

# SCHOLASTIC OLYMPICS MAKE LEARNING FUN

blows the whistle and they are off like streaks of lightning, clipboards and pencils in hand to follow a prearranged course around the playground. When they return they'll have a list of 75 nouns and 50 verbs.

Each year during the last two weeks of school I use Scholastic Olympics to capture the attention of restless minds. We review the work of the year and have fun in the process.

To provide atmosphere the room is decorated with posters of sports action bought in the local Christian bookstore. Flags of the participating countries are on display. A huge scoreboard is drawn on one chalkboard. "G" means gold; "S" is for silver; and "B" is for bronze medals won. For the purpose of averaging scores, gold is worth three points, silver two points, and bronze one point.

## **Worships**

Morning worships center around the Olympics theme. We talk about what makes us winners in the game of life. Stories can be found in the junior devotional for 1988.<sup>1</sup>

On the last day of school each child receives a certificate for outstanding performance and good sportsmanship in Scholastic Olympics. Thus, each child ends up a winner.

Some of the events I have found successful are listed below. I adapt these activities from year to year according to the material covered and the ages of the children involved.

In multigrade rooms it is important to group older students with younger ones on each team so that all have an equal chance of success.

## **Bible Broad Jump**

Play like Tic-Tac-Toe, with two teams competing. Use review questions on the Bible lessons.

## **Handwriting High Jump**

Give a handwriting test on all upper- and lower-case letters of the alphabet. Allow one point for each letter formed correctly.

## **Story Telling**

Have the children line up in front of the room. The first person begins a

**I**t is the last week of school. The weather is perfect. A soft, warm breeze, heavy with the scent of lilacs and new-mown grass, ruffles the papers on the desks. Let's look in on two very different classrooms as the children come in from their noon recess:

*Classroom 1:* Bored children stare out the window, wishing they could be as free as the robin that hops across the playground. The teacher introduces a language review. The children groan as they take out their language textbook and half-heartedly turn to the pages that review nouns and verbs.

*Classroom 2:* Excited children gather around the Scholastic Olympics Scoreboard after noon recess. Their eyes sparkle as they count the number of gold medals for their team. The bell rings and they take their places in one of four groups of desks. Hanging from the ceiling above the group is a sign that identifies the teams: Canada, U.S.A., France, and Australia. The warm breeze ruffles flags of the four countries on the teacher's desk. Every eye is on her as she explains the rules for the Language Cross-Country Run. She

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story. When he is tired of talking, or at the end of two minutes, he touches the next person, who picks up the story where he left off. Each person must say at least three sentences before touching the next person. They may not repeat the same thing over and over. If there is a gap in speaking of more than five seconds, the team must sit down. Count the number of minutes and seconds they are able to talk.

### **Listening Lightweight Championship**

Play a story record or tape, then give a quiz on the story. Each person answers separately. Total the points for each item.

### **Math Marathon**

Use duplicated sheets of math facts like those used for drill and timing

during the year. Then see how many sheets of math the students can do in a 20-minute period. Each person works on separate sheets. Total the number of sheets for each team.

### **Math Meter Run**

Using small chalkboards for each child, give a series of mental math computations the students are to do. They are to compute in their heads,

then write the answer when you call for it. Example: "Take the number 2, multiply by 2, add 5, add 9, subtract 3, subtract 5, add 4. Write your answer." Give one point for each correct answer. This can be adjusted for difficulty, according to the grade level. I have used this with upper-grade students for multiplying and dividing by tens, hundreds, and thousands, which requires them to move the decimal point mentally.

### **Crossword Steeplechase**

Have a variety of crossword puzzles available. I use one table for easy puzzles, worth one point each; another table of harder puzzles, worth three points each. Each person tries to do as many puzzles as possible in 20 minutes.

### **Bible Sword Drill**

Make a list of 50 texts and an object you want the students to find in each text. Read a text. The first person to find the object stands and gives the answer. Examples: "Find an animal in Genesis 49:27"; "Find a weapon in Jeremiah 51:20."

### **Reading Relay\***

Time each child to see how long he or she can read without making a mistake. Students are to use the last reading book they completed. Give one point for every 10 seconds. No one is allowed to read more than two minutes.

