**2013 Special Olympics Global Youth Activation Summit**

*Youth Do Change the World* Educational Session #7

What does Project UNIFY and Social Inclusion Look Like? In Special Olympics and in Communities? How Do Youth Make it happen?

**Purpose**

Special Olympics Project UNIFY® ([www.project-unify.org](http://www.project-unify.org)) empowers youth with and without ID to be agents of change in their communities. Youth are not the leaders of tomorrow, but we are the leaders of today. Project UNIFY is a “for the youth, by the youth” social justice movement, that embraces inclusive youth leadership, societal awareness, and sports as a catalyst to initiate bonds of love, acceptance and dignity for all people. Project UNIFY is progressive in the concept of Social Inclusion, where students with and without ID are socially connected, valued and supported in a safe and engaging environment. Through implementing the Special Olympics Get Into It Curriculum, to forming a Unified Sports Team, friendships that were once not possible through the extremities of exclusion, are now being recognized as friendships that will last a lifetime.

**Logistics**

1. Even though the message of Project UNIFY is consistent, the various components that each Program implements, can vary. Therefore, a few co-leaders elected to share how Project UNIFY looks like in their community, supplemented with pictures.
2. Each table was given a Resource with the 6 Program Elements of Project UNIFY to discuss. Each person was provided with a worksheet where one distinguished core values or behaviors that support Project UNIFY, along with either writing a description or a personal experience that supports it. (e-mail Clem for an electronic copy).
3. Due to the sometimes-confusing and abstract concept of Social Inclusion, each delegation first discussed about what comprises their community, through the use of open-ended questions. Following this, questions were asked specifically on ID, which intersected the community and inclusion aspect for people with and without ID.
4. Each delegation was provided a blank chart with three categories: (1) Social Inclusion, (2) Physical Inclusion and (3) Exclusion. With 20-options, each delegation chose which category it belonged too, along with what the option meant to them.
5. Through a group-discussion, we expanded upon our working definition of Inclusion from Session #2, and delved further into the behaviors, practices, and values that support Social Inclusion.

**Highlights**

* Responses to, *What is a Community?*
  + Mutual understanding, being natural with one another and continuous communication.
  + To be interested in achieving goals of a community.
* **Understanding** – realizing that everyone is different but that they still have a contribution to make.
* **Courage** – people conquering challenges and doing their very best whether they win or lose.
* **Teamwork** – *Together We Can!* Passing the ball so everyone can have a chance to score.
* **Friendship** – as they work together, they’ll get to know each other and will create a friendship chain.
* **Sense of Value** – everyone has a sense of purpose.
* **Love** – love is the driving force and boost to help friends.
* **Development** – give everyone a change to be better and learn from another.

**Action Considerations**

1. Take 5-minutes to look at the culture of your school – are (and how) students with and without ID valued and perceived as assets to the community?
2. Facilitate a Team Building Activity, where each team is given a task to complete as a group. The facilitator can impose challenges upon the participants, where he or she must still engage in completing the task with the team, despite the challenge.
3. Complete the phrase, “I feel supported and engaged when…” Encourage fellow youth leaders to share their responses in creating an environment that helps all to be the best learners and sharers.
4. When speaking, ensure that everyone is able to understand by using visuals, graphic organizers, ‘think-pair breaks’ and summarizing discussions (review, *Equitable Conversations Do’s and Don’ts*).

**Personal Reflection**

1. What does our community look like now? How would our ideal community look like?
2. Through your involvement in Special Olympics, how have you seen Athletes become empowered, determined and courageous on both the field and as ambassadors/leaders?
3. Why should youth be the key people in leading and promoting Social Inclusion in the community?

**For More Information**

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