



World Olympics – Correspondence with Families

Throughout the *World Olympics* program, it will be important to let families know what their children are learning and what sorts of activities they've been participating in. We recommend sending an introductory letter outlining the purpose of *World Olympics* and the schedule of activities. You will want to maintain ongoing communication, as this will help families be able to engage in conversation about the activities with their children and bring their learning home. Below are some guidelines for suggested content for such communications.

Introductory Letter Outlining the Project

Points to include:

- Purpose of the *World Olympics* Program
- Schedule of units and activities
- A pre-invitation to the culminating Olympics event
- Suggestions for engaging students in conversation about what they've been doing
 - You may wish to include specific discussion questions that go beyond the standard "What did you learn today?" For instance, families could ask their children "Did you learn about a new country today? What is one interesting fact you learned?" or "Did you talk about teamwork? What is teamwork?"

Ongoing Communication

We highly recommend that you include the following points in ongoing conversation with families:

- In Unit One (Learning About Each Other), students engage in a number of activities about their families, ancestors and traditions. It is important to note that some students may not want to share part or all of their family stories, especially if they come from a non-traditional family setting. You may choose to learn a bit about students' families prior to these activities, in order to best guide them through any difficult areas. Furthermore, it will certainly be helpful to know exactly who you are communicating with throughout the course of the program.
- For Unit Three (Learning About Wellness), you will want to find out about any dietary restrictions students may have, as some of the activities involve preparing and/or eating food. It is best, whenever possible, to gather this information from their families.
- Many of the activities in Unit Four (Learning About Being an Athlete) discuss stereotypes and prejudice, which can be difficult and complicated topics for students to fully understand and engage with respectfully. We recommend giving families an overview of these activities before students participate in them, as well as a brief summary of how the activities went. You will want to explain to families why you are doing these activities and provide suggestions for follow-up discussions that they may wish to have with their children. Take caution, however, that some of the stereotypes students bring with them to the program may have originated at home. Rather than confronting stu-

dents and/or families about these stereotypes, we recommend sticking to broader, non-confrontational discussion topics that highlight the danger of stereotyping, as well as the new critical thinking skills that students are learning to help them debunk stereotypes. Some suggestions for discussion questions include:

- How do we learn about other peoples and cultures? What resources do we use? What perspectives do these resources provide?
- What is a stereotype? How do we form stereotypes? Can you think of any positive or negative aspects of having stereotypes?
- How can you respectfully ask questions to learn more about a different culture?
- Throughout the program, you can choose to send notes home regarding specific student achievements. This will help families better connect with their children's learning and help them understand the successes of the program. You may also want to schedule time when family members and community members can come and preview what your students have created – flags, banners, ancestor collages, etc.
- When sending out invitations to the culminating Olympics event, we recommend that you give families ample notice so that they can best plan to attend. You may want to engage students in creating and/or decorating the invitations!