



Project UNIFY





Special Olympics
South Carolina
Be a fan™

Project UNIFY



UNIFY

Project UNIFY Participation Guide



Special Olympics South Carolina • 1276 Assembly Street • Columbia, SC 29201 • (803)772-1555
www.so-sc.org



DID YOU KNOW about SO...

- Special Olympics was founded by the late Eunice Kennedy Shriver after beginning a summer day camp for in her backyard for children with intellectual disabilities in 1963.
- The 1st International Special Olympics Games was held at Chicago's Soldier Field July 19th-20th, 1968. 1,000 athletes from 26 states and Canada competed in athletics, aquatics, and floor hockey. South Carolina sent 5 athletes to this important historical event!
- The Special Olympics movement is in 180 countries throughout the world.
- Special Olympics International (SOI) serves more than 3.1 million athletes globally.
- SOI offers training and competition opportunities in 30 Olympic-type sports.
- Special Olympics South Carolina (SOSC) serves nearly 18,000 athletes each year.
- SOSC offers training and competition opportunities in 23 sports including opportunities for Unified Sports® Programs in 17 of those sports.
- Nearly 1,000 coaches volunteer their time with the athletes of SOSC each year.
- More than 10,000 volunteers are involved with SOSC events annually.
- Special Olympics is a 501c3 non-profit organization that relies on charitable donations from individuals, businesses, foundations, etc. for all funding to support year-round programs.



Special Olympics
South Carolina

Be a fan.™



SOSC Sports/Competition Schedule

MidWinter Games (Feb-March) - Charleston

- Badminton
- Basketball
- Table Tennis
- Bowling (21 and over)
- Powerlifting
- Disc Golf

Fall Games (Oct.-Nov.) - Greenville

- Football (Soccer)
- Roller Skating
- Flag Football
- Volleyball
- Bocce
- Golf
- Tennis



US Tennis Championships (March) - Hilton Head Island

Summer Games (May) - Columbia

- Athletics (track & field)
- Bowling (under 21)
- Gymnastics
- Aquatics
- Cheerleading



Other Sports/Competitions

- Equestrian
- Kayaking
- Alpine Skiing
- Sailing



What is Project UNIFY®?

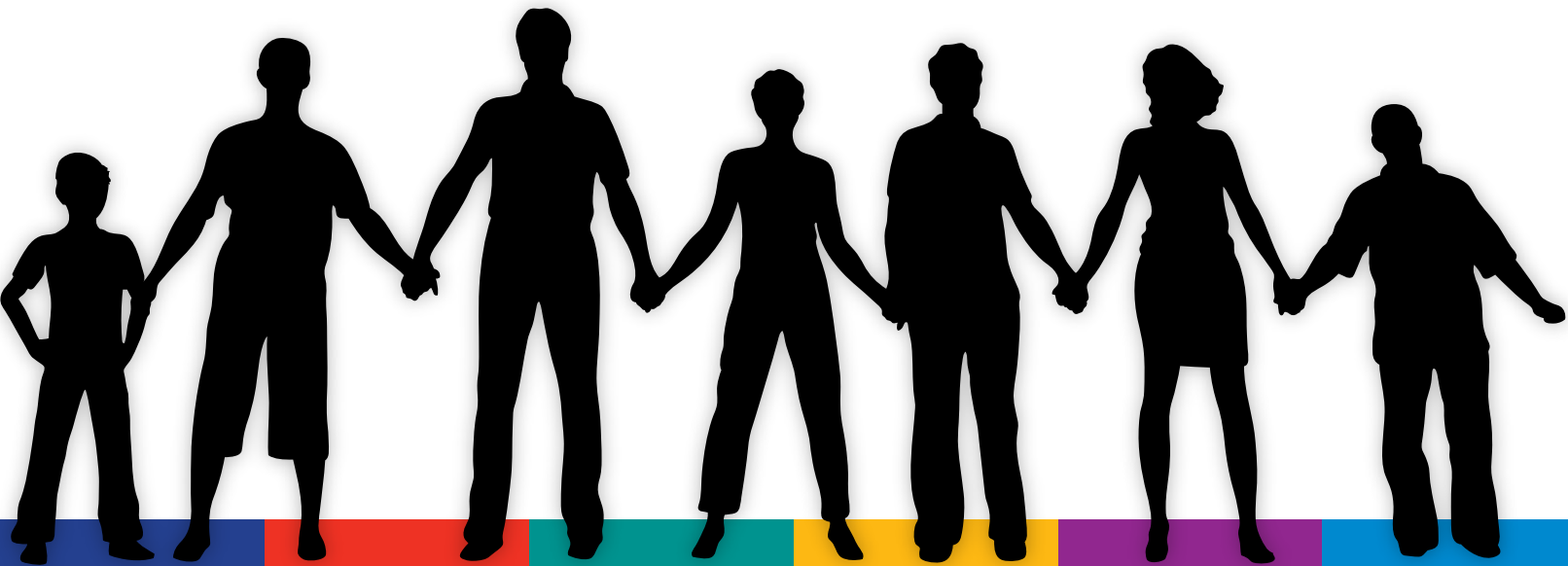
In 2008, Special Olympics North America was awarded a grant from the US Department of Education with a goal to activate communities where all young people are agents of change, who foster advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities. To accomplish this goal, the organization formed Project UNIFY®, a program that seeks to utilize existing state Special Olympics programs and initiatives in combination with schools.

What is Project UNIFY® doing now?

The 2008-2009 school year was the first year for beginning Project UNIFY® programs in schools, with 12 schools participating in South Carolina. During the 2009-2010 academic school year, 30 South Carolina schools were involved and received sub-grant funding, up to \$1000, from the Special Olympics South Carolina state office through the Project UNIFY® grant supporting their specific Project UNIFY® programs. The schools host activities and events with an abundance of inclusive opportunities through Special Olympics and Project UNIFY® initiatives, while experiencing great success in promoting respect for and acceptance of their Special Olympics athletes by their peers without intellectual disabilities.



