



Sport of the Month



November

This month's theme: **fairness**

Goals:

- Help students understand the meaning and value of fairness in sports as well as in daily life.
- Help students to understand that fair play is as important as competition and effort.
- Help students to recognize when fairness is not a part of competition and how to correct it.

Week 1:

Begin the lesson by asking for a show of hands: *How many of you play sports, like to participate in physical activities, or play games with your friends? How does participating in physical activities or games help you?* Tell students you'd like to share a story about a ten-year-old boy who likes sports. He has had to work especially hard to learn new skills because he has intellectual disabilities. Ask students if they know what this term means. Explain to students that people with intellectual disabilities have to work harder to do certain tasks, but like others, they excel at other tasks. Remind students that people's differences are part of what makes the world interesting. It would be boring if we were all the same! Then share the story below.

Meet a Special Olympics Athlete

Cole Cleworth is ten years old and lives in a small city in Wisconsin. He likes drawing, singing, bowling, cross-country skiing, and track and field. He is also active in his church. In many ways Cole is like any other child his age. But Cole has Down syndrome. But that doesn't stop him from doing just about anything. It just makes things a little harder.

Having Down syndrome is just something that makes Cole a little different, the way you have brown eyes and someone else has blue eyes. Down syndrome makes Cole more flexible in his joints than most kids and also gives his eyes a different shape. It also makes him learn more slowly. But he can do everything you do, just a little more slowly. He likes all the same things other kids do, and he's a great friend. And by the way, you can't catch Down syndrome like you can catch a cold. You are born with it. But once you have it, you'll always have it.

Teacher note: Allow children to ask questions here.

Cole spends a lot of his time in Special Olympics. He has won medals in all his sports. He was especially excited when he received his first gold medal. He won it for cross-country skiing.

Cole is smaller than most athletes his age, but this does not stop him from trying.

Bowling in Special Olympics

Although bowling is not part of the Olympics, it is among the most popular sports in Special Olympics. Participants of many different ages and with different degrees of athletic ability can participate. They benefit not only from the exercise but also from the social aspects of the game.

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

"We have created an expectation in our school community—all students should be included, respected, and treasured whenever it is in the best interest of the kids. Our administration and staff are very supportive."



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Week 1 (continued):

Take Action!

- Explain to students that anyone is invited to cheer on the athletes at a Special Olympics event. Share the dates for upcoming local events and encourage students to ask their parents if they can attend. Then remind students to gather a group of friends, make some posters, and bring their team spirit to be Fans in the Stands at a local Special Olympics event!



He tries any sport he is asked to try and gives it his all. When running in his first race at competition, he ran down the track with a huge smile on his face and waved to the crowd. That caused the crowd to cheer more, and he smiled even bigger. When he gets on cross-country skis, he moves very quickly. At times he falls, but he jumps right back up and keeps going.

Cole always wants to try new things. He isn't afraid. All in all, Cole is just like many children his age—except for having Down syndrome. But if you know Cole, there is nothing “down” about him. He can light up the day with his smile, and he brings joy to those who know him.

When you have finished reading this passage, review the information with your students. Ask questions: *Do you think that the benefits of participating in sports are different for people with intellectual disabilities? Why or why not? How would a sport like bowling positively impact a child like Cole? What about soccer or softball?*

Week 2:

Share the Special Olympics “Sport Teaches Us” video with your class. (Video can be found at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>.) Engage students in a discussion: *Why was Special Olympics formed? How are Special Olympics athletes like you? What do you have in common?*

Next, share Special Olympics’ video “It’s All About Unity” with your class. (Video can be found at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>.) Engage students in a discussion: *What does the word unity mean to you? How are unity and fairness related? How important are the words unity and fairness in Special Olympics?* Challenge students to write about what they have learned related to fairness, unity, and Special Olympics, with the goal of explaining these concepts to a younger child. Partner with a younger class and have students share their thoughts with the younger children. Then invite the younger children to illustrate what they’ve learned. Bind the stories and illustrations into a class book titled “Fair for All, Fun for All” that the younger class will get to keep.

November events:

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Week 3:

Review what the students have learned about Special Olympics and Special Olympics athletes in the first two weeks of November. You may want to review the videos from last week.

Write a KWL (Know, Want to Know, Learned) chart on the board to organize the information that students have learned from the Special Olympics profile and the video. Brainstorm facts that students now know about Special Olympics, including ways in which athletes with intellectual disabilities have benefited from participation in Special Olympics. Record students’ responses on the chart under Know.



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Project UNIFY®

Special Olympics Project UNIFY uses sports and education programs to activate young people to develop school communities where all students are agents of change—fostering respect, dignity, and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities. Learn more about Project UNIFY at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>.

Week 3 (continued):

Move to the Want to Know column of the chart, asking students what questions the profile and video raised and what they would like to learn about Special Olympics and the games, athletes, coaches, or volunteers. As students brainstorm, write their questions on the chart (e.g., How many athletes around the world participate in Special Olympics? What sports are included? How did the organization start? Where/when will the next World Games happen? Can anyone attend Special Olympics events?).

Ask students to identify available resources, such as Special Olympics' website, to answer those questions.

Separate the class into cooperative groups and have each group select several questions to research. The group's designated recorder should write each answer on a sticky note to be posted in the Learned column on the chart. Invite the group's designated leader to report the findings to the class.

Week 4:

This week, begin by asking your students if they have ever taken an oath. Discuss the following questions:

- What is an oath?
- Can you think of others who are required to take an oath? (presidents, public officials, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, witnesses in a courtroom)
- Why do people take oaths?

Read aloud as you write the Special Olympics Athlete Oath on the board:
Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.

Explain that Special Olympics participants take this oath before competing and that gladiators spoke these same words in ancient Rome as they entered the arena, prepared for battle. Ask students, "What do you think this oath means?" and have them relate the oath to sports or competitive activities in which they've participated. Continue the discussion with questions like these:

- What is it like to want to win?
- How does it feel to lose?
- How is a sports competition like a battle?
- Why must athletes be brave?
- Why must Special Olympics athletes be brave? What challenges might they face while competing?

Finally, divide your class into small groups and challenge each group to come up with a short, well-written oath of their own. The oath should include the words *unity* and *fairness* and refer not just to sports in their school and community, but to the way they treat friends and classmates as well. Have the entire class vote on a favorite oath and post it in your classroom.