### **Writing Derby**

Divide the children into teams. Give them a topic such as "Summer Vacation." At the signal they are to begin to write as fast as they can on that topic. They may repeat sentences and phrases if they need to do so. The object is to write nonstop for 15 minutes, stopping when the bell rings. Students may raise their hand to have you spell a word for them. However, words do not have to be spelled correctly. First-graders might be allowed to copy from a book. Total the number of words written by each group.

### **Puzzle Race**

Give 100-piece jigsaw puzzles to each group. Have them race to see who can get their puzzle put together first.

### **Writing Wrestling Match\***

One person in each group is designated as writer. The rest tell him what to write. Begin by calling a letter of the alphabet. For 30 seconds, the group tries to think of as many words as they

can that begin with that letter. Continue with several different letters of the alphabet.

### **Homonym Hop**

One person in each group is chosen as writer. The rest tell him what to write. They try to think of as many pairs of homonyms as they can in a 20-minute timing.

### **Spelling Tournament**

Compile lists of words from each grade level. Children may choose the level of difficulty. They will get the same number of points for their team as the grade level they choose. The student goes to the chalkboard and writes the word called. When he is satisfied with it he turns around. If it is correct, the points are added to his team's score. If it is wrong, the word goes to the next team, as in a spelling bee.

### **Map 100-Meter Dash**

Display a map at the front of the room. One person from each of two teams waits at the back of the room. When a city, country, or body of water is called, the contestants race to the map and try to locate the place. The first one to do so gets the point for his or her team.

### **Social Studies Baseball**

Place four chairs around the room to form the baseball diamond. One team at a time is up to bat. The teacher is the pitcher.

Display an outline map of your country or continent without any names on it. Point to one state or province. If the child gives the correct name, he can go to first base. Naming two states that adjoin the state will take him to third base. Naming the capital of the state or province will take him home. Three guesses to name the state count as an out. Three outs and the other team gets to bat. Play for as many innings as time permits.

### **Spelling Obstacle Course**

Put the words "Scholastic Olympics Are Fun," on the chalkboard. Have the students copy them on their papers. Then ask them to make as many words as they can out of the letters in those words. They may use the letter more than once in a word only if it appears more than once in the phrase. Have the students see how many different words they can spell using those letters in a 20-minute period.

### **Reading Decathlon**

Help the students select books on their reading level. They are to read

silently as many pages as possible in a 30-minute timing. Total the number of pages read by each group.

### **Dictionary Discus Throw**

Make a list of spelling words from each child's level. Have the students see how many words they can locate in a 20-minute period. They are to write down the word and the page on which they find it in the dictionary. Total the number of words for each group.

### **Social Studies Knockout**

Place a chair at the front of the room. Have two teams line up at the back of the room. Call out the name of a city or country. The first person in line for each group competes to be first to sit on the chair. Whoever wins gets to name the continent. This can also be used to review questions on the year's work, in which case the person who gets the chair answers the question. If a student fails to answer correctly, the person from the other team gets an opportunity.

### **Language Hurdles**

Prepare a test on the year's work. Divide it into several sections. When a person finishes one section he runs to the table for his grade level and gets the next section. The object is to get as many correct answers as possible in a 30-minute timing. Dividing the test into small sections makes it more exciting, since the pupils have to run back and forth to get each section.

### **In Conclusion**

The activities listed above are just suggestions to get you started. Use your creativity! A variety of drills and materials lend themselves to various olympics activities. Never again will your students dread review time—they'll look forward to it with eager anticipation each spring. □

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*\*Stopwatch needed for this activity.*

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*Dorothy Eaton Watts has taught in several church schools in different parts of the United States. At the time this article was written, she was teaching at the St. John's SDA School in St. John's, Michigan, where the photos were taken. She is currently a multigrade specialist living in Anchorage, Alaska, where she holds seminars at teachers' conventions and weeks of prayer in church schools. She is writing a book on teaching in the small, multigrade classroom.*

#### REFERENCE

<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Eaton Watts, *Stepping Stones* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1987).