Project UNIFY





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graph TD; A([US Department of Education]) --> B([Special Olympics North America]); B --> C([Special Olympics South Carolina]); C --> D([Special Olympics Public Schools (through Sub-Grant Program)]); D --> B;
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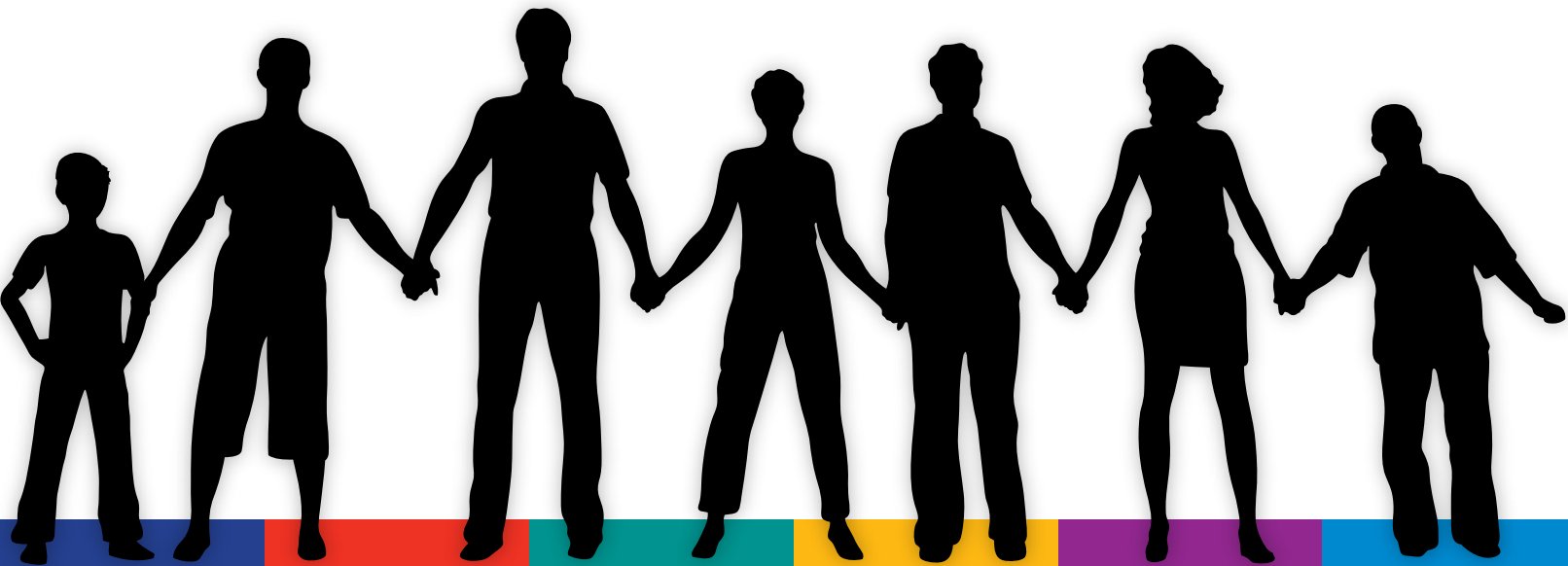
**US Department
of Education**

**Special Olympics
North America**

**Special Olympics
South Carolina**

**Special Olympics
Public Schools**
(through Sub-Grant Program)

Project UNIFY



Project UNIFY® Key Characteristics

Project UNIFY® is committed to ensuring that the following characteristics of effective practice are in place and consistently achieved in schools.

- Unifying Sports Programming**
 A commitment to bring the diverse programs together focusing on school community and student development.
- Youth Leadership**
 Young people representing the diversity of the student body are engaged in leadership positions and schools acknowledge that youth leadership is a priority for the schools/programs.
- School-Community Collaborations**
 Sustainable collaborations exist that mutually benefit the school and the community and are a core element of Project UNIFY® activities.
- Creating and Sustaining Relationships**
 A commitment to bring youth with and without disabilities together through programs so that all youth benefit and lasting friendships and relationships are formed.
- Communications**
 The new social networking media to young people is centered to all communication. Quality communications strategies are employed to inform and influence critical education stakeholders. In addition, communication and youth products are shared with networks that offer the greatest opportunity for suggested strategies to be considered and employed.
- Professional Development**
 Creating structured time for initiative practitioners to acquire and enhance knowledge and skills to effectively implement and sustain quality products.
- Continuous Improvement**
 Sustainable formal teams focusing on using data for improvement. Teams consist of all stakeholders ensuring that data is analyzed and resulting “improvements” are appropriate and geared to program enhancement.

Project UNIFY® supports districts and schools as they establish partnerships within the school community to raise the inclusiveness of the district. The reputation of Special Olympics adds credibility to the Project UNIFY® program, while ensuring to schools that they are partnering with a global network of people who are making a difference in the lives of children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

Project UNIFY® and Special Olympics will be seen as a catalyst for this work- similar to the Effective School Movement of the 1990’s and Professional Learning Community earlier in this decade. Special Olympics sports and related programs provide platforms for youth to understand and to value their peers with intellectual disabilities. It empowers and activates youth to create opportunities for and with them in sport, friendship and advocacy. This will create a shift in expectation and results for Special Olympics in public education and school districts.



Ways in Which Programming is Combined:

- **Pre-K/Elementary/Primary Schools-** Young Athletes Program, Special Olympics Get Into It service-learning curriculum, Unify Day, researching information on the web/activities, art projects and Fans in the Stands with classmates and family members.
- **Secondary/Middle Schools-** Unified Sports® teams, Special Olympics Get Into It service-learning curriculum, Youth Summits and Rallies, Unify Day, Student led R-Word: social justice and advocacy campaign, guest speakers, web site connections, essay contests, school assemblies, wellness campaigns tied to curriculum and Special Olympics activities.
- **Secondary/High Schools-** Unified Sports® teams, Special Olympics Get Into It service-learning curriculum, Unify Day, Games, Student led R-Word: social justice an advocacy campaigns, web-based friendships with national and international Special Olympics connections, Be a fan campaigns, essay contests, editorial writing, Youth Summits, Assemblies and Rallies, Youth Activation committees, leadership roles in planning and implementing Special Olympics competition, mentoring middle school students, volunteering with Elementary School activities.



