Riding for Focus

THE SPECIALIZED FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER: ISSUE SEVEN

Welcome to Issue Seven of Riding for Focus. As the new school year is underway, we want to continue 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. Check out our newsletter archive on our website and be inspired by the students and our program champions.

OUTRIDE ADHD CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

We’re making a difference and we want you to come along for the ride! The Specialized Foundation launched “Outride ADHD,” a campaign to create awareness about an alternative method to combat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The power of the bicycle goes far beyond racing. By launching the campaign at the Tour de France this past July, The Specialized Foundation hopes to inspire people around the world to join the movement and create a healthier future for generations to come.

The effort is part of The Specialized Foundation’s program, Riding for Focus, to promote the use of cycling as a tool in which children can achieve academic and social success at school. The Riding for Focus program has pledged to bring the program to 200 institutions by 2020. The campaign is aimed at educating parents, teachers, and doctors about the benefit that cycling can provide to children with ADHD, which affects one out of nine schoolchildren in the US.

The Specialized Foundation has partnered with Stanford University to further research the impact that cycling and physical activity have on ADHD symptoms. Previous research findings have found that riding a bike daily can help children focus, as well as improve their mood and academic performance. In the original study, conducted by The Specialized Foundation and RTSG Neuroscience Consultants, a single biking session significantly improved measures of executive attention in ADHD students. Specifically, ADHD students were more accurate and faster on the Simon test after a single episode of exercise.

The Specialized Foundation in partnership with Goodby Silverstein & Partners (GS&P) developed the campaign, “Outride ADHD” and will continue to run throughout the fall. “Share your Story” is a feature of the campaign if viewers opt to participate.

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Watch the Video
Highlights: Inaugural Riding for Focus Research Summit at Stanford

This past August, the Specialized Foundation Team, led by Executive Director Ted Theocleung and Foundation Director of Research and School Programs Dr. Kim Price, Ph.D. hosted the inaugural Riding for Focus Research Summit on the Stanford campus. Together with Stanford University and the Lucille Packard Foundation for Children’s Health, experts gathered from the fields of brain science, exercise physiology, child development, education, and bicycle advocacy. Collectively, they shared the latest research on the role of exercise, specifically cycling, in improving the academic, physical, and emotional lives of today’s youth.

Highlights below include ten key takeaways of the knowledge shared, insights into research, and best practices in education curricula development. Attendees included the Champions from the 20 schools receiving the Riding for Focus grants for the 2017-18 school year, along with Foundation supporters, mentors and cycling advocates eager to learn more about the mission and work of the Foundation.

1. Mike Sinyard, Founder and CEO of Specialized Bicycles opened the Summit with his personal story of how an idea sparked action and the Foundation was launched. “At Specialized, we have always believed that cycling has the power to change lives. Through our partnership with Stanford, we are furthering our research that, when it comes to ADHD, a bike ride a day can have an incredibly positive impact on kids’ lives.”

2. Mike introduced Rich Silverstein, founder of the advertising agency, Goodby Silverstein & Partners (GS&P) who developed and shared the summer campaign, “Outride ADHD” to create awareness about an alternative method to combat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). “Riding is the magic that can help us all”, shared Rich.

3. Dr. Reiss, is the Howard C. Robbins Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences Research (CIBSR) at Stanford University School of Medicine, and he heads up the research team for the Riding for Focus Program. Dr. Reiss’ research examines in the lab the non-traditional therapy of exercise, and bicycling specifically, in reducing symptoms of ADHD in a sub-group within the wide umbrella of ADHD designation. “We are excited about what this research can uncover, possibly identifying which children will most benefit from using physical activities like cycling to treat their ADHD, and how we can structure their activities to be the most impactful on their cognitive functions”. Hear more from Dr. Reiss in his interview with KTVU Channel 2 at the Summit.

