

Project UNIFY: Year 4 Results

(2011- 2012 School Year)



Special Olympics





Introductions



Research & Evaluation team/UMass Boston:

- Gary Siperstein, Robin Parker, Jennifer Ross Stewart, Laura Corona

Special Olympics Project UNIFY national staff:

- Andrea Cahn, Steve Corbin, Oscar Harrell, Jerry Holy, Joanne Maldonado, Brian Quinn, Rebecca Ralston, Sarah Wright

Panelists:

- Ann Grunert: President and CEO, Special Olympics Delaware
- Clem Coulston: National YAC member, University of Delaware (2015)
- Rachel Ward: SODE athlete and Delaware YAC member
- Ruth Coughlan: Project UNIFY liaison, Special Olympics Delaware
- Samantha Huffman: former National YAC member, Hanover College(2013)



Overview



Project UNIFY *focuses on social inclusion, activating youth to develop school communities where all young people are agents of change - **fostering respect, dignity and advocacy** for people with intellectual disabilities by utilizing the existing sports and education programs of Special Olympics, as well as new, student-led initiatives.*



Valuable Lessons Learned

Years 1 - 3



- ❖ Creativity and experience drive success
- ❖ Three components – sports and more
- ❖ Everyone benefits
- ❖ We are ready to lead



Growth of Project UNIFY

Years 1 - 4



	2008	2012	2018
Schools	1,700	2,150	5,000
Youth active in inclusive sports in schools	10,922	63,371	100,000
State Education Leaders Networks	0	23	52
State Youth Activation Committees	0	24	52
Intense interactions (Unified Sports, Young Athletes, Partners Clubs)	?	155,000	500,000
Inclusive experiences	626,306	823,462	1,500,000

Evaluation of Project UNIFY: *Year 4*



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Evaluation Objectives: Year 4



- ❖ Document the scope of Project UNIFY programming in the schools.
- ❖ Document the value of Project UNIFY to State Programs, schools, and students.
- ❖ Describe the partnerships created and collaboration between State Programs and schools.



Methodology

- SO Staff surveys
- School Liaison surveys
- Student surveys
- Site visits
- Interviews

Participants

- State SO Programs
 - Project UNIFY staff
 - State Program CEOs
- Schools
 - Liaisons
 - Administrators
 - Students with ID
 - Students without ID

Project UNIFY: *Scope*



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Year 4 Initiatives



	Schools (n = 1073)
R-Word	56%
Unified Sports	46%
Traditional SO Sports	44%
Partners Club	39%
SO Sports Day	33%
Fans in the Stands	29%
Get Into It	29%
Fundraising	27%
Youth Leadership Training	20%
Young Athletes*	19%
Project UNIFY Rally	18%

*Young Athletes includes students participating as athletes or students volunteering to help younger students.



Project UNIFY Components



Project UNIFY Components	Schools (n = 1073)
Inclusive Sports Opportunities (e.g. Unified Sports, Young Athletes)	62%
Youth Leadership Opportunities (e.g. Partners Club, Youth Leadership Training)	72%
Whole School Involvement/Awareness (e.g. R-Word Campaign, Fans in the Stands)	77%
Included multiple components	76%



Value for SO Programs: Changing Image



❖ State Program CEOs believe that Project UNIFY has changed the way the educational community views Special Olympics

- Project UNIFY has **challenged the preconceived notion** that Special Olympics is a segregated organization
- Project UNIFY has **raised awareness** that Special Olympics supports social inclusion

"They no longer see Special Olympics as a segregated outdated program. They embrace the inclusiveness of Unified Sports and how it changes perceptions and attitudes of youth."

Value for SO Programs: Role of Youth



❖ State Program CEOs believe that Project UNIFY has served to promote **a culture of youth leadership and engagement** within the Special Olympics organization

- State Programs view their state-level Youth Activation Committee (YAC) as a valuable asset
- State Programs believe the YAC provides them with new perspectives and valuable feedback, assistance and guidance.

"[The YAC] ensures Project UNIFY is truly youth-led ... gives youth a voice in how Project UNIFY is implemented..."

