccer ball into the goal. Line up behind one another.

Student 3: This is going to be fun!

Students 1–3 line up behind one another in numerical order and face the PE teacher, leaving several feet between them and the teacher. The teacher pantomimes rolling a ball to Student 1. Student 1 runs up and kicks the imaginary ball.

Student 2: Wow! That went right in.

PE teacher: Good job.

Student 1 happily gets the imaginary ball and tosses it to the teacher.

Student 1: *(Cheering on Student 2)* Come on! Smash it!

Student 3: Yeah, smash it!

The teacher rolls the ball and Student 2 runs up and kicks it.

Student 2: *(Does a fist pump.)* Score!

Student 2 gets the ball and tosses it to the teacher. The teacher rolls the ball to Student 3. Student 3 walks up and kicks.

Student 1: You missed it!

Student 2: It wasn't even close!

Students 1 and 2 laugh.

PE teacher: Okay, okay. Settle down.

Narrators 1 and 2 enter the stage.

Narrator 1: Kicking the ball is only one part of being a great soccer player.

Narrator 2: Another part is being a good teammate. A good teammate doesn't tease other players.

Narrator 1: A good teammate encourages all players even if they don't score.





Scene 4: GROUP ART PROJECT

Roles:

Art teacher

Narrator 1

Students 1–5 (Student 5 is male.)

Narrator 2

The art teacher and students enter the stage.

Art teacher: Today we're going to start a group project. Each group will make a poster. You can use my special paints and markers.

Student 5: Cool!

Student 2: This is going to be awesome.

Art teacher: Okay. Everyone get into groups of two or three.

Students 1 and 2 excitedly move to one side. Students 3 and 4 quickly pair up too. Student 5 stands quietly and looks at the floor.

Art teacher: Can someone make a group of three so everyone can join in?

Student 1: *(Talking to Student 2)* I don't want him in our group. He's not good at painting.

Student 3: *(Talking to Student 4)* Let's just do it on our own. I don't want anyone else in our group.

Student 4: That's not right. We shouldn't leave anyone out. How would you like it if no one wanted you in their group?

Student 3: Okay, okay. He can be in our group.

Student 4: *(Gesturing to Student 5)* Want to be in our group?

Student 5: Sure!

Student 5 joins Students 3 and 4.

Student 3: What should we put on the poster?

Student 4: I don't know.

Student 5: I have an idea.

Student 5 huddles with Students 3 and 4 and excitedly whispers his idea to them.

Student 3: That's a fantastic idea! Our poster is going to be great!

Students 3, 4, and 5 pantomime starting to create a poster as the narrators enter the stage.

Narrator 1: It's not fun to be left out. It feels horrible!

Narrator 2: You can make a difference by trying hard to make sure that no one is left out. That's one way you can be a leader.

Narrator 1: Everyone has unique skills and talents.

Narrator 2: When people work together, they help each other by sharing their strengths. Teamwork works!





Scene 5: THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA

Roles:

Students 1–3 (Student 1 is male.)

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Students 1–3 enter the stage. They walk behind one another to an imaginary cafeteria window. Student 1 takes an imaginary tray, walks over to a table with three chairs, and sits down. Students 2 and 3 stand at the window.

Student 1: Yum! Meatloaf and green beans!

Student 1 pantomimes eating his food. Students 2 and 3 start walking toward the table with their lunch trays. They stop when they notice Student 1 sitting there.

Student 2: I don't want to sit by that dummy.

Student 3: He's not a dummy. You shouldn't call people names.

Student 2: I didn't mean it.

Student 3: Well, it still wasn't nice. Did you know that he likes to play basketball?

Student 2: I like basketball too!

Student 3: You might be more alike than you think. There's an easy way to find out.

Student 2: Let's sit down with him.

Student 3: Maybe we can all be friends.

Students 2 and 3 sit at the table as Narrators 1 and 2 enter the stage.

Narrator 1: Mean words hurt people.

Narrator 2: It's never okay to call people mean names.

Narrators 1 and 2: Treat people as you would like to be treated by them.





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Scene 6: CLOSING

All performers enter the stage.

Student 1: We will encourage others. We won't put them down.

All: We will encourage others. We won't put them down.

Student 2: We will make sure that no one is left out.

All: We will make sure that no one is left out.

Student 3: We will use kind words.

All: We will use kind words.

