

# Special Olympics Texas Young Athletes™

## What is the Young Athletes (YA) program?



The Young Athletes program (YA) is a sports play program designed to introduce children to the world of sports prior to Special Olympics eligibility at age eight. The program utilizes physical activities to develop fundamental motor tracking and eye-hand coordination play. Children build these skills by participating in specific activities on a regular basis. The program concentrates on applying the skills learned through these activities in preparation for Special Olympics sports competitions.

The YA program was developed in direct response to requests from families wanting to involve their young children in Special Olympics. The program is solely based on participation, there is no competition. However, the skills these children learn will improve all areas of their lives, including participating in future Special Olympics Texas competitions.

## What is the Focus of Young Athletes?

Students will work on skills as part of their school day. These skills may be in line with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. One to two times a year there will be a culminating day called the Future Stars Sports Day, where the students will demonstrate the skills they have learned for family and friends.

At age seven, Young Athletes will have the opportunity to participate at a local area competition in two events. Here they can experience what competition and events are about at the next level.

## Physical Activities for Young Athletes

- Foundational Skills
- Balance and jumping
- Throwing
- Kicking
- Walking and running
- Trapping and catching
- Striking
- Advanced Skills

Children will learn these skills through a series of activities like bunny hop, obstacle course and bean bag throw.

## Who Benefits from the Program?

### Benefits to Athletes

- Socialization
- Coordination and strength building
- Awareness of self worth and self confidence
- Introduction to sports and preparation for competitions when they are of age

### Benefits for Families

- Introduces families to the resources and support available within Special Olympics
- Offers families the opportunity to share in the success of their future athlete



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Texas

### Special Olympics Texas

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