Value of Project UNIFY: *Schools and Students*



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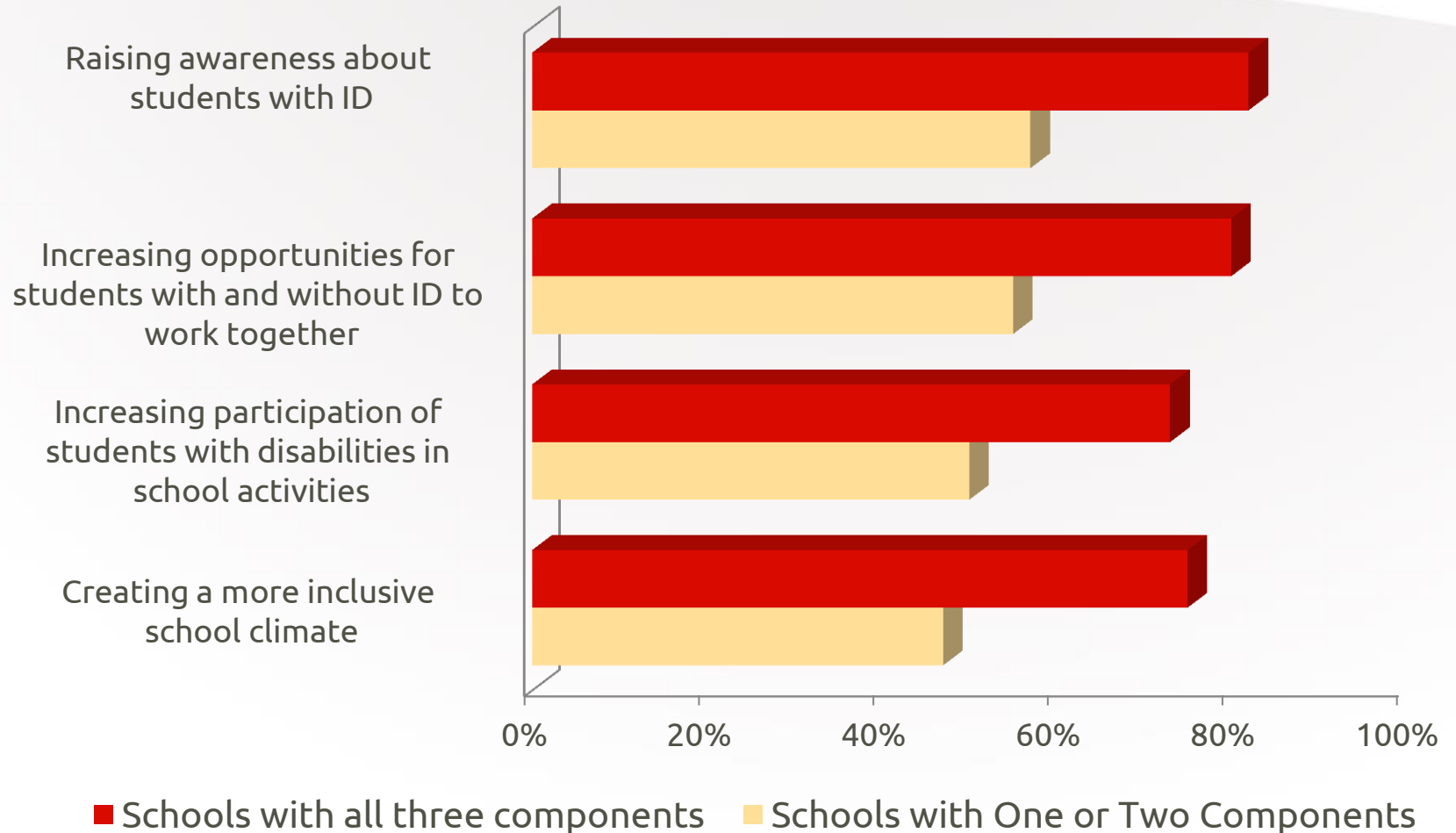


Project UNIFY makes a difference in....

