



Riding for Focus

THE SPECIALIZED FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER: ISSUE THREE

Welcome to Issue Three of Riding for Focus. We want to be a valuable resource of information that can enrich and expand your knowledge of how kids can benefit from cycling in academics and health. For past issues, check out our newsletter archive on the [Specialized Foundation website](#).

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RIDING FOR FOCUS GRANT: APPLY NOW

Our grant application is now open until March 24, 2017

It's a pretty simple formula: Kids + Bikes = Happier, more attentive students in the classroom. And for the past few years, The Specialized Foundation has been helping this happen throughout the USA, dedicating ourselves to giving both schools and children the tools they need to achieve academic, health, and social success. Now, we need riders like you to get involved. Apply now—details on the [Specialized Foundation website](#).



School Profile: AIM Academy, Conshohocken, PA



[Watch Video](#)

AIM Academy, located in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania along the Schuylkill River Trail and 11 miles from downtown Philadelphia, is a Research-to-Practice School that is continually pioneering the technology and techniques proven to benefit children with language-based learning differences. AIM is uniquely positioned to be on the forefront of cutting edge advances in educating children who learn differently. So, it was no surprise that AIM Academy Program Champion and Upper School Teacher Anne Rock was inspired to apply for a Riding for Focus grant when the program first launched in 2016. Anne believes AIM's location and its population of diverse learners made it a perfect match for the program. "Our faculty and occupational therapists anticipate great benefits reaped from the Riding for Focus program on students' executive functions, academic focus, and physical well-being," Rock said. "Plus, research has shown that exercise

near water elevates mood and AIM is nestled between a bike path and the Schuylkill River." The AIM Athletic Director, Mike Brooks, echoed the same sentiment, "I am thrilled for the opportunity to be one of the few schools in the nation to participate in this phenomenal program," Mike

said. "The Riding for Focus curriculum truly mirrors AIM's philosophy, and does so in a way that encourages a lifelong healthy lifestyle. Anne Rock is the perfect person to take the lead in this endeavor. Her energy and enthusiasm are infectious." Anne Rock is interviewed below.



Anne Rock, School Program Champion

Eight Riding for Focus Schools

Each newsletter will focus on one of the current school programs to give you a snapshot of their progress and highlights to date.

AIM Academy, Conshohocken, PA

Evergreen Community Charter School, Asheville, NC

Montevideo Middle School, Penn Laird, VA

P186X, Walter J. Damrosch, The Bronx, NY

Pinelands Regional Jr. High School, Little Egg Harbor, NJ

Pioneer Valley Regional School, Northfield, MA

Tarkanian Middle School, Las Vegas, NV

Whatcom Middle School, Bellingham, WA

How did you decide to apply for the Riding for Focus grant?

During a special in-service teacher's day at the school that brings teachers together to enhance a teaching skill, learn, and prepare for new changes in the state curriculum, there was a presentation on ADD and exercise. The speaker mentioned John Ratey's work and book "Spark." I researched online and discovered press releases in both VeloNews and Bicycling Magazine, then followed the link to Specialized website. I approached the speaker that day; I was so excited and motivated to take action.

What are some of the takeaways from the program?

Currently, there are 12 students in the program—all in 8th grade. The program has experienced both challenges and successes—a result of learning hands on by riding the bikes all year round if possible. One challenge was mechanical—a chain broke. But this was good because it taught a lesson about what to have on rides, even short ones. I expected a flat, but not the chain. Other challenges include our schedule. We meet for an hour on Monday, Wednesday, and alternate Fridays. Every day would have been better for retention and reinforcing lessons learned. One success story was a student who had never ridden before and struggled initially to ride and be sociable. But after a few classes, the student was eventually waving to passersby on the path. Also, students are not being deterred by riding in nasty weather. We have some 'flahutes! The Belgians would be proud.



Have you seen any change in the culture or behavior of the students from riding that could expand the scope of the program inside and outside of classroom?

Students not involved in the program have taken an interest. For example, a junior Eagle Scout will earn a badge by helping build sustainable trails. This is a goal: to involve students in riding, trail stewardship, and service. I'm hoping the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Cycling League, a NICA Project League, will help us with this. We also have students working on bike-themed projects in art class. The entrepreneurial class (Start UP Corps) wanted to do a bike maintenance service. I told them liability issues prohibited that, but they could do a bike wash business that would be a win/win for a wider audience.



Some students were seasoned riders while others were brand new. It didn't take them long to get up to speed. At this juncture, they are happy to ride. One morning a student remarked she was glad to ride for her first class because it got her in the right frame of mind for her upcoming test.

AIM students are inspired by bikes and working on bike-themed projects in art class.

¹The term Flahute is thought to be coined by French journalists after WWII who used it endearingly to describe their Belgian neighbors, the cyclists who rode the legs off their rivals over the pave and through cold, rainy conditions.