Student 4: We will treat people as we would like to be treated.

All: We will treat people as we would like to be treated.





Checklist for “Looking for Leaders” School Play

The play presents several short vignettes that are designed to increase students’ awareness of respectful behavior and encourage them to be leaders by setting positive examples. You’ll find background information and the script on pages 93–99. Use the checklist below to guide your planning.

- 1. Meet with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss putting on the play at your school. Develop a timeline for planning and rehearsing the performance.
- 2. Meet with the principal to discuss plans for the play and ensure the administration’s support and approval.
- 3. Communicate with the school staff about the purpose of the play. Decide who will present the performance. For example, fifth graders could present the play to younger classes, or interested students from various grades might perform the play for students and parents.
- 4. Develop a plan.
 - Set the date, time, and location for the performance. Make sure these details are cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.
 - Assign roles and schedule rehearsals.
 - Create a plan for each task that needs to be completed, including deadlines, and a list of who is responsible for carrying out each step.
- 5. Ask the school staff members to assist with communication through announcements, the school website, letters sent home, the school newsletter, and local news media.
- 6. Encourage teachers to talk with their classes after the performance to discuss the play’s message of respect and social inclusion. See the discussion questions on page 101.
- 7. After the performance, be sure to thank everyone involved with the event.





Discussion Questions for “Looking for Leaders” School Play

The play provides a natural opportunity to promote class discussions that support social and emotional learning. Use questions such as the ones below to guide students’ reflections.

Grades K–2

- *Social awareness, relationship skills:* What can we learn from the play?
- *Self-awareness, social awareness:* What does it mean to be left out? How does it feel?
- *Social awareness:* What are some things a good teammate might say to a soccer player who scores a goal?
- *Social awareness:* What are some things a good teammate might say to a basketball player who misses a shot?
- *Social awareness:* How can words hurt people?
- *Responsible decision-making:* What can you do if you see a student who has no one to play with during recess?



Grades 3–5

- *Social awareness, relationship skills:* What do you think the play’s main message is?
- *Self-awareness:* Have you ever been left out of an activity? How did it feel?
- *Self-awareness:* Has anyone ever invited you to join them in a game or an activity during recess? How did it feel?
- *Social awareness:* Can you tell everything about a person by looking at him or her? Explain.
- *Social awareness:* How can students be different but alike?
- *Social awareness, relationship skills:* What does it mean to encourage someone?
- *Self-management, responsible decision-making:* A good leader sets a positive example. What does that statement mean to you?
- *Self-management, responsible decision-making:* How can students be leaders?

Unified Champion Schools provide students with experiences that **develop prosocial** skills.

To learn more about social and emotional learning, visit casel.org.



Whole School Engagement: Tips for Success

- **Start small!** Make sure your first activity is manageable and then build on that success.
- **Don't reinvent the wheel:** Build on activities that your school already does with a focus on making them more socially inclusive.
- **Include school administration:** Get the support of administrators early in the process. Invite them to participate in visible ways.
- **Incorporate social inclusion into schoolwide plans:** Be intentional about including social inclusion in curriculum development and school climate improvement activities. The unified program complements social emotional learning and can support schoolwide SEL goals already in place.
- **Take advantage of available resources:** Connect with your state Special Olympics program for support. Let them know about your successes, too!
- **Work together:** Share the goals of whole school engagement with staff, parents, and students.
- **Reach out:** Provide opportunities for stakeholders throughout the school and community to be involved.
- **Help students connect:** Encourage inclusive relationships in both structured and unstructured settings.
- **Connect with families:** Organize inclusive family events, such as a family skate night, a family bowling night, or a family movie night. While the school might have offered similar events in the past, you might need to make a deliberate effort to ensure that families of students with intellectual disabilities feel welcome.
- **Share accomplishments:** Use the school's website or social media to post photos, videos, and stories of social inclusion activities.
- **Encourage reflection:** Provide opportunities for students to reflect on whole school engagement activities through discussion or journal writing by asking questions such as, "What did you learn from the experience?" or "How did you feel before the activity, during the activity, and after the activity?"