- ❖ Raising awareness about students with intellectual disabilities
- ❖ Increasing opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to work together
- ❖ Increasing the participation of students with intellectual disabilities in school activities
- ❖ Creating a more inclusive school climate

Value to Schools

As reported by school liaisons





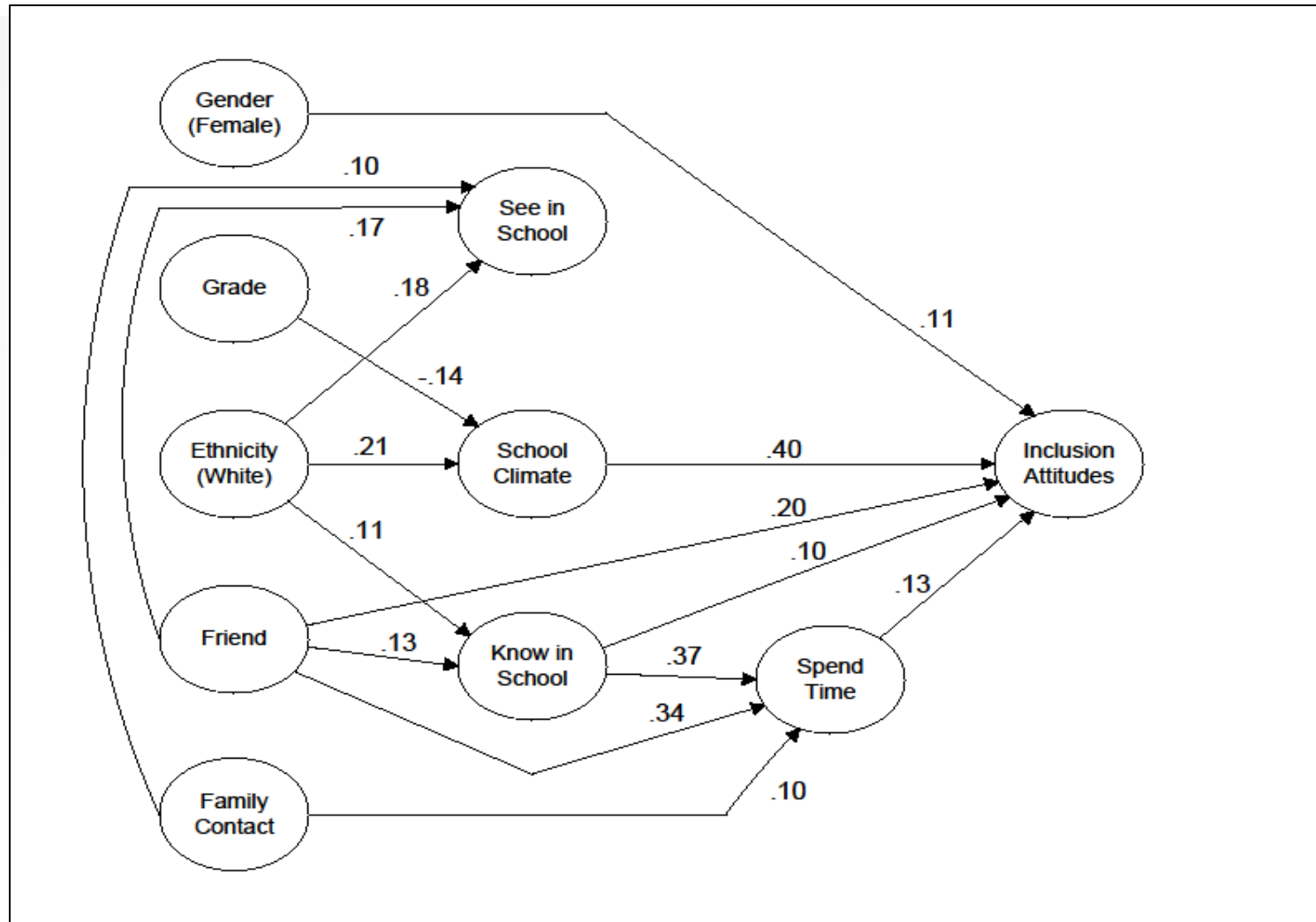
Value to Students: Attitudes toward peers with ID



