

## The Riding for Focus School Cycling Program

**T**HE RIDING FOR FOCUS school cycling program is a fun, well-structured program intended to provide middle schoolers with the many potential academic and health-related benefits associated with aerobic exercise. The program focuses particularly on helping children with ADHD. Sponsored and funded by the Specialized Foundation, the program is the brainchild of Mike Sinyard, CEO of Specialized Bicycle Components.

Sinyard knows personally how helpful cycling can be in helping to manage ADHD symptoms. Both he and his son have been diagnosed with the condition, and they both have benefitted a great deal from cycling. Sinyard wants all children—with or without ADHD—to enjoy similar benefits, so he, along with a team of experts, created Riding for Focus. He also founded the Specialized Foundation to provide dedicated resources to house the research and school cycling program efforts.

The program strives to achieve three goals:

- measurable improvements in academic performance, fitness, and behavior
- long-term social and health outcomes
- reduction in core symptoms associated with ADHD.

To participate in the program, middle schools apply for a grant through the Specialized Foundation. The Specialized team is reaching out to potential donors and other revenue streams so that more schools can receive grant money. Successful grantees are required to demonstrate an interest in sustaining the program over time, a champion who can serve as a liaison between the foundation and the school, at least three safe routes near the school at varying levels of difficulty, and an advisory committee that includes parents, teachers, community volunteers, and cycling enthusiasts. Visit the Specialized Foundation website to learn more about other criteria.

The cycling program occurs a minimum of three days per week, with a target of four days if possible. Selected schools receive all they'll need to implement and sustain



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the program, including extensive support, bikes and helmets, a link to a local Specialized retailer or other bike shop to help keep bicycles in tip-top shape, and training in a curriculum designed in partnership with experts in the field from Central Michigan University. The curriculum encompasses seven goals:

- **Teach safety**—what students need to know in order to ride a bicycle safely
- **Teach skills**—how to ride a bicycle effectively, efficiently, and competently
- **Teach fitness**—including how to achieve exercise levels at 65-85 percent of their heart rate maximum for a minimum of twenty minutes, how to form an exercise habit, and how to use exercise to improve different aspects of their lives
- **Be enjoyable**—provide a fun, positive experience, as well as a health-enhancing one
- **Establish appreciation for bicycling**—including access to experiences where children learn to develop their own autonomous bicycling activities, safe riding routes, and personal fitness goals
- **Be sustainable**—help schools keep the program in place over the long term
- **Accommodate future research**—study the impact of cycling on academic, cognitive, affective, behavioral, and clinical functioning.

Research studies are under way. The Specialized Foundation has partnered with

A clinical and consulting psychologist, **Mark Katz, PhD**, is the director of Learning Development Services, an educational, psychological, and neuropsychological center in San Diego, California. As a contributing editor to *Attention* magazine, he writes the *Promising Practices* column and serves on the editorial advisory board. He is also a former member of CHADD's professional advisory board and a recipient of the CHADD Hall of Fame Award.

**LEARN MORE**

To learn more, visit [www.specializedfoundation.org](http://www.specializedfoundation.org).

Contact Katie Sue Gruener via email at [KatieSue.Gruener@Specialized.com](mailto:KatieSue.Gruener@Specialized.com) or phone 408-891-7591.

Visit [www.specialized.com/us/en/specialized-foundation-school-program](http://www.specialized.com/us/en/specialized-foundation-school-program) to watch a brief video describing the potential benefits of cycling for children with ADHD.

Allan Reiss, PhD, from Stanford University to explore the impact of different cycling intensities on brain function and cognition. Reiss is the director of Stanford's Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Science

and Research. The investigative team hopes someday to use study findings to help treating professionals to teach cycle-specific interventions as part of a comprehensive treatment program for ADHD. 📍



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