For additional resources, see **Get Into It**, a web-based, interactive curriculum for students that promotes respect and acceptance for people with intellectual disabilities. This unique program delivers free lessons, activities, videos, athlete stories, and supplemental materials at <https://getintoit.specialolympics.org/>



Unified Champion Schools

Whole School Engagement Action Plan Form

Strategy/Activity	Tasks	Date of Completion	People Responsible
Connects with: <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Sports <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Youth Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Other			
Connects with: <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Sports <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Youth Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Other			



Glad to Be Me

Social and Emotional Learning Competency (SEL): Self-awareness

Lesson overview:

During this lesson, students learn the following:

- Interests and strengths contribute to uniqueness.
- Strengths include skills, talents, and character traits.
- How to identify one's own characteristics.

To wrap up the lesson, students will create a class display that showcases interests and strengths.

Academic skills:

- Participating in a group discussion
- Expressing thoughts clearly
- Writing in response to a prompt
- Developing vocabulary

Social-emotional learning skill:

- Identifying one's own interests and strengths

Estimated lesson time: 40–45 minutes

As an alternative, the lesson can be divided into two sessions, approximately 20 minutes each.



“By being yourself, you put something wonderful in the world that was not there before.”—Edwin Elliott



Through Special Olympics Unified Sports, 93% of young people with intellectual disabilities reported significant **change in self-esteem/self-confidence.**



Glad to Be Me

Social and Emotional Learning Competency (SEL): Self-awareness

Materials needed:

- “Roll a Question!” mini poster
- copy of “Meet Me!” reproducible for each student
- colorful copy of a smiley face pattern for each student
- class supply of 9" x 12" construction paper
- die
- crayons
- scissors
- stapler

Vocabulary:

- strength, talent, character traits



Activity:

1. Ask students, “What can you tell about someone just by looking at him or her?” Invite students to share their thoughts. Comment that it’s difficult to identify a person’s interests and strengths without interacting with them.
2. Ask students to define *strength* in their own words. Guide them to realize that the word not only means the quality of being physically strong but also means something at which a person is good. Point out that everyone has strengths. Explain that a strength might be a trait, such as being kind, patient, or creative; or it might be a skill or talent, such as playing soccer or the piano very well. Point out that having a strength in a particular area doesn’t necessarily mean that you are the best at it.
3. Tell students that they will complete an activity that involves identifying some of their own strengths and interests. Display the “Roll a Question!” mini poster. Roll a die and identify the number rolled. Read the corresponding question aloud and then answer it. Have each student take at least one turn. (Read the questions for students, if desired.)
4. Give each student a copy of the “Meet Me!” reproducible. Instruct each student to draw a self-portrait in the first box and then write and illustrate a sentence ending in each remaining box. Encourage more advanced students to list self-describing character traits in the last box.
5. Have each student cut out a colorful smiley face pattern. Back each student’s paper with construction paper and then display it with the smiley face cutout on a bulletin board titled “Glad to Be Me!”



Glad to Be Me

Social and Emotional Learning Competency (SEL): Self-awareness

Adaptations:

- **Time modification:** Complete the question activity one day and the reproducible activity on another day.
- **Easier version:** Complete the “Roll a Question!” activity early in the week. Throughout the rest of the week, meet with students in small groups to guide them in completing the reproducible. Invite them to draw or write a response to each sentence starter.
- **More advanced version:** Instead of using the “Meet Me!” reproducible, have each student design a poster that shows his or her name, interests, and strengths. Encourage students to include words that describe their character traits.



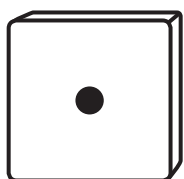
Extensions:

- **Grs. K–2:** Read a selection about self-awareness such as *You’re All Kinds of Wonderful* by Nancy Tillman or *I Like Myself!* by Karen Beaumont. Ask each student to write the following sentence starter and complete the sentence: “I like me because...” Then, have the student illustrate his or her work. **Writing**
- **Grs. K–5:** Invite each student to write in a journal about an achievement that makes him or her proud. **Writing**
- **Grs. 3–5:** Tell students that an acrostic is a poem that uses the letters of a topic-related word to begin each line of the poem, with every line describing the topic. Have each student write an acrostic using his or her name. **Writing**
- **Grs. K–5:** Guide students to name different physical strengths, such as being a fast runner or being able to jump high. Discuss how different strengths often lead to different interests. Also, point out that diverse physical strengths benefit sports teams.

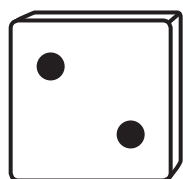
To learn more about social and emotional learning, visit casel.org.



