

# Education Leaders Network (ELN) Toolkit



Special Olympics Project UNIFY® developed and implemented a National Education Leaders Network (NELN) to provide insights, direction, opportunities and access to national education conversations, initiatives, forums and collaborations to advance Project UNIFY characteristics in policy and practice.

This diverse network brings together national education, civic, special education, corporation, research, social and equity leaders well-positioned to advance Project UNIFY with their constituents and their networks. As a result of the NELN, Project UNIFY is now positioned with several national initiatives, secured support for its school-based initiatives, implemented two national Education Leaders Roundtable discussions, implemented collaborations with Project UNIFY Youth Activation Committee and developed a four-prong set of work to advance Project UNIFY in states, districts, schools and communities.

Each of the Special Olympics Project UNIFY States have an opportunity to design and implement a State Education Leaders Network engaging local education, civic, social and corporate leaders to advance Project UNIFY in their state.

The following identify the purpose, candidates and responsibilities of a State Education Leaders Network for each state to consider as they design their local network.

The purpose of the State Education Leaders Network is to:

- Enhance current relationships with education leaders;
- Secure support from the state's major education stakeholders to advocate for Project UNIFY;
- Understand the current and projected education and civic landscape of the state with corresponding opportunities for Project UNIFY to participate and contribute;
- Share information on Project UNIFY with their constituents so that they become aware of Project UNIFY and corresponding adoption opportunities;
- Provide access to state, district and local networks focused on youth development, leadership and engagement;
- Identify events, forums, conferences and interactions for Project UNIFY to present programmatic information to a broad range of educators, parents, community and business leaders.

*"A strong ELN is a key to creating a sustainable culture change through Project UNIFY. While the majority of work gets completed by the youth and frontline staff, the access to resources, strategic planning and established communication channels comes through the ELN."*

-Tim Martin, CEO, Special Olympics Arizona

## Members

Each state should determine ELN make up and specific attributes of members, given the State Programs current collaborations, programing and needs; however the following is a list of attributes and affiliations common to effectively engaging education leaders as members a State Education Leadership Network.

- Representative from the state department of education;
- Association of school administrators;
- Executive Director of the state school boards association;
- Executive Director of the state board of education;
- Executive Director of the state middle schools association;
- Executive Director of the state principals association;
- Teacher well versed in Project UNIFY strategies and a leader within their school and/or district;
- Service-learning leader, in most cases this is an individual from the state department of education responsible for additional federal funding;
- District superintendent experienced and supportive of Project UNIFY and respected by their peers;
- School principal knowledgeable about Project UNIFY and respected by their peers;
- Business leader committed to youth engagement;
- Youth leader from a Project UNIFY school and/or university student experienced in Special Olympics;
- Education researcher or policy specialist;
- Human rights leader;
- University of college leader of faculty member committed to youth engagement and social justice.

The number of ELN members is determined by each state, however it is advisable to start small and initially engage five or six members and as you determine specific objectives and responsibilities increase membership.

## Responsibilities

Members of the State Education Leaders Network will provide leadership and access to education systems and opportunities to increase the awareness of their constituents about Project UNIFY and how it aligns with their organization, mission and strategies.

Members will meet three times a year and communicate via e-mail more frequently to provide insights and respond to inquiries from the state Special Olympics CEO on Project UNIFY issues.

Members will contribute to Special Olympics Project UNIFY resources (authoring articles, op-eds, etc.) and participate, as possible, in forums and conferences representing Special Olympics Project UNIFY.

Members will identify and advocate for opportunities for Special Olympics Project UNIFY to participate in, contribute to and benefit from state and local collaborations to advance the mission and strategies of Project UNIFY.

Members will participate in Special Olympics activities, sports and events to show their support and become more aware of Special Olympics programs and opportunities.

## Special Olympics Project UNIFY Assistance

Special Olympics Project UNIFY staff and consultants are available to assist Special Olympics state CEOs and their staff to identify, recruit and select State Education Leaders Network members and establish this critical organizational component. In addition Special Olympics Project UNIFY National Education Leaders Network members will provide access to their state networks and individuals and encourage them to participate in the State Education Leaders Network.

