



INTRODUCING THE YOUNG ATHLETES™ CURRICULUM

Young Athletes™ is an innovative sports play program with 76,000 participants aged 2-7 years involved around the world. The program includes active games, songs and other play activities that help children develop motor, social and cognitive skills. Children with intellectual disabilities have this opportunity to learn, grown and have fun because of you—their families, teachers, coaches, volunteers, early intervention specialists and other professionals.

Your commitment to learn about and lead the Young Athletes™ program at home, in the community, and in schools is what makes the biggest difference in young children's lives. The new Young Athletes™ Curriculum is a tremendous resource to support your success and we are pleased to introduce it to you.

The Young Athletes™ Curriculum builds on the Young Athletes™ Activity Guide and Training video resources, providing scripted Lesson Plans for you to use over an 8 week period. For each week there are 3 days of Lesson Plans for a total of 24 days. Lessons are designed to be offered in sequence to help children become acquainted with the activities and build skills through repetition.

- Week 1: Foundation Skills
- Week 2: Walking and Running
- Week 3: Balance and Jumping
- Week 4: Trapping and Catching
- Week 5: Throwing
- Week 6: Striking
- Week 7: Kicking
- Week 8: Review of Skills as Sports

We encourage you to download the resources from the online toolkit at:

[http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/Young Athletes/Young Athletes Toolkit.aspx](http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/Young_Athletes/Young_Athletes_Toolkit.aspx)

Online tools include all the Lesson Plans (8 weeks with 3 days each), the Lesson Summary Cards, Equipment List, Activity Guide, Videos, Suggestions from Teachers, and additional promotional and planning tools.

It is extremely exciting to provide this resource to you because of the promising results of the research study results. This Curriculum was developed and evaluated by the Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts at Boston in collaboration with the Frank Porter Graham Research Institute at the University of North Carolina. Those children whose teachers lead Young Athletes™ using the Curriculum gained significantly more motor development skills than their peers whose teachers did not incorporate the Lessons into their preschool program. In addition, teachers and families also reported that young athletes made important gains in social skills, language development, confidence and other kindergarten readiness skills. (Favazza, Siperstein, Zeisel, Odom & Moskowitz, 2011)

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