School Climate

- Project UNIFY® focuses on changing school climate to be more inclusive, reduce impediments and sustain programs that can boost student achievement for all students as well as those with ID. School policy current focus is on academic competencies with little time for programs not focused on academic content.
- Project UNIFY® creates a delivery system with partners, places and methodologies that create a critical mass of youth and adult leaders in your community or school district. It helps focus competing priorities, fragmented services, unstable funding and low expectations for all students and youth including those with intellectual disabilities. Success stories will help break the complacency and low expectations for intellectually disabled students. It will also provide support and methods to improve the quality of life for students and families in the school community.
- Project UNIFY® provides coaching and tools to help school leaders and teachers think differently, act differently and act together. This will help young people, parents, teachers, school leaders, and policy makers bring precision to their passion, ensuring that all young people engage in an inclusive environment.
- Project UNIFY® is a new way of doing business. It focuses on youth as leaders and major contributors to project design, implementation, evaluation and sustainability.
- Project UNIFY® provides a method to consolidate and align separate change-focused initiatives underway and focus on big goals.



- Project UNIFY® will support school leaders in the establishment of relationships between schools and local, regional, and national Special Olympics Organizations.
- Project UNIFY® will support school leaders in their ongoing drive for funding. Project UNIFY® will model the investment of funds and human capital to build a culture of collaboration. Funding will be provided for a set period of time to establish practices of youth engagement. The principles and practices of the Special Olympics provide opportunities for dialogue with local funders who can unite with the local SO Program and school district around the values outlined in Project UNIFY®.

Community Building

- Project UNIFY® will support all school leaders in establishing processes and methods to change school climate to create a school culture of inclusion, respect, and human dignity for all students in the school. An engaged student is connected to their school and the adults working with them.



- Project UNIFY® is a method to establish a collaborative group dedicated to youth service. Care providers, educators, government, faith-based and non-profit agency reps, and teen advisors who are concerned about the youth in our community can be brought together to share resources and organizations.
- Project UNIFY® supports state and community efforts to help youth by changing the way they build coalitions of youth including those with intellectual disabilities. It provides an entry point for school districts to find new partners where previously the school district has worked independently.



- Project UNIFY® will assist school leaders develop and sustain partnerships with Special Olympics at the local and regional level. Both will have an opportunity to collaborate on practices that sustain a climate of inclusion for all students rather than a specific methodology that is linked to Project UNIFY®. They must develop a sustaining climate of inclusion for all students and this is a methodology to accomplish this goal.
- Project UNIFY® will work schools to establish partnerships with local or regional SO programs. Special Olympics programming is often special events; more systemic integration needs to be done here. It is more effective to work with existing programs than attempt to create new programs that will compete for funding and attention.

Resources

- Project UNIFY® is a unique conversation starter with those who are interested in student leadership and school climate. A successful partnership with Project UNIFY® and Special Olympics will support the school district's efforts to attract fiscal resources by expanding the opportunity for investment.
- This avoids the development of a dependency of a school district on Special Olympics for funding; freeing Special Olympics to fund other projects in the future. Project UNIFY® incentivizes schools to efforts that cost little and are more about skills, knowledge and dispositions of those in the schools and districts than a set purpose that ends with the loss of funding. It supports Special Olympics in their mission while schools improve school climate for all students.
- Project UNIFY® provides a method to consolidate separate change-focused initiatives, task forces, and coalitions.



Youth Engagement

- Project UNIFY® brings another mechanism to incorporate youth voice and leadership in school climates and at the district and community level to foster the acceptance of their peers with ID and impact attitudes of the entire group. Youth leaders are increasingly viewed as a process that enhances school community change. Improvements of school climate and change also create relationships and professional development for teachers.
- Project UNIFY® will provide teachers and school leaders structured time for initiative members to acquire and enhance knowledge and skills.

Implications for Schools

The best schools are finding that the main factors in improving student learning-especially those youth that are challenged or not working to expectation are those that are moving from a standardized educational program. These schools may not offer every opportunity that schools are known for. Rather, these schools are led by principals and teachers that are focused on student centric learning- where learning is increasingly customized to how each student learns best, where relationships and connections between teachers; students and authentic learning is routine, and where schools are more focused on creating opportunity and expectation for all students, not those who meet the mold of standardized education.

These practices and beliefs include setting high expectations and holding students to them for learning, behavior, attitudes and attention in class and the schoolhouse. Successful educators routinely adjust their teaching and practices with youth so they do learn and behave rather than accepting less than what is right or allowing them to underperform.

They develop and acquire in partnership with youth, learning materials and lessons in place aligned with what is assessed in class, the grade level and school district. They give youth a voice and opportunities to contribute, through service, to their classroom, school and community so we are working together in a relationship of collaboration and authentic- meaningful learning.

Schools and community groups developing youth share a common goal of preparing them for a world, better than what we live in now. We will be living in a world that is better for all if we have an inclusive school environment that fosters equity, justice and engagement so that all students are active principled citizens and leaders today as well as tomorrow. The result is a world inclusive by nature and collaborative by practice. Project UNIFY® commits to these efforts and impacts. As Tim Shriver, Chairman and CEO of Special Olympics recently wrote about the words of his mother, "As we hope for the best in them, hope is reborn in us."



Project UNIFY® Movement

Project UNIFY® is designed to change perspectives, improve attitudes, enhance relationships, and boost acceptance among students with and without intellectual disabilities through the creation of school-based projects and sports opportunities for Special Olympics athletes and unified partners. In changing perspectives, Project UNIFY® is reshaping the overall stereotype of the Special Olympics movement to a more inclusive environment for individuals with and without intellectual disabilities.



Project UNIFY® is helping to restructure Special Olympics and inclusive opportunities by transitioning the thought process...