Members of the Special Olympics Project UNIFY National Education Leaders Network include the executive directors of the National Association of State Boards of Education, NEA Foundation and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools; leaders at the American Institutes of Research, the Freedom Forum, IDEA Partnership, American Association of School Administrators and the Public Education Network; and leaders from the business community include the State Farm Insurance Company.

## Summary

Establishing and sustaining a quality Special Olympics Project UNIFY State Education Leaders Network engages state and local education leaders to assist the state organization to deepen and broaden support for Project UNIFY. While the education landscape and the current collaborations are different in every state, the above overview provides information and strategies for states to consider, adopt and/or adapt to engage education leaders in this important work.

## Contact

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## EXAMPLE AGENDA ITEMS FOR FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

Given that the purpose of the ELN is to:

- Enhance current relationships with education leaders;
- Secure support from the state's major education stakeholders to advocate for Project UNIFY;
- Understand the current and projected education and civic landscape of the state with corresponding opportunities for Project UNIFY to participate and contribute;
- Share information on Project UNIFY with their constituents so that they become aware of Project UNIFY and corresponding adoption opportunities;
- Provide access to state, district and local networks focused on youth development, leadership and engagement;
- Identify events, forums, conferences and interactions for Project UNIFY to present programmatic information to a broad range of educators, parents, community and business leader;

## One way to frame an ELN Meeting Agenda is to focus on three processes:

1. **Information** (information shared before or during the meeting that increases ELN Members' knowledge of Project UNIFY, their responsibilities and how they fit within the state and national organizations).
  - › What do the ELN Members need to know about each other?
  - › What do they need to know about your Program?
  - › What do they need to know about Project UNIFY? (Characteristics, research, programs, engagement strategies, scope of work in your state and throughout the U. S., etc.)

- › What do they need to know about Get Into It, Unified Sports®, and other programs?
- › What do they need to know about their contributions and responsibilities?
- › What do they need to know about how their work connects with other Program efforts (including the Youth Activation Committee) and national Project UNIFY efforts?
- › What do they need to know about the Teacher Awards?

2. **Deliberation** (guided engaging conversations that take place during the meeting that provide insights with implications for your Program).

- › How do the elements of Project UNIFY align with current and projected school priorities, programs, strategies and partnerships? For example, a greater focus on health, a commitment to inclusion, enhance student leadership, focus on school climate, use of sports as a platform for inclusion, etc.). (See Table 11 below from Project UNIFY Year 3 Evaluation.)
- › What opportunities exist to align Project UNIFY in schools in your State? This includes cost sharing.
- › In your district/school how are initiatives successfully integrated and sustained? What are those elements and the sequence of implementation?
- › What is the most effective information and

strategy to inform and influence district and school leaders to consider, adopt and/or adapt school-based strategies? It is important to understand how leaders are influenced so that your Program can create strategies and resources to effectively advance Project UNIFY in schools.

- › What meetings, forums, conferences, workshops and other venues are available for members of the ELN to share Project UNIFY information with their peers?

3. **Decision-Making** (collective decisions that need to be made during the meeting).

- › Prioritize the opportunities surfaced in the “deliberations” session – what is the consensus of the ELN Members on which opportunities/strategies are most timely and effective to advance Project UNIFY in schools throughout your state?
- › What resources do the ELN Members need to implement the strategies (above)?
- › How can the ELN best be organized? Working together on all tasks? Working in small task groups to focus on specific tasks (e.g., resource development, advocacy, working with the YAC, etc.).
- › How often and what form should the ELN schedule member interactions?
- › What specific ways can the ELN contribute to the National Education Leaders Network?

## Education Leaders Network (ELN) Sample Agenda

10:00-10:15

Welcome and Introductions

10:15-10:45

Current Status Review

- Project UNIFY Schools
- SOAZ/AIA Unified Sports® Schools
- Curriculum Schools
- Project UNIFY Program Calendar

10:45-11:15

Healthy Athletes Curriculum

- Fact Sheet Handout

11:15-11:30

Open Expansion/Capacity Discussion

- YAC development, growth, implementation
- YAC = area where most growth is needed
- Council Development

