



Sport of the Month



figure skating

January

This month's theme: **individuality**

Goals:

- Help students understand what makes them each an individual.
- Help students understand how to value each other as individuals.
- Help students be proud of who they are as individuals and foster their self-worth.

Figure Skating in Special Olympics

Figure skating is a sport in which individuals or pairs perform spins, jumps, footwork, and other intricate and challenging moves on ice skates.

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

"I was able to bring the rest of the teaching team on board to do activities together. It has helped me build partnerships within our school."

Week 1:

Gather your students together and spend some time brainstorming the meaning of several words to make sure all students have an equal understanding. Ask your students if they know what the words *individual*, *unique*, and *self-esteem* mean. It's likely that self-esteem will be the most difficult concept for your students to grasp, so be sure to have an age-appropriate explanation prepared in advance. For example, you might explain that self-esteem isn't something you can see or touch, but it's a feeling inside you that affects how you feel about yourself and how you respond to different situations.

Next, give your students some time to think about the answers to the following questions as you distribute drawing paper.

- What makes me unique?
- What makes me feel good about myself?

Once all of your students have paper and art supplies, ask them to draw a picture of themselves that shows what makes them unique. Suggest to students some things that might make them unique. *Do you love turtles? Do you like to put corn flakes on your peanut butter sandwich? Is your hair a different color than everyone else's? Were you born in a different part of the country? A different part of the world? Do you speak a different language at home?*

As an extension for older students, have them write a brief letter to accompany the picture.

When all of your students have completed their pictures, collect them and set them aside for Week 2.



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Take Action!

● **Take the Plunge!** Most Special Olympics State Programs have exciting fundraisers where individuals raise money and then do crazy things (like jump into the ocean in February, rappel off a 10-story building, pull a plane, and more!). Contact your local or state Special Olympics Program to see what opportunities are available.



Week 2:

Start off this week's discussion by revisiting the definitions your class came up with for *individual*, *unique*, and *self-esteem*. Remind students of the things they discovered about themselves that are different from everyone else, the very things that make them unique.

Next, point out how your students are similar. Some ways to do this include

- Raise your hand if you are a student in my class.
- Raise your hand if you are a boy/girl.
- Raise your hand if you like sports.
- Raise your hand if you like dogs/cats.

Next, ask your students to share their drawing from Week 1 with the class. Ask them to explain what is in their picture and why it shows what makes them unique. When all the students have shared their pictures, point out to them that each child is both a unique individual and a part of a larger group. Remind them that together they make up your class, a very important group of individuals in your life.

Week 3:

Start this week's lesson by asking your students to answer this question: *What is something nice someone has said to you today/this week?* As students give their answers, be sure to ask them why these kind words made them feel better and who said them.

Next, begin a drawing exercise similar to the one in Week 1. However, this time, randomly assign students a classmate to draw so that they are not drawing themselves. Instruct students to say something nice about the classmate they are drawing, as well as pointing out something positive that makes him or her unique. Finally, have students write a brief letter to accompany the picture. Students will be pleased to find out what others see as their unique and interesting traits!



January events:

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Week 4:

Program Spotlight: Get Into It[®] Games

It's More Fun When Everyone Plays!



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

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

Find links to all games at
<http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>.

Students will ask to play these engaging games again and again!

As a class, watch Special Olympics' video *Be a Fan of Confidence*, which introduces Charles Howard, a medal-winning snowboarder and someone who shows his individuality with pride. You'll find the video at <http://www.specialolympics.org/educators>.

Ask your students to describe what Charles's talents are (athlete, artist, actor, singer). Then ask, *How do these talents contribute to Charles's individuality? Does he seem like a confident person, one with positive self-esteem? Does he seem like a fun person to spend time with? What does his coach say about him? How did his participation in Special Olympics contribute to the person he has become?*

Be sure to make connections between the individual performance of the athlete and the team of coaches and supporters who help make the competition successful for the athlete. Remind students that everyone can play a role in supporting the athletes, including volunteering, cheering, coaching, and spreading the word about the impact that Special Olympics has.