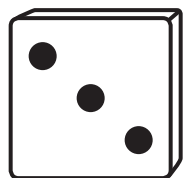
Roll a Question!



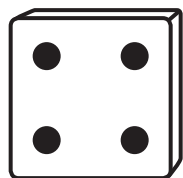
What
is your
favorite game or
sport to play?



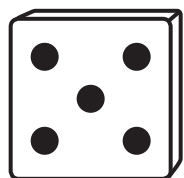
What do
you like to
do after school?



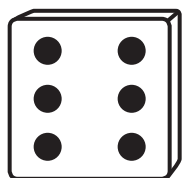
What is
one word
that describes
you?



What
makes you
really happy?



What do
you like
to do with your
family?



What is
one thing
you do well?

Name _____ Self-awareness: personal interests and strengths

Meet Me!

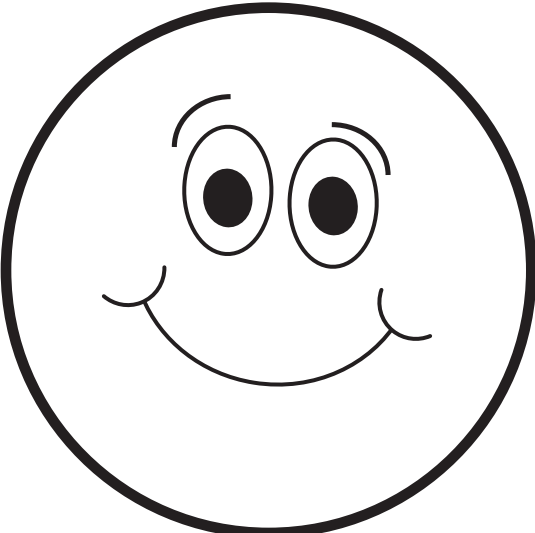
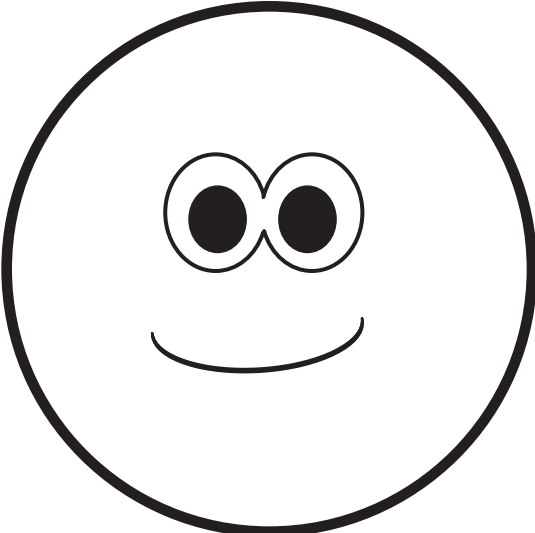
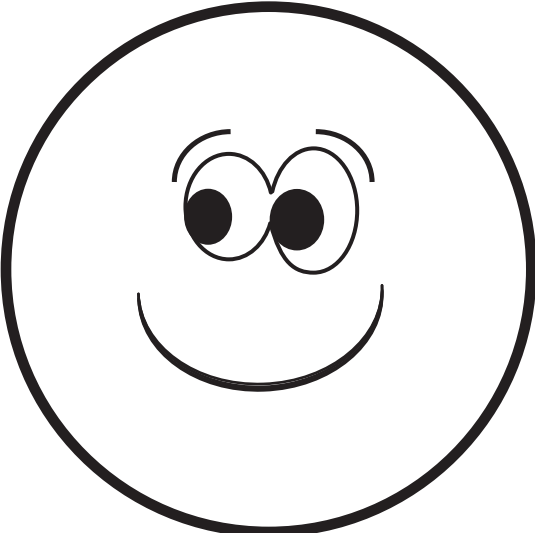
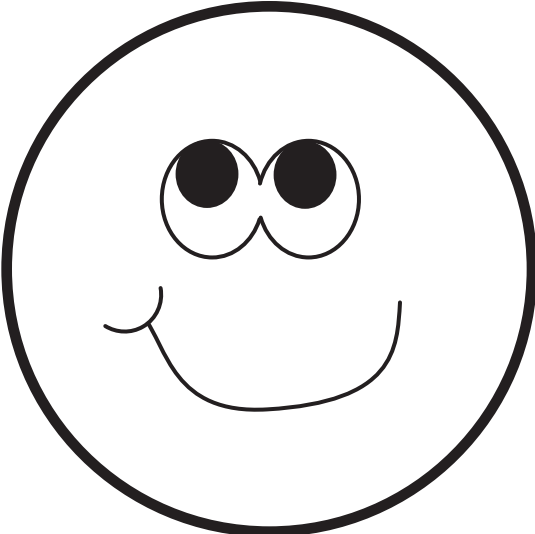
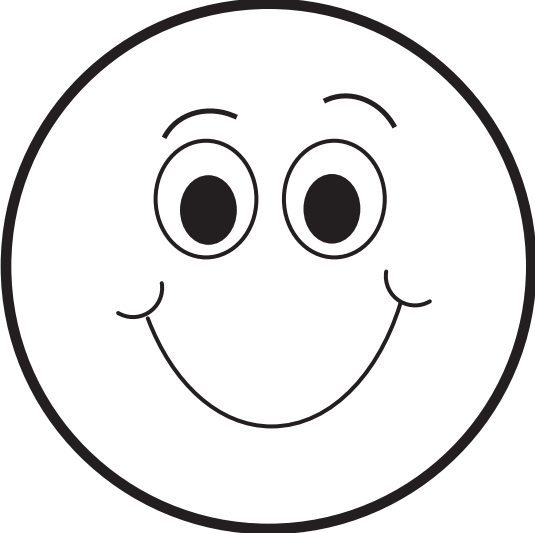
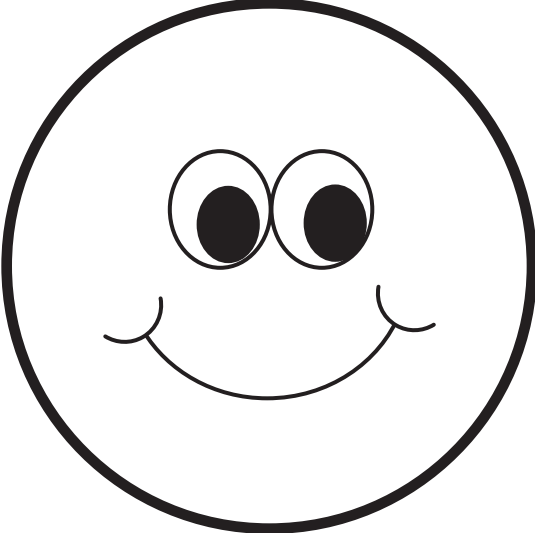
My Self-Portrait