From

To

- One Country's Movement —————> • A Global Movement
- Pity —————> • Empowerment
- "Nice" thing to do —————> • Important for society
- An occasional event —————> • A part of everyday life
- A charity —————> • A global marketing partner
- About "those special people" —————> • About all of "us"



UNIFY

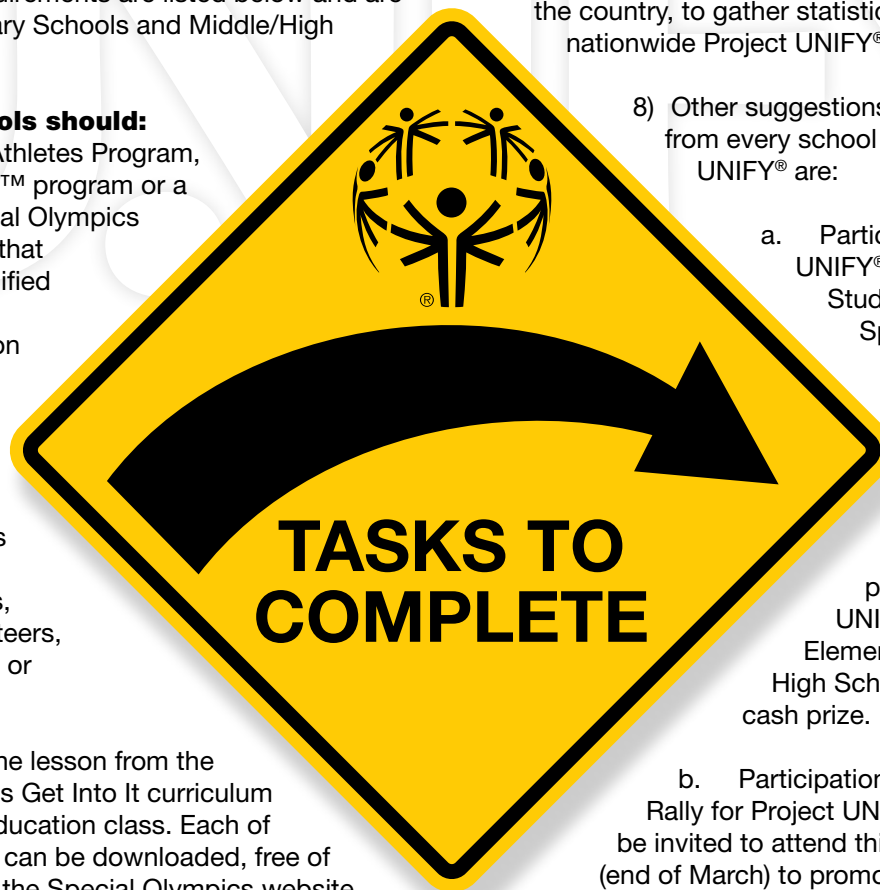


Road Map for Project UNIFY®

Schools participating in Project UNIFY® are required to fulfill a number of tasks throughout their project timeframe. The requirements are listed below and are specific to Elementary Schools and Middle/High Schools.

Elementary Schools should:

- 1) Begin a Young Athletes Program, a Unified Sports™ program or a traditional Special Olympics sports program that must include Unified Experiences. A general education class or student volunteers must be included in practices or training sessions and can serve as peer coaches, additional volunteers, unified partners, or “buddies”.
- 2) Teach at least one lesson from the Special Olympics Get Into It curriculum to the general education class. Each of the four lessons can be downloaded, free of charge, through the Special Olympics website.
- 3) Implement at least one school-wide activity that promotes Be a fan™ and/or End the R-Word campaigns. Activity ideas can be found on the School Activities page within this kit.
- 4) Meet with Special Olympics staff for face-to-face meetings to discuss your specific Project UNIFY® program.
- 5) Submit a monthly log. These “reports” will give Special Olympics staff a better look into your program and the activities you’ve done throughout the month. This will be a very simple requirement and is outlined under the Monthly Logs definition in the initiatives section of this kit.
- 6) Organize some sort of culminating activity. This activity can be classroom-based, school-based or include multiple schools in your district/area. The activity could be a competition or could be your school-wide activity.
- 7) Finally, you will be asked to complete an online survey, provided by the University of Massachusetts, towards the end of the school year which serves as an evaluation of the grant project. This survey will be completed by all schools, across the country, to gather statistics and results for the nationwide Project UNIFY® movement.
- 8) Other suggestions that are encouraged from every school involved in Project UNIFY® are:
 - a. Participation in the Project UNIFY® Essay Contest. Student volunteers and Special Olympics athletes may submit short essays by the designated deadline (usually mid-Spring) telling of their experience of participation in Project UNIFY®. Winners from Elementary, Middle, and High School levels will receive a cash prize.
 - b. Participation in the State House Rally for Project UNIFY®. All schools will be invited to attend this youth-driven event (end of March) to promote Be a fan™ and End the R-Word campaigns.
 - c. Sharing of photos, videos, and stories of their activities and events using web-based resources, such as the Special Olympics Fan Community site.
 - d. Development of a School Coordinating Team which will be comprised of at least one special education teacher, one general education teacher, one athlete and one partner with some involvement from a school administrator. These teams will work together and come up with ideas for the grant project and how they can impact their school climate.
 - e. Creation of a Fan Club at your school. These clubs will be comprised of students that want to help in the activities being promoted through your Project UNIFY® program and promote the program through special projects or activities.



Road Map (Continued)

Middle and High Schools should:

