



**Special
Olympics**

**Leadership
EXCELLENCE**



Evaluation Report

Special Olympics Leadership Academy

Leader I Workshop

Philadelphia, USA

19 – 22 April 2016



Special Olympics



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Academy participants (SO Pennsylvania and Special Olympics athlete leaders) with Mayor Jim Kenney and Philadelphia Eagles President Don Smolenski at the Academy opening



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Participants

4 athletes
including an SOI
Board member
24 Vice Presidents/
National Directors/
Senior Staff
2 Regional/SOI
Staff

Countries / States

Bahamas
Canada
Arizona
California
Colorado
Delaware
Florida
Indiana
Kansas
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Missouri
Nebraska
North Carolina
Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania
South Carolina
Vermont
Virginia
Washington

Executive Summary

The fourth Special Olympics International (SOI) Leadership Academy workshop took place in Philadelphia on April 19 – 22 2016. 30 participants from North America took part in this Leader I workshop, along with two SOI/Regional staff. Importantly, this Academy includes four athletes from the US and Canada – twice as many as in the Frankfurt workshop.

Building on previous workshops in Asia Pacific, Europe/Eurasia and Africa, this Academy featured external facilitators from Academy partners CEB and Goldman Sachs, as well as from Harvard Business and Law Schools. Funding was provided thanks to American Express Foundation, CEB and SOI.

Due to outstanding collaboration with SO Pennsylvania, this workshop raised the Academy to a new level and exceeded the highest expectations of the participants. The Academy featured an opening ceremony by the Philadelphia Mayor and Philadelphia Eagles President and a panel with executives from Aramark, Comcast SportsNet Philadelphia, Philadelphia Union (MLS) and Wharton's Sports Business Initiative. The Eagles Stadium hosted the workshop opening day and Aramark hosted the second day. Harvard Professor Michael Stein, Executive Director of the Harvard Law School Project on Disability, expertly led a conversation on Inclusive Leadership. The last day featured a highly rated session on authentic leadership by Harvard Professor Scott Snook. Other Academy topics included leadership roles, influencing, teamwork and

execution. Special Olympics' Chief Inspiration Officer Loretta Claiborne made closing of the workshop even more special thanks to her moving remarks.

The average overall rating of the Academy by participants revealed a rare 5 out of 5, witnessing the strength of this particular workshop. Some felt the Academy was their best ever development experience. Participants' evaluations stated that it will help them not only achieve better results but help transform their programs. The overall experience, starting from the new knowledge, external expertise, networking and workshop organization, made it a powerful and memorable event for everyone and set a higher bar for future workshops.

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Goals

The Leadership Academy is designed to drive stronger, more proactive leadership around the world. Our goals are to challenge and empower through:

- Creating leaders with vision, able to galvanize voluntary, political and government support, create and implement high quality programming, and influence others;
- Infusing leaders with the inspiration and capacity to perform at a higher level and significantly enhance our global impact.

Location and Logistics

The Academy was held at the Philadelphia Eagles Stadium, the Aramark Tower, and at the Hilton at Penn's Landing hotel, providing a variety of learning environments. Excellent support was provided by staff from Special Olympics Pennsylvania.



Jeff Connor, Chief Growth Officer, Aramark Corp, with Denis Doolan, Chief, Organizational Excellence, SOI



Panasonic Club at the Philadelphia Eagles Stadium

Partnership Support

The Academy was funded by a combination of American Express, CEB and Special Olympics International. Similar to the previous Academy workshops, course content was designed in partnership with CEB and Goldman Sachs. SkillSoft – a new partner of the Academy – provided licenses for the participants to access online business skills courses and short videos for continuous learning.



Format and Syllabus

Before arriving to Philadelphia, the participants completed the CEB Enterprise Leadership survey to help analyze their potential areas for improvement. The Academy also provided two advance webinars for athlete leaders, preparing them for successful participation in the workshop.

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During the workshop and in the traditional spirit of the Academy, the participants had constant opportunities for dialogue, best practice sharing and reflection to enhance the learning experience. The syllabus structure was designed to focus first at an individual level and then explore influencing others, particularly externally, leading a team, being authentic and executing successfully. The schedule was as follows:

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
AM	Your Leadership Role	Influencing Others	Authentic Leadership
	Enterprise Leadership	Inclusive Leadership	
PM	Panel Discussion: Leadership Today	Leading Your Team	Execution, Final Action Planning
	Influencing Others	Flexing Your Style	Wrap-up

Day One



Awarding the URAA torch to Don Smolenski, Eagles President



Twitter post by the Mayor

After an energizing and highly stimulating opening ceremony with the Philadelphia Mayor and the Philadelphia Eagles President in the Eagles locker room, the participants began their first day by walking around the room to review famous leadership quotations and select a favorite. The group then took part in a session exploring leadership and what great leaders do.