I like to...

I am good at...

I am...

Smiley Face Patterns





Keep Trying!

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies (SEL):

Self-management, relationship skills

Lesson overview:

During this lesson, students do the following:

- Explore the theme of perseverance through a popular fable.
- Practice perseverance and providing encouragement.

To wrap up the lesson, students will write about the message conveyed in *The Tortoise and the Hare*: Hard work and perseverance bring reward.

Academic skills:

- Identifying the theme of a reading selection
- Making connections between literature and real-life experiences
- Participating in a group discussion
- Comparing characters

Social-emotional learning skills:

- Setting goals
- Motivating oneself
- Displaying perseverance
- Offering support to others when needed

Estimated lesson time: 45–50 minutes

As an alternative, the lesson can be divided into two sessions, approximately 25 minutes each.

Data shows that middle school students who participated in the Unified Champion Schools program reported they learned about **working with others** (64%), **helping others** (68%), becoming more **patient** (64%), **standing up** for something (66%), and that they have **things in common** with students of different abilities (59%).



“Little by little, one walks far.”—Peruvian Proverb



Keep Trying!

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies (SEL):

Self-management, relationship skills

Materials needed:

- *The Tortoise and the Hare* by Janet Stevens
- copy of the reproducible “A Lesson from Tortoise” or “The Power of Perseverance” for each student

Vocabulary:

fable, perseverance, determination, encourage

Activity:

1. Tell students that you’re going to read a certain kind of fiction book called a fable. Explain that many fables feature animals as the main characters and teach a lesson. Read the book aloud, pausing partway through the story. Ask each student to turn and tell his neighbor what he thinks the fable’s lesson might be. Then, finish reading the story.
2. Write the word *perseverance* on the board. Encourage students to define it in their own words. Then use the questions below to guide a class discussion.
 - How are Tortoise and Hare alike? Different?
 - What are some ways Tortoise shows perseverance and hard work?
 - What is determination? Where do you think it comes from?
 - How do Tortoise’s friends encourage him?
3. Tell students that everyone can learn new things. Sometimes, people need a lot of practice or time to learn a new task; that means they need perseverance. Explain that each student will have a chance to practice perseverance.



