

Examples of Impact by Different Programmatic Components - Project UNIFY Year 2

Partners Clubs in Oklahoma

“I love being in this atmosphere with the smiling happy faces. I have a disabled uncle and was already involved with Special Olympics a little.”

Victoria D – Harrah, Oklahoma, High School Student

Establishing a Special Olympics Partners Club in Harrah has been a dream of mine for several years. Project UNIFY was able to guide me in getting started. The athletes have enjoyed being members of a group that include Special Olympians as well as friends from the rest of the student body. The partners have grown to appreciate the hard work the athletes put forth during training and competition. EVERYONE involved has had a great time interacting and establishing new friendships as they work towards a common goal: acceptance and respect. Unified sports, R-word campaign, Be a Fan, Polar Plunge, Christmas parties, Valentine parties, and even the prom have all provided opportunities for growth. I enjoy watching my students "hanging out" with their Partners Club friends during the course of the day. As each year goes by, the Harrah Partners Club will grow and impact the lives of more and more citizens in this great community. - *Darlene Turner, Harrah High School Partner Club Advisor*

Be a Fan/Fans in the Stands in Connecticut

The newly formed Northeast Middle School Unified Sports track team was treated to an Olympic send-off as they left for their first event at Plainville High School. The team assembled in the café and then paraded through the school halls as the Olympic theme song played on the loud speaker and the students lined the hallway giving high 5's and cheering them on. The busses were then given a police escort off the property. – *Lou Pear, Director of Unified Sports, Connecticut Association of Schools*

R-Word Spread the Word to End the Word Changes School Climate in Illinois

In March 2010, one Schaumburg High School Regional basketball game was dedicated to Special Olympics. An announcement was made at the beginning of the game to dedicate the basketball game. Then during half-time, students from the Elementary School District 54 Special Olympic Basketball teams played a 4-minute game. The teams then received medals at the end of the game, keeping in the spirit of the Special Olympics. Students are creating a 3-5 minute video composed of students with developmental disabilities talking about their abilities and how the “R” word has affected them. To celebrate the National “Spread the Word to End the Word” day the four hallways of the main floor are decorated in the colors of Special Olympics. The business hallway has a “Dare to Care” wall where students sign their name to a heart, pledging to care about people with disabilities. Finally, the guidance hallway has profiles of Special Olympic athletes and is decorated with an Olympic theme. Students are encouraged to wear the theme colors. Teachers count the number of students participating in their 3rd hour classes. The class with the highest percentage of participation receives donuts. While conducting research for the project, students learned that some special needs students at our school ate lunch in the classroom because they were made fun of in the cafeteria. This was extremely upsetting to the students, so they decided to create a buddy club where students would sign up to eat lunch and play games with students with disabilities in the cafeteria during the lunch hours. The students plan to make this a monthly event. – *Dave Breen, Vice President of Area Management, Special Olympics Illinois*

Unified Sports Growth in Connecticut

Prior to Project Unify we would add a few new schools each year. In year 1 we added 12 new schools and in year two about 12 more with 11 of the first year schools continuing. This year we have so far added 22 new schools and today we spoke to a superintendent, his principals and the physical education staff. I am confident that there will be 3 more schools in this district signing on soon.

As far as school climate goes, I have received several news articles, teacher anecdotal remarks and parent comments. Most recently a teacher observed a pep rally where athletes were introduced and the Unified Sports team played a demonstration game. All students and staff were being fans in the stands in support

of their Unified Athlete Peers. At High School halftime games, pep clubs, cheerleaders, classmates, parents and staff provide validation of their performance and show their school spirit. A parent at a recent elementary sports day made mention that her daughter now has friends at school, is included in groups at lunch, is asked to play with classmates at lunch recess and has been invited for the first time to three birthday parties. All high school programs and there are close to 70 that include Unified Sports Athletes and Partners in their school award banquets and receive the same certificates, plaques and trophies. A brand new Unified Sports School brought the varsity cheerleading team to a soccer tournament in uniform to support their athletes. This same team, according to the vice principal is seeing Unified Sports Athletes eating lunch with their partners, walking to class together as they set a good example for other classmates. This principal has seen a big change in the attitudes of students toward these athletes and she is confident that there will be many school spectators at the basketball tournament that this school is hosting in March. In addition to the fine work that this urban school is doing, as a result of a news article, the superintendent in this district has suggested that the other two high schools start a Unified Sports team. As of this week these two other schools have established teams and one of the middle schools is on board as well. The Project Unify funds have really brought the Unified Sports Program in CT to a new level. – *Lou Pear, Director of Unified Sports, Connecticut Association of Schools*