- ❖ Students who participate in Project UNIFY* report ***positive attitudes*** toward their peers with ID in terms of both...
 - their beliefs about the inclusion of students with ID in their classes
 - their willingness to interact with their peers with ID

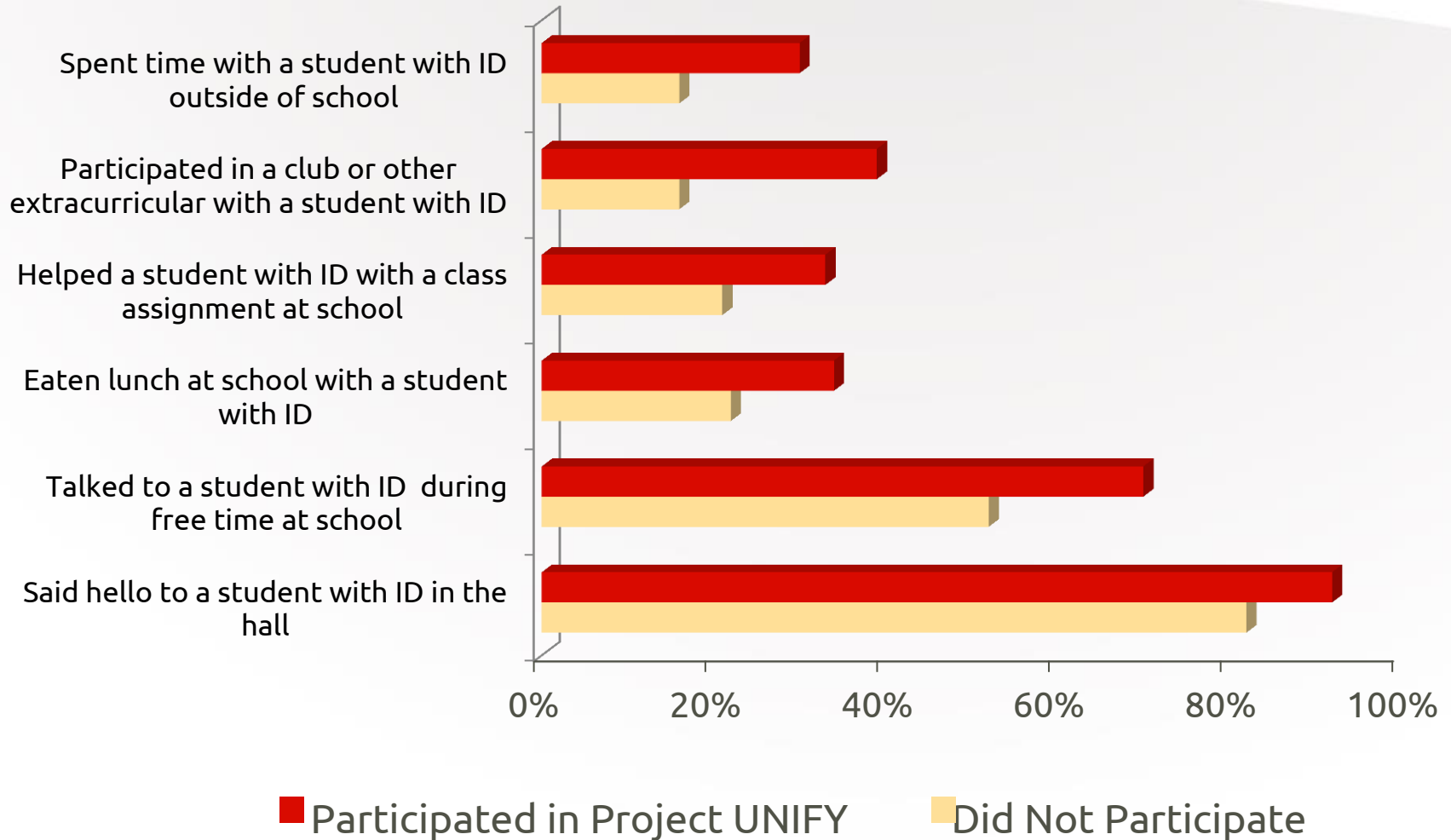
*in schools *new* to Project UNIFY in Year 4

