Project UNIFY:
Year 4 Results
(2011-2012 School Year)
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

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

Evaluation of Project UNIFY: Year 4
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.
Evaluation Design

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
# Year 4 Initiatives

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

*Young Athletes includes students participating as athletes or students volunteering to help younger students.*
## Project UNIFY Components

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

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Value of Project UNIFY: 

Schools and Students
Value to Schools

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

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

- Schools with all three components
- Schools with One or Two Components
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

![Diagram showing the relationship between various factors and inclusion attitudes.](image-url)
Self-Reported Interactions with Peers with Intellectual Disabilities

- Spent time with a student with ID outside of school
- Participated in a club or other extracurricular with a student with ID
- Helped a student with ID with a class assignment at school
- Eaten lunch at school with a student with ID
- Talked to a student with ID during free time at school
- Said hello to a student with ID in the hall

- Participated in Project UNIFY
- Did Not Participate
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
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

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middle school student
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.
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?
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