- 1) Begin a Unified Sports™ program or a traditional Special Olympics sports program that must include Unified Experiences. A general education class or group of student volunteers must be included in any practices or training sessions that are being held and can serve as unified partner and/or peer coaches.
- 2) You are required to teach at least one lesson from the Special Olympics Get Into It curriculum to the general education class. Each of the four lessons can be downloaded, free of charge, through the Special Olympics website.
- 3) You must implement at least one school-wide activity that promotes Be a fan™ and/or End the R-Word campaigns. Activity ideas can be found on the School Activities page within this kit.
- 4) Meet with Special Olympics staff for face-to-face meetings to discuss your specific Project UNIFY® program.
- 5) Submit a monthly log. These “reports” will give Special Olympics staff a better look into your program and what activities you’ve done throughout the month. This will be a very simple requirement and is outlined under the Monthly Logs definition in the initiatives section of this kit.
- 6) Your school must establish a School Coordinating Team which will be comprised of at least one special education teacher, one general education teacher, one athlete and one partner with some involvement from a school administrator. These teams will work together and come up with ideas for the grant project and how they can impact their school climate.
- 7) Your school should also create and implement a Fan Club for Project UNIFY®. These clubs will be comprised of students that want to help in the activities being promoted through your Project UNIFY® program.
- 8) Organize some sort of culminating activity. This activity can be classroom-based, school-based or include multiple schools in your district/area. The activity could be a competition or could be your school-wide activity. Finally, you will be asked to complete an online survey, provided by the University of Massachusetts, towards the end of the school year which serves as an evaluation of the grant project. This survey will be completed by all schools, across the country, to gather statistics and results for the nationwide Project UNIFY® movement.
- 9) Other suggestions that are encouraged from every school involved in Project UNIFY® are:
 - a. Participation in the Project UNIFY® Essay Contest. Student volunteers and Special Olympics athletes may submit short essays by the designated deadline (usually mid-Spring) telling of their experience of participation in Project UNIFY®. Winners from Elementary, Middle, and High School levels will receive a cash prize.
 - b. Participation in the State House Rally for Project UNIFY®. All schools will be invited to attend this youth-driven event (end of March) to promote Be a fan™ and End the R-Word campaigns.
 - c. Sharing of photos, videos, and stories of their activities and events using web-based resources, such as the Special Olympics Fan Community site.



Destination Inclusion

The Project UNIFY® grant program is structured around 3 core Special Olympics activities:

Young Athletes Program with a “buddied” component for Unified Experiences

Traditional Special Olympics Sports program with Unified Experiences

Unified Sports®

Young Athletes Program is a program designed for 2-7 year olds that is used to develop and introduce foundational skills through the use of “play activities”. Each activity challenges athletes through learning the basics of sport (i.e. throwing, jumping, catching, etc.) as well as learning to follow instructions, such as taking turns and waiting in line.



All activities are also designed to prepare for sports participation by increasing strength and coordination while developing group play. While the program is designed to promote games and activities over competition, it is also designed to begin preparation for them to begin competing as a Special Olympics athlete at age 8.

An example of how this initiative can be implemented in your school program is by taking a preschool or Kindergarten special needs class and pairing them up with a 3rd grade general education class. The general education students would become “buddies” and help their Young Athlete practice and move through the different skill sets you set up. They would also stay with their particular “buddy” throughout the duration of your Project UNIFY® program so they can develop a relationship with their new “friend”.



Traditional Special Olympics Sports with “Unified Experiences” is an initiative to create inclusive activities through Special Olympics and other school-based programs. General education students will pair with Special Olympic athletes and work with them as they prepare for traditional sport competition. While they aren’t playing on the same team, many general education students will serve as peer leaders/coaches.

One example would be a Young Athletes Program that pairs young mentors/volunteers (without intellectual disabilities) with Special Olympics athletes. Another example of a “unified experience” would be middle or high school students helping athletes train for a spring games event. Our Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) would also fall under this initiative, in which case, an MATP Challenge Day could be planned and executed by the general education students. These students can come up with the activities and events that the MATP athletes will be participating in that day, as well as help them through each challenge.

Destination Inclusion (Continued)

Unified Sports® is a unique program that provides individuals without intellectual disabilities and Special Olympics athletes the opportunity to train and compete as a team. This initiative offers a great inclusive opportunity and environment for both the athletes and the partners to not only become a team, but to promote acceptance throughout their schools. Through unified sports, school climates will be changed.

Special Olympics South Carolina offers 19 unified opportunities in athletics, aquatics, basketball, badminton, bocce, bowling, cheerleading, disc golf, flag football, golf, gymnastics, kayaking, powerlifting, sailing, soccer, softball, tennis, team handball, and volleyball.

Unified sports teams have the opportunity, as well as any other sport initiative, to attend one of our 3 State Games a year. Fall Games take place in Greenville, Mid-Winter Games takes place in Charleston, and Summer

Games take place at Ft. Jackson in Columbia, SC. These teams will have the opportunity to experience traveling to the different areas around the state and compete with other skilled unified teams. Not only do they receive a high-quality competition experience, but they take away the experience of building lasting friendships with each other as well as individuals from all over the state.



get into it

education and engagement tools for teachers and students

The **Get Into It curriculum** is made up of four, pre-planned lessons and is designed to teach general education students from all levels, kindergarten to college, about Special Olympics, intellectual disabilities, and inclusion. The lessons are both easy and effective tools for teachers to use in the classroom. SOSC has received nothing but positive feedback from educators who have used the curriculum in the past.

The Special Olympics national office for Project UNIFY® is now requiring state programs participating in Project UNIFY® to require schools' participation in at least a portion (one lesson) of the Get Into It curriculum. In addition to SOSC's need to fulfill this requirement, the SOSC Project UNIFY® staff understands the value in participating schools utilizing the curriculum so that student volunteers get a better understanding of the

individuals they will be working with, how to behave/interact with Special Olympics athletes in an inclusive environment, and a general background on the Special Olympics organization.

School liaisons should contact SOSC Project UNIFY® staff to report the use of Get Into It curriculum so that SOSC can track the use of the curriculum in schools across the state and is aware that the requirement has been fulfilled by each participating school.

All Get Into It materials can be easily downloaded for free over the internet. The Project UNIFY® staff can e-mail the link per request or you can access the link from the SOSC website by visiting www.so-sc.org and clicking on the Project UNIFY® page.