Value to Students: Attitudes toward peers with ID





Self-Reported Interactions with Peers with Intellectual Disabilities





Self-Reported Interactions with Peers with Intellectual Disabilities



- ❖ Students who participate in Project UNIFY report interacting with students with intellectual disabilities in more *ways* than students who did not participate in Project UNIFY.
 - Students who participate in more Project UNIFY components report *significantly more interaction* with peers with ID than students who participate in fewer components.



Youth Experiences in Project UNIFY



82%

...become more aware that their emotions and attitudes can affect their classmates.

79%

...learn the importance of compromise when working together.

79%

...learn to be more patient with classmates.

65%

...learn they have things in common with students with disabilities.

Most participating students (78%) view Project UNIFY as a positive turning point in their life.

Value to Students with Intellectual Disabilities



- ❖ Students with intellectual disabilities who participate in Project UNIFY report being satisfied with and excited about their experiences.

Project UNIFY provided students with disabilities the opportunity to...

- have new and enjoyable experiences.
- demonstrate their abilities.
- make friends or meet new people

"My favorite part is when they help me find new friends so I don't feel lonely."

Project UNIFY Partnerships: *Collaboration of State Programs & Schools*



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State Program Models of Implementation



Implementation Strategies

❖ Top Down

- State recognizes their responsibility for implementing Project UNIFY
- High involvement and support

❖ Bottom Up

- School is mainly responsible for implementing Project UNIFY
- State encourages school to make Project UNIFY fit their needs

❖ Mixed

- State is responsible for the coordination of sport activities and the school is responsible for school based social inclusion activities

"My favorite part is when they help me find new friends so I don't feel lonely"



School Models of Implementation



Platform and Priority

❖ Sports Based Model

- Strong roots with sports programming; prior involvement with Special Olympics
- Natural transition to Project UNIFY, but difficult to connect school based activities and gain school wide support

❖ School Wide/ Youth Leadership Based Model

- Schools focus on awareness and diversity through education: prior involvement with socially inclusive activities
- Emphasize leadership to promote inclusion. Sports is just an activity where students with and without disabilities have an opportunity to interact



Program-School Partnerships



Communication

57%

...of the liaisons reported that they communicated with their State Program **once a month or more.**

63%

...of administrators reported that **no one from Special Olympics** had reached out to them to discuss Project UNIFY programming.

Time Commitment/Being Present

69%

... of liaisons felt that the involvement they had from their State Program was about **as much as they wanted..**

*... them. ... We thought it they help me find new friends
be able to actually meet them. It's always fun to have a
lot of friends, and they feel the same way.
Project UNIFY club member*



Valuable Lessons Learned

Year 4



- ❖ Demonstrated support for 3 Project UNIFY components
- ❖ Benefit for State SO Programs
- ❖ Extending our understanding of how State Programs and schools implement Project UNIFY
- ❖ Continuous improvement

Project UNIFY :

*Where are we
going from here?*

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Continuous Improvement



Use evaluation results to improve, enhance and sustain

- **Scope**
 - deepen capacity, expansion of opportunities
 - promote greater sustainability
- **Value**
 - shared leadership and collaboration with schools
 - stronger and more inclusive leadership for students
- **Collaboration**
 - technical assistance/professional development
 - training for schools and teachers

Vision For the Future: The Next Phase



- **Seamless Education**
 - Preparing for kindergarten
 - More transition programming
 - Emphasis on elementary and middle schools
- **Emphasis on the Whole School**
 - Inclusive Youth Leadership - Partners Clubs
 - Social Inclusion measures
 - Interscholastic sports
- **Creative Inclusion Centers**
 - Technical Assistance Centers set up regionally
 - Support teachers with professional development
 - Common Core Standards



Questions?

Discussion