Near infrared spectroscopy (NIRS) is an increasingly popular technology for studying human brain function. NIRS systems are compact, have high temporal and spatial resolution and are cost effective. Small probes (plastic disks of about 1/4 inch attached to optical fibers) are placed on the top of the head. There is no sensation of any kind from the infrared light, and it is not harmful.
4. Dr. Reiss introduced Dr. Gavin Tempest, Ph.D. who will lead The Stanford BREXFIT Lab. Gavin along with his colleagues Aaron Piccirilli, B.S., Dr. Hadi Hosseini, Ph.D., and Andrew Gundran, M.S., will continue their research into what happens in the brain during exercise that influences the way we think and feel. His major area of studies employ Near Infrared Spectroscopy (NIRS) to identify the dose-response effects of the intensity and duration of cycling-based exercise upon brain activity, cognition and mood. These findings will help to develop exercise protocols beneficial for individuals with cognitive dysfunction such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

6. Dr. Ray Allen, Ph.D. and Ben Rollenhagen, M.S. with the Department of Physical Education and Sport at Central Michigan University (CMU) serve as the Cycling Program Partner for the Foundation and developed the Riding for Focus School Program Curriculum to meet the nation standards for the physical education classes. Dr. Allen commented on the brilliance and potential of the Specialized Model that includes the Vision, Program support, Recognition and University partnership that makes it so unique. The initiative goal for the Riding for Focus program is that it becomes a staple with PE curricula nationwide within five years.

7. Dr. Jennifer Boldry, Ph.D., Director of Research for PeopleforBikes addressed Trends in Bicycle Ridership and shared three key takeaways: There is opportunity to grow bike riding among kids, the gender gap in bike riding emerges in adolescence and most importantly, we need more data. She issued a call to action to the schools to collect the bicycling data to augment their research.

8. Carl Guardino, President and CEO of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group announced an extension of their support for the Riding for Focus program for the next three years from the Silicon Valley Leadership Group Foundation.

“At the Silicon Valley Leadership Group Foundation, we know that a child’s focus in school is strengthened through both exercise and nutrition,” shared Carl. “We’re proud of our partnership with The Specialized Foundation’s innovative efforts to bring cycling to schools, and healthier lifestyles to our kids. The Riding for Focus program will hopefully give them experiences and habits they will keep for a lifetime.”

9. Dr. Kim Price, Ph.D., Specialized Foundation Director of Research and School Programs concluded the program with a final presentation of the School Programs and Assessment. Early findings indicate: fitness scores improved, as did balance; there were improvements on attention tests, and declines in impulsivity; an increase in positive mood; high retention, 90% of kids enjoyed the program and would recommend to friends; and the standardized math tests scores improved.
Dr. Price also pointed to the two key areas of improvement to ensure quality research outcomes in the future: standardization and consistent implementation of the Riding for Focus curriculum and advanced yet practical measurement tools to increase fidelity and accuracy of outcome data.

10. Ted Theocheung, Executive Director thanked all the attendees and offered optimism in reaching the target goal of 200 schools by 2010 and the continuation of the annual Research Summits to gather the experts to delve deeper into the neuroscience of the benefits of bicycling.

Comments shared from a local, state and international level

“I’m excited about deploying a consistent data collection method to secure credible data. I’m also excited to make it engaging and fun for the students. I firmly believe that the collective passion and respective acumen of educators, researchers, and business people guarantee the project’s success. Bicycles will change the world.”  
- Anne Rock, School Champion, AIM Academy, Conshohocken, PA

“There were two major takeaways for me. The CDC study on exercise suggesting that increased time in PE doesn’t detract from academic performance, even if less time was devoted to those academic classes. It just struck me as another example highlighting how essential exercise is for students. The second one was that the #1 determinant of whether kids will continue to be physically active is their parents and whether they’re active.”  
- Chris Connolly, School Champion, Chaboya Middle School, San Jose, CA

“All the knowledge and passion in one room was truly inspiring and gave me plenty of motivation for what can be achieved in the UK. I particularly enjoyed learning how the Riding for Focus curriculum can help bring about change for children and their families. With the current trend, both in the US and the UK for children to live sedentary lifestyles from an alarmingly young age it is so exciting to be able to give them the tools required to make a positive long term difference to their lives.”  
- Blake Coxon, Specialized Account Manager – South West England and Wales
School Mission
Whatcom Middle School is committed to providing students educational experiences that promote lifelong learning. The school is dedicated to helping students develop skills needed to reason, communicate, collaborate, and make healthy choices in a safe and respectful environment.