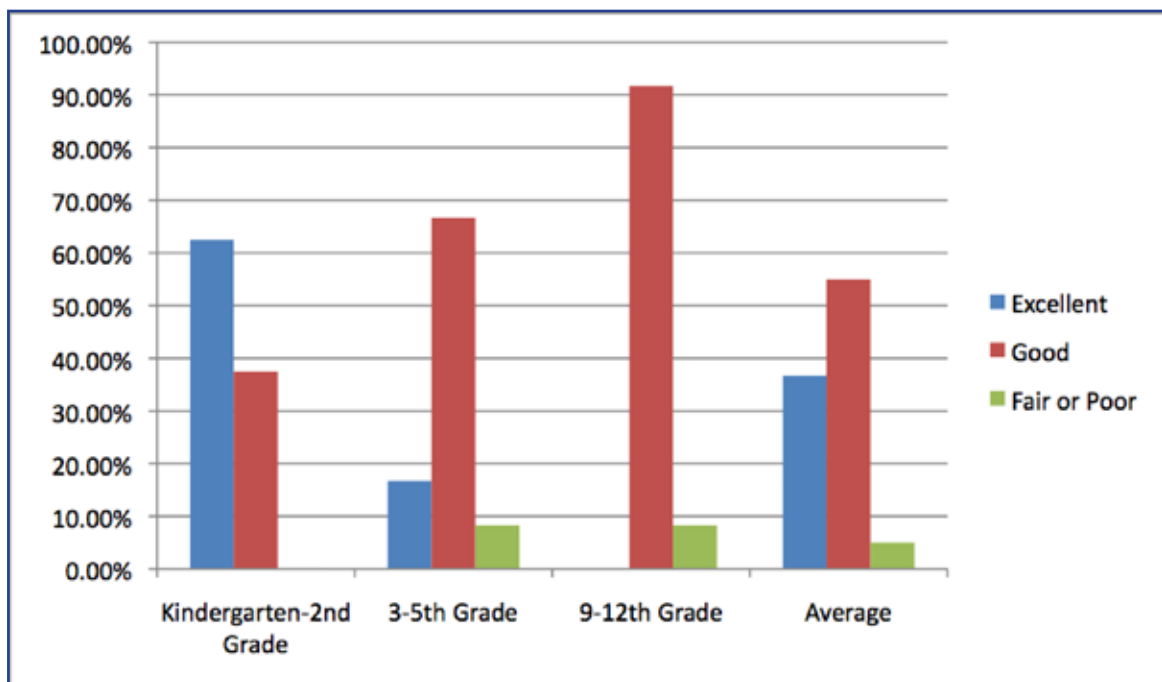


get into it

education and engagement tools for teachers and students

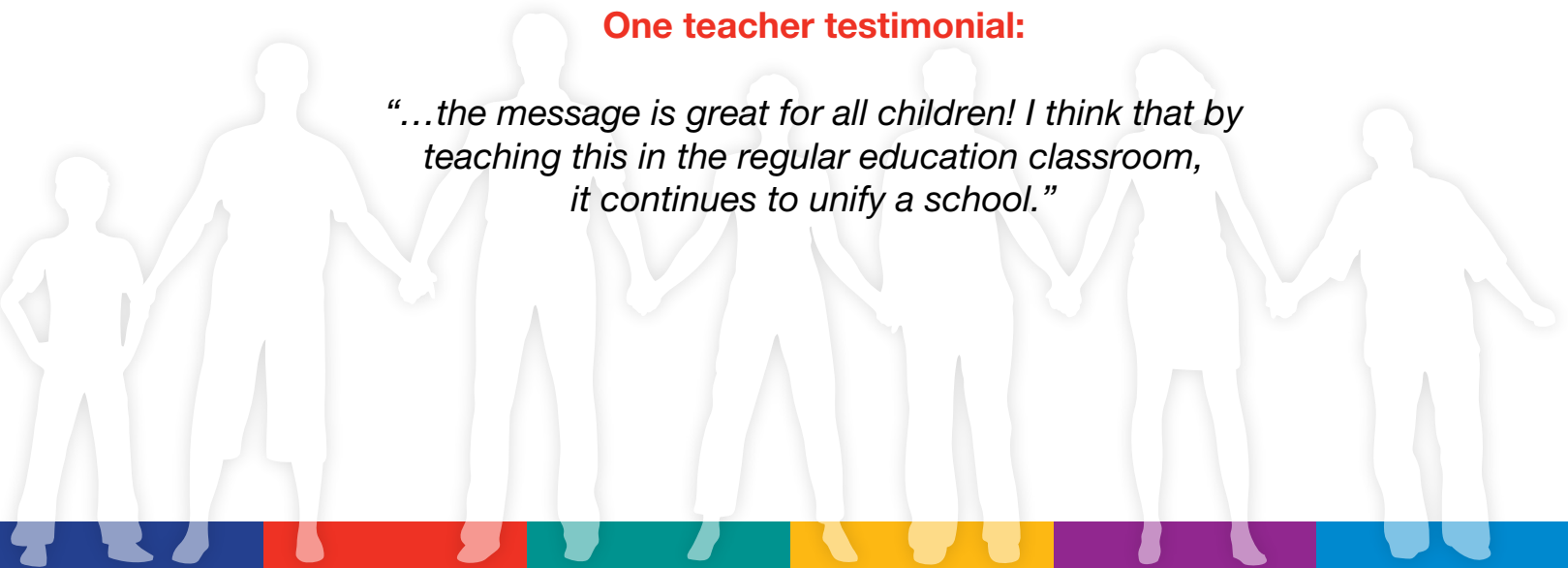
The overall program goal of “Get Into It” is to teach young people (students with and without disabilities) about intellectual disabilities while **empowering them to “be the difference”** by learning values of **inclusion, acceptance, and respect**.

According to a recent “Get Into It” evaluation (conducted by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates-Denver, CO), the following depicts the percentage of teachers with either Excellent, Good, Fair or Poor view(s) of the potential long-lasting impact of GII activities and curriculum level.



One teacher testimonial:

“...the message is great for all children! I think that by teaching this in the regular education classroom, it continues to unify a school.”

