
World Olympics

Preparing Students for a
Multicultural and Multireligious World

A CURRICULUM DEVELOPED BY TANENBAUM FOR GRADES K-6



Imagine: a more peaceful world that respects difference.
We are committed to making that vision a reality.

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Measurement and Timekeeping

Unit 5, Lesson 3

Objectives: Students will learn about standard units of measurement and practice measurement and timekeeping skills in teams to prepare for their final Olympics.

Skills: Teamwork, Measurement (time and distance), Estimating, Averages

Grades: K-6

Materials:

- Stopwatches
- Paper Plates
- Rulers
- Paper
- Pencils

PROCEDURE

Part I – Standard Units of Measurement

Step One: Tell the students that today, to practice their measurements, they will be having a paper plate discus throw. Explain to the students that they will be measuring how far the discus throw is.

Ask the class: *What can we use to measure these?* Explain to students that first they will be measuring their throws with the length of their hands (i.e. – how many of a person's "hands" it takes to span the distance).

Step Two: Have the students get into groups of three and take turns throwing the paper plate discus. One student will be the "thrower," and then all three will measure the throw using their own hands and record their measurements. After one student has finished throwing, another student in the group should take a turn.

Step Three: After all the students have finished throwing and measuring, ask students: *Did all of the people in your group have the same measurement for each throw? Why do you think that you sometimes got different measurements? If we did this activity with a group of people from the whole school, how many different answers do you think we would get? What can we do to make sure that we all get the same measurement for each throw?*

Explain to the class that the reason everyone got a different distance for the same throw was because everyone's hands are different in size. In order for everyone in the world to get the same measurement of a distance, we use standard units. Ask students if they know of any examples of standard units for size, distance, weight, time, etc.

Step Four: Show the class the English ruler (inches). Ask the class if they know what it is. Have the students define "ruler" and talk about what a ruler is and what it is used for. Then show the class the metric ruler (cms). Ask if anyone knows the difference between the two rulers. Explain that some countries use inches, while other countries use centimeters to measure. Ask students: *Do you know a country that uses inches? Do you know a country that uses centimeters?*

Step Five: You can help students pair up and measure each other's heights to practice. Talk the class through the process step-by-step. Measure with all of the units of measurement, stressing units. Explain that it is important to say which unit of measurement you are using when reporting a measurement. For example, a line that is one inch long is also two and a half centimeters long.

Part II - Timekeeping

Step One: For younger children, you can begin with a mini-lesson on time and the units of time. Explain that time is measured by units called seconds, minutes and hours. A good estimation of one second is the time it takes to say "Mississippi" or "One Thousand." Have the children say these words so they can learn approximately how long a second is.

Step Two: Tell the students that a minute is made up of sixty seconds. Have the students sit still and quietly while you time one minute, so that they can get a feel for how long a minute is. Give them other everyday examples of approximate times. For example, a TV commercial is about 30 seconds or half a minute long.

Step Three: Now have the children guess how long they think it takes to do common tasks in the classroom such as cleaning the blackboard, etc. Record all the guesses.

Step Four: Show the class a stopwatch. Explain where the start and stop buttons are. Show the class where the minutes and seconds are displayed. Model timing for the class. Time how long it takes a student to clean the board or walk from one side of the room to another.

Step Five: Have the children find a partner. Distribute one stopwatch for each pair of students. Tell the children that each partner will get a turn being the timekeeper.

Step Six: Have the first partner time how long it takes his/her partner to hop on one foot five times. Have the pair switch roles and have the second partner time his/her partner saying the alphabet. Have the children record these times, in minutes and seconds.

Step Seven: Allow each time for the partners to report to the class how long the activities took. Then discuss with the class: *Did everyone complete the activities in the same amount of time? Do all people do things at the same rate? Why or why not? Is there something that takes you a long time to do? Something you are super fast at doing?*

Step Eight: Children will now practice timing the activities they will be participating in in their Olympic games. Allow children to rotate jobs, so that everyone gets a chance to be the timekeeper and to participate.

Step Nine: Explain that estimating is like making a good guess. Have the students write down a guess of how long it will take them to draw a picture of a cat or to write their own names. Then, have them time each other.

Step Ten: After their estimation and their actual times are recorded, facilitate a discussion: *Were your estimations close? Why or why not?*

Part III - Olympic Averages

Step One: Tell the children that today they will be practicing for their Olympic Games. Have the students choose three events that they would like to measure time or distance for. Set up the classroom so that there is room for all the activities to take place simultaneously. Remember to choose physical as well as non-physical games.

Step Two: Divide the class into three groups. Each group will begin at a different activity station. If there is enough time, all of the groups can rotate through all of the stations.

Step Three: Have students take turns being measurers and participants in the activity. Have students take measurements three times and then calculate the average. For example, if one of the events is a paper plate throw, then have one student be the thrower and the other be the measurer. Ask throwers to throw the paper plate three times, and then have measurers calculate the average throw distance.

Step Four: Ask students why averages are used. *What are some other ways that can be used to calculate the person's score (choosing the best of three scores, picking the middle number, random choice etc.)? Which is the best method? Why?*