Students can see perseverance in action in the video about Special Olympics snowboarder Daina Shilts at http://bit.ly/daina_shilts.



4. Pair students and tell them that they will try to do a 180-degree jump turn. Demonstrate how students should stand with feet shoulder-width apart and then jump while turning their bodies 180 degrees, landing with their feet facing the opposite direction. If students can do this easily, ask them to try a full turn, landing with their feet facing the same direction that they started. Suggest that partners encourage each other. Give the first student in each twosome a few minutes to try this task (gauge the time according to students' enthusiasm and success) and then signal partners to switch roles.

Note: If students in the group have gross motor difficulties that hinder jumping, provide a different task, such as throwing a beanbag at a small target from a long distance.



5. Guide a discussion about the experience by asking students to respond to questions such as these:
 - When you first tried the task, how did you feel? Why?
 - If something is difficult the first time you try to do it, does it always mean that you won't ever be able to do it?
 - Think about another time when you tried something new, such as playing a musical instrument, learning the rules to a new game at recess, or drawing a self-portrait. How were these experiences similar? How were they different?
 - How can a friend motivate you to keep trying to do something that is difficult?
6. Tell students that Special Olympics is a sports program that includes athletes who might need a longer time to learn a particular skill. That means they need to persevere and try harder and work longer to learn a new skill. Explain that Special Olympics athletes say an oath before competing: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." Discuss the oath's meaning and what it means to be a winner.
7. Give each student a copy of the grade-appropriate version of the reproducible to complete.
 - Grs. K–1: "A Lesson from Tortoise"
 - Grs. 2–5: "The Power of Perseverance"



Keep Trying!

Social and Emotional Learning Competencies (SEL):

Self-management, relationship skills

Adaptations:

- **Time modification:** Complete the lesson over two days, reading and discussing *The Tortoise and the Hare* on the first day and completing the partner activity and written follow-up on another day.
- **Easier version:** For students who have difficulty expressing themselves in writing, have a classmate or an adult write their responses for them.
- **More advanced version:** After reading the story, create a class Venn diagram to compare and contrast Tortoise and Hare.



Sometimes making new friends takes perseverance, too. It might take longer to make friends with someone who is shy or someone who is still learning English. But with a little perseverance, those friendships flourish.

Extensions:

- **Grs. K-3:** Read aloud *The Most Magnificent Thing* by Ashley Spires. Ask students to describe the factors in the main character's success, such as the faithful support that the dog provides. Discuss the different ways friends can demonstrate support for one another. **Comprehension**
- **Grs. K-5:** Read aloud a real-life story of perseverance, *Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman* by Kathleen Krull. As a class, create a web of words that describe Wilma Rudolph or have each student create a web individually. **Character analysis**
- **Grs. 3-5:** Pair students and have each pair write and illustrate their own fable that teaches the lesson that perseverance brings reward. Arrange for students to share their fables with the rest of the class and students in lower grades. **Writing**

To learn more about social and emotional learning, visit casel.org.

A Lesson from Tortoise

What did you learn from the story about Tortoise and Hare?
Draw and write.



The Power of Perseverance



Explain what *perseverance* means in your own words.



Describe a time when you used perseverance to accomplish something. What helped you stick with the task?



Why is perseverance important?



We Are All Unique

Social and Emotional Learning Competency (SEL): Social awareness

Lesson overview:

During this lesson, students do the following:

- Explore the concepts of uniqueness and diversity.

During this lesson, students learn the following:

- All groups represent overlapping areas of similarities and differences.

To wrap up the lesson, students reflect on characteristics that make them unique and compare and contrast their interests and preferences with those of a classmate.

Academic skills:

- Demonstrating listening comprehension
- Participating in a group discussion
- Developing vocabulary
- Comparing and contrasting

Social-emotional learning skill:

- Appreciating diversity (recognizing individual similarities and differences)

Estimated lesson time: 35–40 minutes

As an alternative, the lesson can be divided into two sessions approximately 15 or 20 minutes each.