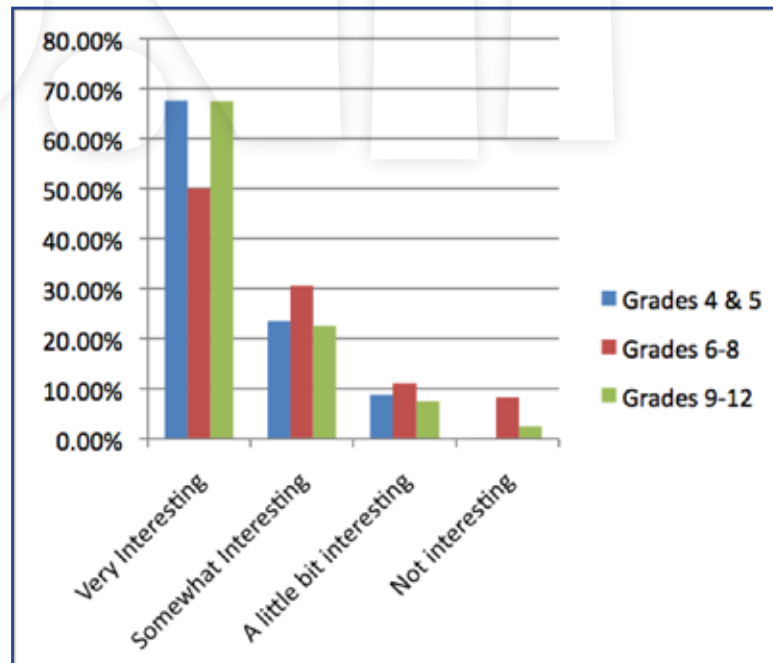


get into it

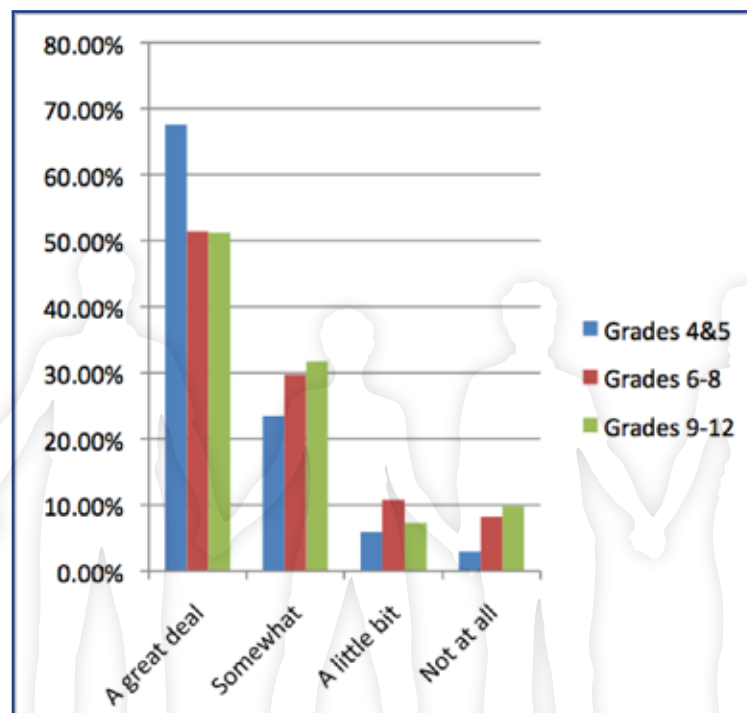
education and engagement tools for teachers and students

From the same study, researchers looked into how youth was affected by the activities of “Get Into It”.

How interesting was the GII Curriculum for you? (by grade level)



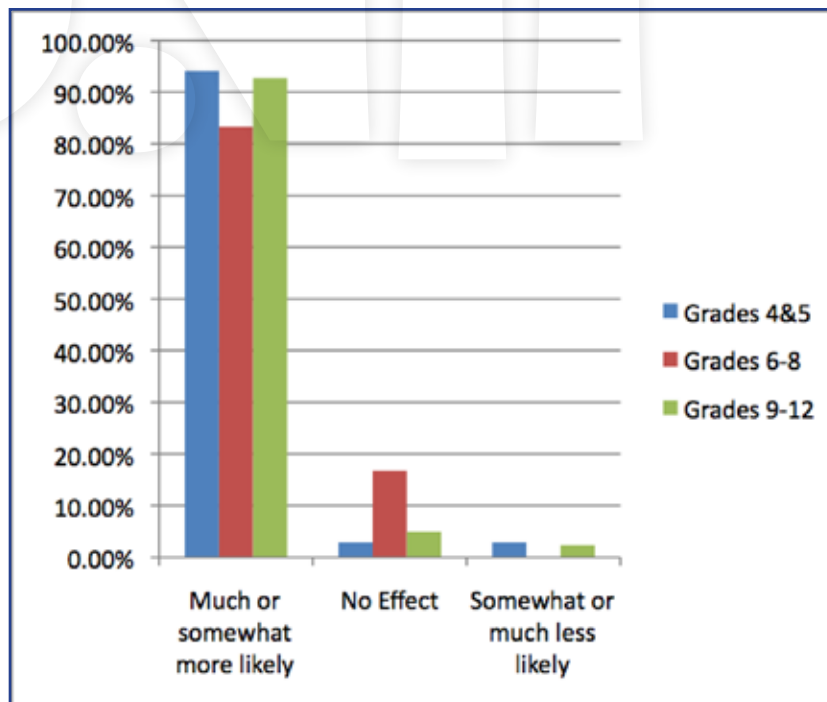
To what degree did the curriculum change what you think about persons with intellectual disabilities? (by grade level)



get into it

education and engagement tools
for teachers and students

Does the GII curriculum make you more or less likely to get involved with
Special Olympics? (by grade level)



Play Your Part
and acknowledge different abilities
embrace differences
utilize service learning
implement **Get Into It** into your school!



Traffic Updates

Monthly Logs are simple reports of “what’s happening” in participating schools each month and do not have to be long in nature but must include details of what you, the school coordinating team, and/or the students have been doing throughout the course of the month. Some months you will have a lot to share, and others you may not, but we want to see what planning and activities go on when we are unable to make it to your school or practices. It is acceptable and even encouraged to task monthly logs to your students.

Monthly logs can be accepted a number of different ways, but just make sure you notify your SOSC Staff member of how you are going to submit your reports. We are looking forward to hearing from you and seeing the growth in your program as you go through the grant year.



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Monthly logs may be communicated in the following manner(s)...

- A Project UNIFY® teacher or liaison submits monthly logs to SOSC Staff at the end of each month. Each log is a few paragraphs in a written email or word document highlighting the activities or events that went on during that particular month. The length of the text will depend on the amount of information to share, and will vary from one month to the next.
- Project UNIFY® students work together on monthly logs and submit to SOSC Staff by the end of each month. They can come up with a one page document or email that tells us how their activities went and what they learned during the month.
- Project UNIFY® students, teachers or liaisons can join the Special Olympics Fan Community website by creating a site that serves as their program’s website. On Fan Community, you can submit a monthly “blog” telling not only SOSC Staff, but the Special Olympics National office and other Project UNIFY® participating schools across the country, what you are doing as a school community through the Project UNIFY® initiatives and events.