11:30-11:50

ELN Project Discussion

11:50-12:00

Set Date for Next Meeting

- Look at dates 3-4 months from now

## State Specific Example

### Special Olympics Arizona Education Leaders Network Committee Meeting Minutes

1/18/2012

Call to order 10:00am

Members present: Tim Martin, Brian Quinn, Nandine Armstrong, Scott Brown, Lori Ramsey, Daniel Dodge, Becky Raabe, Deb Randazzo, James Lee, Larry Clausen, Sr., Michele Staples, Deb Taylor, Chris Corey, Jim Braden, and Austtin Montoya

Members absent: Chuck Schmidt, Gerry Corcoran, Denton Santarelli, Matt Mixer, Isaac Sanft, Dave Allison

Minutes taken by: Austtin Montoya

Call to order:

Brian Quinn called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Review:

- Brian Quinn introduces the "List of Project UNIFY Schools" handout to the group and discusses the progress in signing on schools for Youth Activation, SOAZ/AIA Unified Sports®, and Unified Sports® P.E. Curriculum.
- Scott Brown talks about the progress of his schools (93 schools and counting).
- Scott Brown explains that 100 schools will descend upon Chandler High School to compete in the largest invitational track meet in the southwestern United States where two Unified Track events will take place on the Saturday of the meet. An estimated 4,000 people will be in attendance for this track meet. The date of the track meet will follow.
- Deb Randazzo
  - Talks about her curriculum update. Avondale, Higley, Bullhead City, Sunnyside, and

Vail school districts are now on board for the Young Athletes Program (Elementary Curriculum).

- Goes over an explanation of the Young Athletes program (For 2 ½ to 7 years of age that works on gross motor skills).
- Talks about Disability Awareness Week which has been a big hit within the school districts.
- Talks about how she and Brian Quinn will be training 50 Physical Education teachers at the AZ Dept. of Education Health Education Conference. Each teacher will receive the curriculum and will be trained in how to get the curriculum approved by their school/district.
- Asks the ELN group how to get the word out about the Physical Education Curriculum.
- Tim Martin talks about how the curriculum is very easy to implement, because the activities are in place for the teachers to present to their classroom.
- Brian Quinn passes out the Youth Activation Program Guide which is for a student leadership group for a Unified Sports® club to run all activities Unified Sports® club to run all activities related to Project UNIFY/Youth Activation in their school.
- Daniel Dodge states that the program guide is organized like a “menu” and he finds that very helpful.
- Tim Martin talks about ALPS University and educated the group on the details/specifics (handout is provided to all); and wants to see a focus put on Unified athletes and partners attending the ALPS University.
- Brian Quinn asks the group for thoughts on new ideas for Youth Activation activities and asks the committee if there are any student athletic group leaders that he could tap into for Youth Activation.
- Scott Brown states that a lot of high schools do not necessarily have a leadership council, but a lot of the students would be able to be easily identified by the coaches and/or athletic directors at their school.
- Jim Braden states that Character Matters has been implemented at each of the high schools in his district.
  - Each of the high schools will have a Captains Corner, where all of the captains of all of the athletic programs will meet once a week and the Captains Corner will be involved very closely with Unified Sports®.
- The Special Education department did have a special homecoming for their kids and non-special education students invited the special education students to the traditional dance.
- Brian Quinn asks the group if they have any marketing ideas for Project UNIFY
  - Larry Clausen, Sr. provides the group with an Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council handout and talks about how Youth Activation could tie in to the Council’s goals.
  - The Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council has the power to sponsor events up to \$5000. Basically the Council can support events or activities that promote the Council’s goals.
- Tim Martin talks about the LETR “Make That Change” program (A quarter mile of quarters lined up on a schools track). Chandler School District has raised \$7000 dollars in the past two and a half weeks just for Project UNIFY. A quarter mile of quarters is about \$4600 dollars. He also shares information about the Unified Tax Credit – Legislation to allow for Unified Sports to be an additional tax credit donation for participating schools.