What are some of the bike program elements of the curriculum you are implementing?

My co-teacher, Doug Markgraf, and I are figuring out the best way to present technology to these middle schoolers so we can track and monitor progress with Fitbits and heart rate monitors. Safety is a major component we include. There is no better teacher to teach bike safety than Doug as he survived a very serious life-changing bike crash. Doug miraculously recovered and founded Project Mend the Mind. The documentary "This Beats a Coma," highlights his story from a hit-and-run car-vs-bicycle accident, subsequent coma, and the inspiring 3,000-mile bicycle trek to raise awareness for brain injuries and their effects. Students get real testimony from Doug on the value of helmet use and riding safety.

What part of the program is your favorite?

The last Thursday of the Month is Bike to School Day for the community. Students, Faculty, and Parents are all welcome to join us and representatives of the Bicycle Club of Philadelphia on the 3.5-mile ride along the Schuylkill River Trail from Manayunk to AIM, a 20-minute ride. That gets a handful of kids and teachers who join and celebrate the joy of riding for focus! This community-building health initiative builds awareness of AIM among the cycling community, fosters healthy habits and, most importantly, is fun! Local bike dealers and volunteers are willing to help and we are thankful for their support. We also have community volunteers and offers of help from advocacy groups like the Philadelphia Bike Coalition. A Specialized dealer, Bicycle Therapy, in Philadelphia is our dealer connection.

[Watch Bike Building Timelapse](#)



Saluting our Foundation Partners

We would like to recognize and thank our primary research partner, program and performance partners, and their unique roles within the Specialized Foundation. In this issue, we'll include a conversation with Dr. Allan Reiss, Director of the Stanford Medical School and the Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences Research. Future issues will profile our cycling and performance partners.

Primary Research Partner

Stanford Medical School and the Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences Research

The Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences Research (CIBSR) at the Stanford University School of Medicine is dedicated to research that will improve the lives and well-being of individuals with disorders of the brain and improve knowledge of healthy brain and behavioral development. CIBSR research staff are dedicated to identifying biological and environmental risk factors, understanding disease pathophysiology and developmental outcomes, and developing new treatments for neurodevelopmental, neurogenetic, and neuropsychiatric disorders of childhood onset.

Cycling Program Partner

The Department of Physical Education and Sport at Central Michigan University

Central Michigan's Department of Physical Education and Sport (CMU) provides students with a variety of professional and personal growth options relative to physical activity and sport. Through partnership with CMU, the Specialized Foundation developed the Riding for Focus School Program curriculum to meet national standards for physical education classes.

Performance Improvement Partner

United Health Group - Optum

Optum is the Health Services platform of United Health Group. Optum will be leading the technology tracking component of the Riding for Focus Program nationwide. The data collected will be key in establishing baseline activity and monitoring progress in fitness and performance levels, as well as augmenting the Stanford research led by Dr. Allan Reiss.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Let's Get Moving!

MARCH 6-9

[National Bike Summit](#), Washington, D.C.

Join advocates uniting the voices of bicyclists on Capitol Hill. This inspiring event builds the movement for bicycling for 2017 and beyond. The Specialized Foundation will join the group of inspirational speakers sharing their programs.

MARCH 25

Join the 2017 Lam Research [Heart & Soles](#) Run, Santa Clara, CA. This family-oriented fun run/walk is dedicated to helping local children engage in healthy exercise and to make better food choices on a daily basis. The Specialized Foundation is one of the benefitting non-profits of the run thanks to the generous support of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. Heart & Soles funding will assist in the creation of on-campus bike trails and riding areas, as well as the acquisition of secure bike storage facilities and trailers for transporting bikes between schools.

APRIL 20-23

[Sea Otter Classic](#), Monterey, CA

Premiere cycling festival—races, rides, special kids programs. Not your average playground, the Specialized Kids Zone allows kids twelve and under to try out their budding bike skills on obstacles appropriate for their age and riding level, plus a separate area for pushbikes.



Read All About It:

Every issue, we'll share a few of our favorite reads that dig deep into the science of ADHD and how exercise can be most beneficial to children.

The benefits of physical activity for children are in the spotlight after two studies were published in the journal [Pediatrics](#). The studies are in-line with other research showing the powerful effects of exercise on the brain, behavior, and mental health. "When we move our body, we move our mind".

Book: [The Other Side of Impossible](#)

Ms. Meadows explores research into the mind's potential to heal the body, the possible role food may play in reversing disease, the power of agency, perseverance, and hope—and more.

Mission

The Specialized Foundation uses cycling as a tool for children to achieve academic, health and social success. Through investments in primary scientific medical research and school-based cycling programs, our mission is to increase accessibility to cycling to aid youth in personal development and education.

Join the Movement

[Learn more](#) about our ongoing research and outreach.

Contact Information

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The Specialized Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that promotes cycling as a tool for children to achieve academic, health, and social success.



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