

# Starting a Partner's Club



## How To Create and Sustain a Special Olympics Partner's Club®

*Created by: The National Youth Activation Committee*

### What is a Partner's Club?

A Partner's Club is a club for students with and without intellectual disabilities that comes together for sports, games, community service, school events, and most of all, to have fun!

### Steps to starting and maintaining a Partner's Club

1. Find out what your school's requirements are for starting a club and make sure you follow their steps.
  - a. Does your school require a presentation as part of the process of approval of your organization?
    - i. If necessary, come up with a presentation on why it is important to have a Partner's Club (to improve the school environment) and what type of events you plan to do, etc.
    - ii. It will be important in the presentation to include facts or statistics and to identify the issue the club is addressing within the school. It is important to relate how this club can make the students and your school a better place.
2. Talk to the Special Education teacher(s) in your school
  - a. How many Special Education students might be interested?
  - b. Would the Special Education teacher or Special Olympics coach be able to participate in the meetings to help supervise and/or sponsor the club?
    - i. If not, whom would they recommend as a teacher advisor?
    - c. What advice does school administration or faculty have for you?
    - d. Ask the Special Education teacher and/or Special Olympics coach to share club information with athletes and parents if they are unable to give you the contact information
3. Talk to your local Special Olympics office and show your interest in forming a partnership with them to start a Partner's Club.
  - a. This is very important if you don't have a Special Education program at your school. They can help you identify students with Intellectual Disabilities to come to your club.
  - b. If your school does not have a Special Education contact, ask your local Special Olympics office to assist in sponsoring or supporting your club.
4. Get a core group of students to be your "executive committee"
  - a. President- this will most likely be you. You will be in close communication with the Special Education teacher and the local Special Olympics office.
  - b. Treasurer- keep track of the funds you have and be in charge of finding out the cost of each event. This person will help with coor-

- dinating fundraising for the club.
  - c. Secretary- in charge of membership and taking notes at all of the meetings
  - d. Athlete advisor- responsibility in representing Special Olympics perspective and fellow athletes
5. Have a meeting with the executive committee and advisor
- a. How often will the club meet?
    - a. This will depend on the activities or events you are organizing, but a minimum of monthly meetings is recommended.
    - b. When will the club meet and for how long?
      - i. Try to find the most convenient time that has the least amount of conflicts with other school activities so that you can get as many members to attend as possible!
      - ii. 1 hour to 1 ½ hours is probably the most time students will be able to meet. If you're doing a special event, you can always extend the time as needed.
      - iii. If your school has a late bus, make sure your meeting is done in time for students to make the bus.
    - c. Where will the club meet?
      - i. You should obtain permission from your advisor or sponsor to use their classroom or a central location.
      - ii. If your school provides space for clubs and organizations, you may be able to meet there.
    - d. Do you have enough money for activities?
      - i. Does your school allocate money for each club?
      - ii. Does your local Special Olympics office have money to give?
      - iii. Would membership dues be appropriate?
      - iv. Are there grants the club can apply for?
        - (i.e. Project UNIFY Youth Grant, Youth Service American grants, etc.)
  - e. Come up with a plan to advertise
    - i. Posters
      - a. Coordinate with an art club or class to help make colorful posters.
        1. a. Announce time and place for meetings
        2. b. Describe the types of activities you will be doing
      - ii. If your school has daily announcements, put an advertisement on the announcements.
    - ii. Form a Facebook group
      1. This contains pictures and descriptions of past activities, while also listing upcoming ones as well!
  - f. Come up with a list of activities for the first few meetings
    - i. The first meeting should include a get to know you activity
    - ii. Attend a school event as a group. Go to the next home game or a local Special Olympic event.
    - iii. If the weather is nice, consider planning some sort of outside activity
  - g. Contact the parents of all of the athletes
    - i. Make sure they know all about the club
    - ii. Is there anything you need to know about their child?
      1. Behavior concerns
      2. Medical conditions (i.e., seizures, food allergies)
    - iii. Ask them if they have any ideas for activities
    - iv. Tell them that you will send them an email the week of each meeting and let them know what the club will be doing and if the students need to bring anything
  - h. Executive committee responsibilities
    - i. It's important that everyone knows

- and understands their role and expectations.
  - ii. Consider issues determined to be important by the members of this club.
  - iii. Assure the club decisions are met and provide a structure of leadership in fulfilling established goals.
  - i. Chartered clubs
    - i. If you plan to start Best Buddies or a similar program be sure to know the requirements to obtain charter. Following established protocol is critical.
6. First Meeting
- a. Provide a description of the club and its purpose
  - b. Introduce all of the executive members and explain what their roles are.
  - c. Pass out a membership form to obtain contact information during the meeting from each member: name, email and phone number.
  - d. Have the dates for all of your activities for the next month at least (if you could do the whole semester that would be great)
  - e. Brainstorm ideas for future activities
  - f. Be certain to answer all questions or concerns brought up by members and officers
  - g. Ice breakers or fun activities are important for the members to get to know one another.
  - h. It is important to have an agenda for the meeting or an activity for the day
  - i. Closing remarks
    - i. Reminder for next meeting
    - ii. Encourage everyone to join the Facebook group! If one hasn't been created, give a member the responsibility of developing it and inviting all of the club's members.

## Important things to remember

1. Always stay in contact with the athletes' families.
2. Make sure the executive committee stays in close communication and is involved in all decision-making. However, be sure to include all members perspectives' when planning events and making big decisions.
3. Remember your purpose - to make friends and HAVE FUN!

## Other ideas for club activities

1. R-Word Campaign
2. Join Unified Sports® team together
  - a. Where those with and without intellectual disabilities play on a sports team together.
  - b. Talk to your local Special Olympics program for more information about this
3. Participate in other Special Olympics events, such as fundraising.