- Larry Clausen, Sr. asks a question about the Law Enforcement Torch Run being an annual run. Tim Martin states that yes even though it is an annual run for the Summer Games, LETR is the biggest fundraising group year-round for Special Olympics Arizona. LETR has risen over \$500,000 dollars through various events.
- Jim Braden asks if the AIAAA has placed Special Olympics Arizona on their September 2012 Conference Agenda? Michele Staples states that this subject will definitely be discussed at the September 2012 Conference.
- Daniel Dodge states that ROTC community service involvement might be a good lead, because they are a big service provider on his campuses. The ROTC is always looking for community service involvement opportunities.
- Brian Quinn asks Larry Clausen, Sr. about the \$5000 sponsorship opportunity. Larry Clausen, Sr. states that in order to receive the sponsorship, the activity or event must tie in to one of the Council's three goals. In addition, the Council has to be prominently displayed as a sponsor.
- Nadine Armstrong talks about the Healthy Athletes program (handout provided); Tim Martin talks about sponsoring the AZ Dept. of Education Health Education Conference on January 28th to present the Healthy Athletes Program (8 week curriculum) to over 50 registered nurses who will hopefully pick that up and teach in each school.
- Brian Quinn talks about the Youth Activation Committee handout and solicits ideas to promote the program.
- Ideas include:
  - SOAZ/AIA Unified Sports® leaders to promote at their schools
  - Post great photos on Facebook; Becky Raabe talks about the positive aspects of Facebook
  - Have an email bank to spread news electronically
  - Link up to participating School District websites
  - Positive news in the paper (Community Sections of the AZ Republic)
  - Tap into city television channels
  - Athletes sit in on IEP meetings / AZ Center for Disability Law
  - Larry Clausen, Sr. offers ideas about partnering with Raising Special Kids to help network the program
- Michele Staples talks about the AIA Luncheon Awards and the Nick Sundberg Award for Athlete & Partner of the Year.
- Brian Quinn informs the group of the Spread the Word to End the Word campaign on March 7th.
- Athlete, Chris Corey, talks about his experience participating in the R-Word campaign.

## State Specific Example

# Special Olympics Arizona Education Leadership Network (ELN) Roster

*in alpha order by 1st name*

Becky Raabe	Program Specialist for the Parent Information Network, Department of Education
Brian Quinn	Youth Leadership & Unified Sports Director, SOAZ
Deb Randazzo	Athlete Outreach Coordinator, SOAZ
Chris Khoury	Unified Sports Athlete, RS Kellis HS
Chuck Schmidt	COO, Arizona Interscholastic Association
Dan Dodge	Executive Director, Arizona Association of Student Councils
Dave Allison	Superintendent, Gilbert Schools
Deb Taylor	Special Education Teacher, Liberty HS
Denton Santerelli	Superintendent, Peoria Unified School District
Gerry Corcoran	State Director, FEA- Future Educators of America
Jim Braden	Athletic Director, Dysart School District
Jim Lee	Superintendent, Paradise Valley Schools
Kathy Khoury	Parent of Unified Sports Athlete
Larry Clausen	Executive Director, Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
Lori Ramsey	Executive Assistant, SOAZ
Matt Mixer	AZ Adaptive PE Director
Naman Shah	Youth Activation Committee member & STUGO President, North Canyon HS
Scott Brown	Director of Unified Sports/ AIA Academy
Tim Martin	CEO, SOAZ

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Q. How many members should we have on the ELN?**

A. It varies by state, however the norm is between 10 and 15 members

### **Q. How often should the ELN meet?**

A. Face-to-face meetings occur either quarterly or twice a year, supported by more frequent web-based or conference call meetings. Initially it is recommended to host a face-to-face meeting for everyone to get to know each other and from that meeting determine the frequency and types of formal interactions.

### **Q. How does the ELN fit into the State Program organization?**

A. Some states align the ELN with their State Program Board and ask one of the Board members to act as the ELN chair; other states organize the ELN as an ad hoc committee that reports to the CEO/Executive Director. In addition there is a benefit to aligning the placement of the ELN in the organizational structure with the State Youth Activation Committee (see the SOAZ organizational chart).

### **Q. Is there a prescribed term or term limit for members of the ELN?**

A. Each State Program determines this; our suggestion is at least an initial two-year term so that there is continuity during the development of the ELN.

### **Q. Does the ELN need by-laws?**

A. In most cases that level of formality is not needed. One of the reasons aligning the ELN with the State Program Board is a good idea, is to provide some structure to the group's purpose and role.

### **Q. What are the types of individuals representing organizations that should be on the ELN?**

A. Leaders from organizations and networks from the state, district and school levels make for the best ELN composition as each of these levels impact how schools are organized and conduct their work.