Chelsea Drob (PA) and Steve Huftalen (MA)



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Jessica DiVito, SO Pennsylvania, during CEB session

The first half of Day One was facilitated by Greg Robinson from CEB. Greg helped the group explore different leadership roles – transactional, transformational and network – using CEB research and CEB’s competency model. He provided an explanation of the Enterprise Leadership Report that each participant had received, after which

each individual reviewed their report to identify areas for improvement. Similar to previous Academy workshops, the session concluded with a fun best practice exchange where participants shared an example from their own work that demonstrated transformational or network leadership best practice.

After lunch, the group listened to a panel composed of outstanding Philadelphia leaders from the business sector: Marc Bruno, Aramark COO, Brian Monihan, President and GM of Comcast SportsNet Philadelphia, Tim McDermott, CBO of Philadelphia Union (MLS), as well as Special Olympics North America Managing Director Marc Edenzon, and moderated by Scott Rosner from Wharton’s Sports Business Initiative. The group was impressed with the level of leadership demonstrated by the panelists, their successes and – importantly – the honest discussion of their mistakes and failures.



Marc Edenzon making a point during the panel

The final session on Day One focused on influencing others. Using CEB materials, Denis Doolan, Chief of Organizational Excellence at Special Olympics, introduced to the participants strategies for understanding other people’s behavior styles and influencing them by finding how to best approach them.

Day 1 ended with a celebration of the Phillies engagement with Special Olympics, the Phillies CEO David Montgomery hosting Academy participants at a game.

Day Two

At the beginning of Day Two the participants completed an interactive exercise to practice the skill of influencing others. In small groups, they prepared pitches aimed at persuading a group of judges to take a vacation in Kansas, based on the judges' predetermined behavior style. Jerry Sorkin, Head of Global Corporate Citizenship at CEB, and Margot Dehn, HR Director at CEB joined the judges group along with Michael Stein from Harvard.



Participants present influencing pitches to the group of CEB, Harvard and SOI judges

Having finished the Influencing Others session, the group welcomed Michael Stein, Executive Director of the Harvard Law School Project on Disability. Professor Stein, in collaboration with Special Olympics Chief Inspiration Officer Loretta Claiborne, led an empowering discussion on Inclusive Leadership. The four athlete participants took a very active part in this conversation, bringing to life stories and examples that highlighted the real issues and opportunities for inclusion.



Michael Stein and Loretta Claiborne



Athlete leader Jordon Schubert

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The afternoon of Day Two was focused on Team Leadership with guest facilitators from Goldman Sachs Nicole Panichella, Vice President of Goldman Sachs University and Kimberly Shepard, Associate, Leadership Development. Participants explored effective team leadership, task analysis and the art of delegation, as well as team effectiveness.



Goldman Sachs team opening up their session

In the final session of the day, Olga Yakimakh, Senior Manager for Organizational Excellence at SOI, introduced to the participants a new resource – SkillSoft’s online learning platform – which every one of them will be able to access for continuous learning after the Academy workshop. At the end of Day Two the group enjoyed a tour of the Independence Mall in Philadelphia with an entertaining tour guide who demonstrated superb skills in her craft.



Day Three

The workshop on Authentic Leadership by Harvard Business School Professor Scott Snook became one of the absolute highlights in the history of the Leadership Academy. The deep, poignant, inspiring workshop that used stories and simple frameworks to explain authentic leadership, touched and transformed every single person in the room. The participants noted in their evaluation forms what powerful influence this session made on their lives.



Professor Scott Snook

The final session was a traditional review of key principles for successful execution and the 'execution matrix' used to help prioritize transformational and network leadership projects and tasks ahead of more day-to-day 'transactional' leadership work. Greg Robinson, CEB, and Denis Doolan, SOI, co-facilitated this session.