School Location
Whatcom Middle School located in Bellingham, Washington is situated in the middle of the dense residential Lettered Streets Neighborhood and has the largest proportion of students within the one-mile “walk area” of any of the four middle schools in the district. Schools generally do not offer bus transportation to students within the walk area, so bicycle education is especially appropriate for Whatcom students.

Program Overview
Whatcom Middle School was one of eight schools nationwide out of more than 200 applicants that received bicycles, the curriculum and training from The Specialized Foundation. The grant included 30 Specialized Hardrock mountain bikes, helmets, tools and annual bike inspections for two years at Fairhaven Bicycle, the Riding for Focus partner retailer. The school supports that cycling can be an important part of a comprehensive approach to help manage ADHD related symptoms, while also positively influencing students’ well-being and academic performance. Whatcom Middle School has been ramping up the Riding for Focus program since last fall, taking groups of students on rides four days a week as part of the school’s extended learning program. Some of the participating students have been identified as having ADHD.

By one measure, bicycle grants awarded to the school are already getting results. “The number of bicycles locked to the racks outside the school went from 35 to about 90 bikes after the grant programs started”, Jeff Coulter, Whatcom Middle School Principal said. “Students are starting to feel safe and confident riding to school.”
“We know some of these students struggle academically,” said Coulter. “We felt this experience of riding would benefit them throughout the school day; All students benefit from consistent physical activity.”

Whatcom students refining their bike skills in middle school can later scale up their participation and lifelong cycling enjoyment by joining the Whatcom High School Mountain Bike Team in Association with the Washington Student Cycling League. This partnership is a great example of sustainable best practices in cycling to develop leadership skills and expand public stewardship involvement leaving a legacy to the sport of cycling.

Riding For Focus Retailer Support
Fairhaven Bicycles in Bellingham, Washington is the Riding for Focus partner retailer for Whatcom Middle School. New owners as of June 2017, Amy Campbell and Matthew Karre are excited about supporting the school. “Students are starting to feel safe and confident riding to school and we are pleased to support the program in any way we can”, stated Amy. Fairhaven provides maintenance for the bikes on a regular basis.

Fairhaven Bicycles has a long history with cycling and was the first to introduce the city to mountain bikes with the Lowell-Knight Pro Cruiser and later the Specialized Stumpjumper which they proudly display in the store, signed by mountain bike legend Ned Overend.
Saluting our Foundation Partners

We would like to recognize our key partners and their unique roles within The Specialized Foundation. Thank you to The Department of Physical Education and Sport at Central Michigan University, United Health Group-Optum, and Stanford Medical School and the Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences Research.

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!

September 30, 2017
Levi’s GranFondo, Santa Rosa, CA
Brought to you by Specialized, Free U24 Program! Beginning this year, anyone under the age of 24 gets to ride the event for FREE.

October 2017
ADHD Awareness Month

November 9-12, 2017
CHADD 29th Annual International Conference,
Atlanta, Georgia

Read All About It

We want to share a few of our favorite reads that dig deep into the science of ADHD and how exercise can be most beneficial to children.

Fast Company, July 7, 2017
Specialized Has a Plan to Use Bicycling to Help Manage ADHD in Schools, by Ben Paynter

Outside Magazine, May 31, 2017
This is your Brain on Exercise, by Kate Wheeling

Observer Dispatch, Utica, NY, July 31, 2017
Don’t Give Up on Yourself, by Chris Welch
A personal student testimony on how cycling helped this Teen All-Star excel in class.

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 and Donate
Learn more about our ongoing research and outreach. Donate here

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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.