Program research shows staff and students alike believed the Unified Champion Schools program **empowers all students to become leaders.** They also felt that these leadership experiences help students learn valuable social-emotional skills like mentoring, interacting with new people, accepting others, learning from mistakes, and, most importantly, how to take on responsibility.

“Diversity is the one true thing we all have in common. Celebrate it every day.”—Author Unknown



We Are All Unique

Social and Emotional Learning Competency (SEL): Social awareness

Materials needed:

- copy of Activity Commands for teacher reference
- one 8½" x 11" sheet of white paper for every two students
- one 9" x 12" sheet of construction paper for every two students
- bulletin board backed with light-color paper
- class supply of colorful markers
- stapler



Vocabulary:

external, internal, alike, unique, diversity

Activity:

1. Comment that even though students see each other often, you wonder how well they really know each other. Explain that every person has characteristics that are external, or can be seen, as well as characteristics that are internal and cannot be seen. Tell students that they will complete an activity that will help them learn ways in which they are alike and ways in which they are different.
2. Have students stand side by side or in a large circle. Explain that they will need to listen carefully and step forward if a sentence describes them.
3. Read aloud a command from the top box of the teacher reference page. Allow time for students to respond; instruct students to look at the two groups that result. Then, ask students to return to their original places.



4. Continue with several other commands, reading some from the top box (external characteristics) and some from the bottom box (internal characteristics such as preferences and abilities). Modify the commands as needed to ensure that they are appropriate for your group and that all students are represented in a number of statements. Then, give a command that applies to all students, such as “Step right up if you are in my wonderful class.”
5. Have students return to their seats and then invite them to share their observations by asking them questions such as:
 - Did you learn anything new about your classmates?
 - How much can you tell about people just by looking at them?
 - Were you always grouped with the same people?
 - Some groups were small and some groups were large. Which did you prefer? Why?
6. Tell students that even though they are alike in some ways, no one is exactly the same as anyone else. We are all unique. Point out that students don't need to be alike in every way to be friends. Explain that diversity makes a community more interesting.
7. Pair students with and without intellectual disabilities as possible. Give each twosome a sheet of white paper and markers. Have the partners title their paper with their names. Ask them to write one way in which they are alike. Then, instruct each student to write a sentence identifying a personal interest or preference that his or her partner does not share. Have each student pair staple its paper to a sheet of construction paper.
8. Display students' work around the edges of a prepared bulletin board to create a border. In the center of the display, write a message celebrating diversity, such as “We are each unique. We're all awesome!”





We Are All Unique

Social and Emotional Learning Competency (SEL): Social awareness

Adaptations:

- **Time modification:** Complete the lesson over two days, doing the “Step Right Up” activity the first day, and the display activity on another day.
- **Easier version:** Instead of writing sentences with a partner, have each student draw an individual self-portrait.
- **More advanced version:** Rather than reading the provided commands, ask students to move around and team up with students who share designated traits or preferences. For one round, you might have students team up with students who have the same eye color or students who like the same flavor of ice cream. Point out that students will need to communicate with each other because some traits are not visible. After each round, ask each group to tell the class what preference or characteristic they share.

Extensions:

- **Grs. K–2:** Read aloud *You Be You* by Linda Kranz or *Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun* by Maria Dismondy. Have each student write what he or she learned from the selection in a journal or on a sheet of paper. **Demonstrating understanding of a story’s central message**
- **Grs. 2–5:** Display a quote about respect or diversity. (See the suggestions below.) Divide students into small groups. Have the group members write a sentence or two that explains what it means to them. Then, ask each group to share their work with the class. **Interpreting a text**
 - Treat people the same way you would like them to treat you.
 - “Never judge someone by the way he looks or a book by the way it’s covered; for inside those tattered pages, there’s a lot to be discovered.”—Stephen Cosgrove
 - “When I see you through my eyes, I think that we are different. When I see you through my heart, I know we are the same.”—Doe Zantamata
- **Grs. 3–5:** Read *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio with students. After each chapter, ask each student to write a reaction to the story events in a journal. **Writing an opinion about a text**

To learn more about social and emotional learning, visit casel.org.

Activity Commands

Step right up if you...

- are wearing sneakers.
- have brown eyes.
- are wearing jeans.
- have a blue backpack.
- have brown hair.
- have freckles.
- have pockets on your outfit.
- are wearing earrings.

Step right up if you...