Matthew Williams, SOI Athlete Board Member

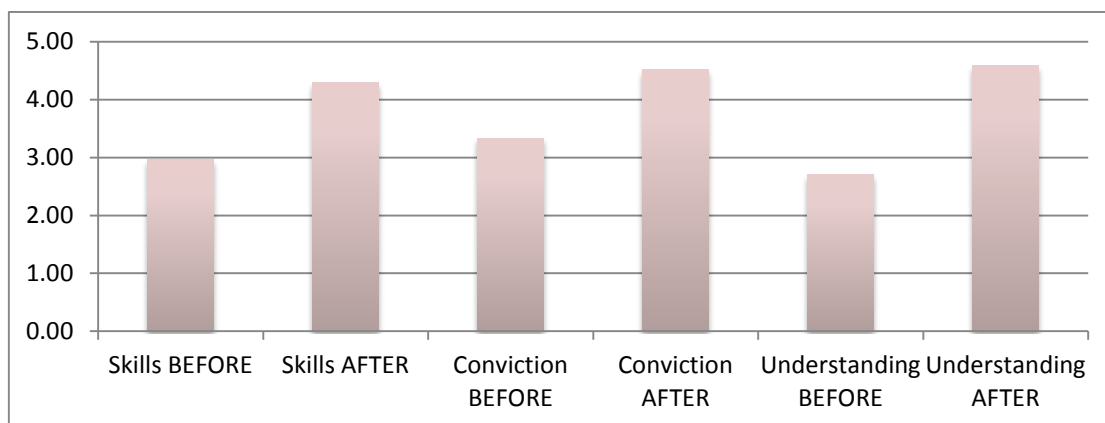
Wrap-Up

The Academy closed with an inspiring talk on athlete leadership in Special Olympics by Loretta Claiborne. This was followed by action planning where each participant reviewed the actions they had identified and refined them to ensure they were clear, impactful and measurable. They were assisted by four CEB coaches: Jerry Sorkin, Head of Global Corporate Citizenship, Greg Robinson, Margot Dean and Meredith Walker, who provided expert guidance with this task.

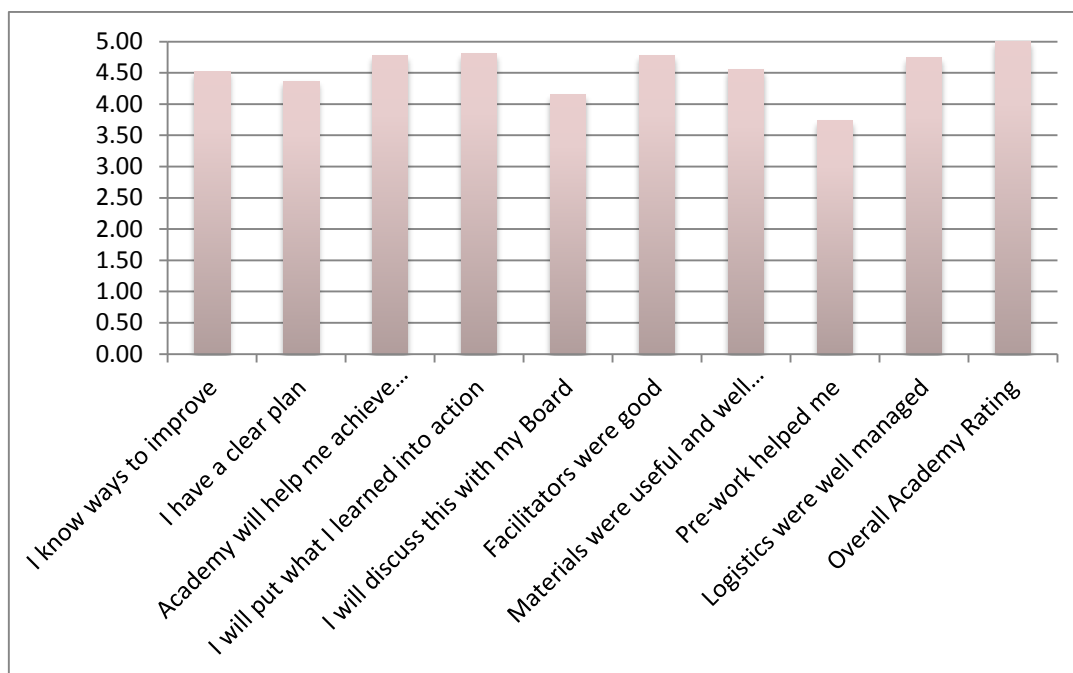
The participants will continue learning and practicing new skills based on their action plans, short videos on various topics available via the SkillSoft online platform, and a Facebook group for the North America Academy cohort. These new tools are envisioned to enhance the continuity of the Academy's efforts. Participants will complete the Academy when they submit interim and 1 year reports on what they have achieved from their action plans.

