

Sponge Activities

Introduce students to the idea that at certain times of the day or week, everyone will be working at a different pace on varied assignments. This work may be completed independently or cooperatively at classroom centers with subject-specific assignments or ongoing stations, providing an opportunity for co-teachers and instructional assistants to offer additional guidance, modeling, practice, review, reinforcement, or enrichment as they circulate about the inclusive classroom. The following table provides suggestions for sponge activities throughout the school year.

August–September	These back-to-school months are a wonderful time for establishing students' prior and baseline knowledge across the disciplines through informal interactive quizzes and fun activities such as crossword puzzles, computer games, bingo, and more. These activities are also an excellent chance to allow students to share their favorite summer activities with pictures, poems, journals, essays, songs, plays, debates, discussions, meetings, dioramas, and bulletin boards. Establish research centers with online curriculum-related sites, WebQuests, performance centers, artists' corners, writing centers, and math-related activities. Distribute interest inventories and people finders to get to know your students and to help your students get to know each other. Encourage your students to share their strengths and preferred learning styles. Celebrate Labor Day, autumn, grandparents, Johnny Appleseed, and Native Americans with fun centers.
October–December	Review what you have taught with cooperative and collaborative open-book quizzes that honor cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. Centers could ask students to retell a story in another genre or from another character's point of view, write a letter to a character, create a soliloquy for a protagonist, pretend to be a scientist who made a recent discovery pertaining to a lesson unit, perform a play set in a historical time frame or on another continent, or create a sculpture from clay or a collage. This is also a time of giving thanks, celebrating holidays with families, and sharing with those less fortunate. Students could write letters to soldiers overseas or seniors in local nursing homes or gather community collections to send to various charities. Celebrate firefighters, Columbus, literacy, the Statue of Liberty, veterans, the harvest, and the close of the calendar year with assignments that value visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements.
January–February	It is time to make resolutions and honor people such as George Washington, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Abraham Lincoln. Sir Isaac Newton, Susan B. Anthony, Elvis Presley, Garth Brooks, and John Steinbeck are just a few famous people who were born in these months. Students can investigate these individuals by writing biographies, dressing in costume, and giving oral presentations. Remember groundhog and leap-year activities, too! Celebrate dental health and Valentine's Day, along with the Chinese New Year, black history, and the civil rights movement.
March–April	Students may be thinking school is almost over, but now is the perfect time to involve them in different sponge activities. March is a month to honor women, music, crafts, and the American Red Cross. Students could help each other with community projects and figure out ways to better their own school environments. Students could create a dance and song for a musical comedy, drama, mystery, or operatic performance with a cast of characters, instruments, scenery, and backdrops that relate to the curriculum. Students delve into higher-order thinking while reading, writing, and researching. They could perform for families or for students in younger grades. Collaborate with other classes and music and art teachers, too. Remember spring. Celebrate good nutrition and the accomplishments of women. Honor Dr. Seuss's birthday on March 2 by reading or critiquing a few of his books or having students emulate his style by creating some of their own stories, either independently or in cooperative writing teams.
May–July	Things are warming up as students in some regions think about diving into pools and visiting beaches. Create class environments that allow students to investigate the seashore with math, science, social studies, reading, and writing connections. Allow learners to cooperatively review and jigsaw topics in the table of contents of textbooks and then teach the concepts to the rest of the class. Lessons can include student-created tests, PowerPoints, videos, songs, dances, plays, collages, class debates, and more. Honor moms on the second Sunday of May and dads on the third Sunday of June. The first week of May is teacher appreciation week. Flag Day is on June 14, and June is National Safety Month. Don't forget that it is all about appreciating your pets the second week in June. Celebrate Cinco de Mayo, Memorial Day, summer, and the Fourth of July. Appropriate age-level projects and activities correlate curriculum topics with students' interests to develop literacy and numeracy skills and to strengthen peer relationships.

Source: Adapted from *Inclusion Lesson Plan Book for the 21st Century* by Toby Karten, 2010.