- like to watch movies.
- like country music.
- play piano or another musical instrument.
- like to sleep late on the weekends.
- like to watch sports games.
- like hip-hop music.
- like to tell jokes.
- have a pet.
- like pepperoni pizza.
- like to play a sport.



Together We Are Stronger

Social and Emotional Learning Competency (SEL):

Relationship skills

Lesson overview:

During this lesson, students do the following:

- Play a game that demonstrates the value of working together.
- Reflect on the experience during a group discussion.
- Identify other situations and ways in which teamwork can be demonstrated.

Academic skills:

- Participating in a collaborative discussion
- Identifying real-life connections between words and their use

Social-emotional learning skills:

- Using teamwork to achieve a goal
- Cooperating with others
- Communicating effectively

Estimated lesson time: 35–40 minutes

As an alternative, the lesson can be divided into two sessions, approximately 15 or 20 minutes each.

Middle school and high school liaisons felt strongly that the Unified Champion Schools program increased opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to **work together** (95%), **raised awareness** about students with intellectual disabilities (94%), increased the **participation** of students with intellectual disabilities in school activities (92%), and **reduced bullying, teasing, and offensive language** (88%).



“The nice thing about teamwork is that you always have others on your side.”—Margaret Carty



Together We Are Stronger

Social and Emotional Learning Competency (SEL):

Relationship skills

Materials needed:

- class supply of beanbags
- source of music
- chart paper
- markers (one colorful, one black)

Vocabulary:

teamwork, cooperative

Activity:

1. Tell students that they will play a game that involves everyone working together toward the same goal. Explain that each student will balance a beanbag on his or her head. If the beanbag falls, the student is frozen. To be freed, another student needs to replace the beanbag on the frozen student's head without dropping his or her own beanbag. If the helper's beanbag falls, the helper also becomes frozen until someone rescues both players. Tell students that the goal of the game is for no more than two students to be frozen at any one time. (Adjust the number as appropriate for your group.)
2. Hand each student a beanbag. Start the activity by having each student balance the beanbag on his or her head. Then play music and have students try not to let the beanbags fall as they walk or dance around a designated area.
3. Continue for a desired amount of time or until a chosen number of songs play.





4. Gather students for a group discussion. Ask students questions such as:
 - How did you feel when you were frozen and needed someone to free you?
 - What helped the group be successful?
 - How does the word *teamwork* relate to this game?
5. Point out how students benefited when everyone worked together, rather than just certain friends helping each other. Remind students that if they didn't include everyone in the game, they might not have gotten help from someone when they most needed it. Working cooperatively with many different people is more effective than working with just a few.
6. Use a colorful marker to write "TEAM" vertically on a sheet of chart paper. Use a black marker to write each of the following words beside the corresponding beginning letter: *Together, Everyone, Achieves, More*. Read the words with students.
7. Have students name various situations in which they can demonstrate teamwork by helping or supporting another person. Possibilities include cheering for a classmate's soccer team, practicing with a bocce ball team, working on a class project, or doing a group service project. Guide students to brainstorm specific ways they can use words and actions to encourage, support, or help others in these and similar situations; then write their thoughts on chart paper.



To learn more about social and emotional learning, visit casel.org.



Together We Are Stronger

Social and Emotional Learning Competency (SEL):

Relationship skills

Adaptations:

- **Time modification:** Complete the lesson over two days, playing and discussing the game on the first day and brainstorming ways teamwork can be demonstrated on another day.
- **Easier version:** Provide more structure by dividing students into groups and having each group walk with their beanbags on their heads on a different designated path.
- **More advanced version:** After introducing the saying “Together Everyone Achieves More” to students, have them work in small groups to create posters promoting teamwork.

Extensions:

- **Grs. K–1:** Read aloud *Strictly No Elephants* by Lisa Mantchev. Have each student draw a picture that shows one thing that friends do and then write about it. **Writing**
- **Grs. 2–5:** Read aloud “The Sneetches” from *The Sneetches and Other Stories* by Dr. Seuss. Write the words *include* and *exclude* on the board. Explain that the prefix *in-* means *in, toward, or into* and the prefix *ex-* means *out, outside, or away from*. Guide students to discuss how these words relate to the story.

Vocabulary

- **Grs. K–5:** Tell students that treating others the same way they would like to be treated is a great way to show respect. Ask students to describe what respect looks like and how it sounds. **Vocabulary**