Evaluation

Participants completed an evaluation form at the end of the Academy to provide initial feedback on the experience. As part of this, they were asked to rate their skills, conviction and understanding before and after the Academy – positive gains were reported against each of these criteria (graph below shows average ratings).



They were also asked to answer a range of additional questions about various aspects of the Academy and its impact on their ability to do their job, culminating in an overall rating of the Academy. The results are shown below – the average overall rating was 5.00 out of 5 from a total of 27 forms returned!



Workshop Strengths

Most of the ratings were extremely positive and showed that the effort put into organizing this workshop is most likely to pay off with leaders' performance improvement. Comments like "I've taken leadership/management classes but I've never been so engaged and feel like the discussions/materials are actually items I would/am going to use" were in abundance in the evaluation forms.

Learning from previous workshops was seriously taken into account by the Academy leaders. For instance, athlete preparation before the workshop to ensure they engage in meaningful learning made a difference compared to previous engagement of athletes. The organizers heard that it was relatively easy for them to follow the content and flow, and effectively participate in conversations.

The evaluations suggested that the carefully selected content, focus on engagement and interactivity, a vision of involving the best external resources and best logistical support made the participants very appreciative of this opportunity. Many evaluations noted an important commitment to maintaining the Academy network and continuing to learn together.

Areas for Improvement and Follow-Up

One major comment concerned a lack of female facilitators, and will be taken into account in subsequent workshops. Comments requesting more time for action planning and digestion of materials also appeared in several evaluations despite the attempt to allocate more time for action planning throughout the event. The feedback concerning improvement of this Academy workshop contained a small amount of logistical notes (for instance, cold conference rooms). Overall though, the group felt there was very little that could have been done to improve this particular workshop.



Learning moments



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The entire academy took me by surprise from the thought provoking content and lessons learned, to each and every one of you. Not only did I expand my network with incredible new colleagues and friends, but you all truly inspired me through your passion and dedication to our movement. Although I've always enjoyed my position, you all have inspired me to look at it in a whole new light and for that, I cannot thank you enough.

Britt Kleine, Director, Pennsylvania



Thank you for the work you all did in making the Leadership Academy workshop the most worthwhile and valuable workshop I have been a part of since starting with Special Olympics. I don't think I fully appreciated the wealth of both knowledge and inspiration I received over the three days in Philadelphia until back in the office with time to reflect. There was an excellent balance of networking, sharing, learning and fun which is testament to the team and all the pre-work you must have done to ensure the week was a success.

Tom Davies, Director, Program Development, Canada



I just wanted to take a moment to say what an awesome experience this week was for me. Meeting all of you and having the opportunity to share knowledge and experiences was simply great. I may not remember all the names and I will not remember all the faces, but the memories will be etched in my mind forever. Thank you all and looking forward to networking with some of you in the not too distant future.

Gilbert Williams, Sports & Training Director, Bahamas

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Thank you so much for last week's incredible experience! It was so thought provoking, moving, and energizing. I feel I have been given so many incredible tools, and am very motivated to work hard to make the best of them for Special Olympics

Megan Grittani-Livingston, Manager, Communications, Canada

Feedback from the participants evaluation forms (anonymous):

"This has sincerely been one of the most educational and enriching opportunities I have ever had. I cannot express my gratitude enough!"

"Sessions and Academy logistics were well planned. Number of Academy participants were "right sized" - small enough for everyone to be involved and interactive - large enough to achieve diversity in experiences. Fully appreciated the involvement and inclusion of athletes. Awesome session on Authentic Leadership."

"I thought this was going to make me an outgoing vocal leader. I'm glad it's not what it was about because, frankly, that intimidated me. Knowing that the goal is to be authentic to who I am yet to stretch to others is a much more attainable goal. I learned so much in such a short amount of time and am excited to put the lessons I learned to practice at work and in my everyday life."

"Very well put together, great speakers, presenters, panel members and activities to help me become a better leader but most of all teach these activities to my co-workers and athlete leaders that I work with."