Calls to Action

Be a Fan™ is a fully integrated marketing campaign designed to send a powerful message that resonates with the general public, tapping in core values and attributes that everyone can appreciate—unity, acceptance, empowerment, respect, inclusion, dignity, courage, strength, pride, confidence and fun. The campaign combines the “Be a fan” with these attributes in the following manner...

- Be a fan of courage.
- Be a fan of strength.
- Be a fan of inclusion.
- Be a fan of spirit.
- Be a fan of community.

This campaign offers a wonderfully positive message for Special Olympics “fans” to use in promoting the many wonderful aspects of Special Olympics and Project UNIFY® programs and the attributes of the people involved, both volunteers and athletes.

Be a fan™

End the R-Word campaign is designed to raise the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the “R-word” (retard or retarded) and urges people to resolve to stop using it as an insult, casual or intended comment.

The R-Word campaign has become a significant youth-driven initiative for Project UNIFY®, especially among middle and high school students. Young people truly become agents of change in their community and students volunteers and Special Olympics athletes become advocates for all people with intellectual disabilities.



A Youth-Driven Highway

School Coordinating Teams are comprised of at least one special education teacher (most likely the school liaison), one general education teacher, one Special Olympics athlete, and one student without intellectual disabilities, as well as some involvement from a school administrator. This group of individuals will work together to serve as project leaders and planners for their school's Project UNIFY® program, including the Be a fan™ and/or R-Word campaigns. School Coordinating Teams are encouraged to meet at least 3 times during the course of the grant's project year with the idea that one meeting would be held before or during the beginning stages of the grant project to brainstorm ideas for upcoming activities and events,

one meeting held during the grant project to assess the progress of activities and events, and one meeting held at the conclusion of the project to evaluate the individual components and overall impact of the grant project.

Schools have the authority to make School Coordinating Teams as big as they would like and create a much more intensive meeting schedule than the 3-meeting guideline. School Coordinating Teams are a requirement for all participating middle and high schools, but are also encouraged for participating elementary schools.



A Youth-Driven Highway (Continued)

Fan Clubs for Project UNIFY® are school-wide clubs comprised of individuals with and without intellectual disabilities who promote social justice and respect for Special Olympics athletes through a variety of activities and projects. The SOSC Project UNIFY® staff is requiring all middle and high schools participating in Project UNIFY® to create *Fan Clubs* at their schools and we encourage elementary schools to do the same.

Fan Clubs will be designed to accomplish the goals of Project UNIFY® by utilizing the commitment and leadership of students as they work together in a variety of ways. *Fan Clubs* will be encouraged to design their own projects involving End the R-Word campaigns, Be a fan™ promotions, Fans in the Stands, Special Olympics sports events in schools, etc.

The organization of the *Fan Clubs* and the club's meeting schedules will be determined by supporting faculty members and/or the club members. The clubs will be required to meet at least 3 times during the course of the school year. *Fan Clubs* will be provided a Youth Guide from the SOSC office to assist with project ideas.

Each *Fan Club* should organize at least one project or activity that involves the entire student body. Examples of these projects/activities are included in the School-Wide Activities section.



A Youth-Driven Highway (Continued)

South Carolina Youth Council for Project UNIFY® is a group of high school student volunteers that have demonstrated great leadership and compassion for our athletes and have been nominated by their teachers to serve as youth liaisons to the SOSC Project UNIFY® Staff in planning and implementing Project UNIFY® in their schools and communities.

Members will be notified before they break for the holiday season and will be asked to attend SOSC's Annual Leadership Conference (January) in Myrtle Beach. There, they will learn the fundamentals of the Project UNIFY® movement as well as be given the tools to take back to their individual schools. It is our hope that they take what they have learned and implement that knowledge to plan and execute school-wide activities that promote inclusion and acceptance for and among their peers.

The South Carolina Youth Council for Project UNIFY® will also have the opportunity to play a large role in the planning and preparation for our State House Rally in March. The overall goal of Youth Council members is to serve as ambassadors for this grant project in and around their local communities and throughout the state.

Athlete Advisory Council is a group of high school students with intellectual disabilities that will offer SOSC Project UNIFY® Staff the perspective of a Special Olympics athlete while helping to plan Project UNIFY® programs. These athletes will be nominated by their teachers because of their desire and ability to lead, their positive attitude, and their belief that they can provide insight for creating effective activities for Project UNIFY®.

Members of the Athlete Advisory Council will have the opportunity to attend SOSC's Annual Leadership Conference (January) in Myrtle Beach. There, they will have the opportunity to participate in the Athlete Leadership Program, which also offers an opportunity to enhance their leadership skills where they will be trained in presentation skills to learn how to effectively spread the message of Special Olympics and Project UNIFY® to their schools and throughout their communities. They will also be working alongside the South Carolina Youth Council for Project UNIFY® during their time at the conference. They will help with providing insight and ideas for the State House Rally, as well as learning to help in the planning and execution of initiating school-wide activities back at their schools.



A Youth-Driven Highway (Continued)

Fans in the Stands is a Special Olympics initiative designed to engage students, family members, and/or other Special Olympics supporters to organize efforts in cheering on Special Olympics athletes in action. These efforts may include making posters, banners or the organization of a school-wide pep rally for Special Olympics athletes at their schools. It also encourages those students to attend a Special Olympics event to cheer on their classmates. This promotes unity and acceptance as well as teaches these students the true meaning of being a friend. A great example of this initiative is a fundraiser that was organized at a participating Project UNIFY® high school to support athletes attending the 2010 USA National Games. Teachers were to play the SC National Unified Basketball team and students could pay \$1 to get out of lunch to attend the game. More than 300 students came to support these athletes and a small group even made and wore t-shirts that spelled out “I’m a fan of Special Olympics!” Banners filled the gym and supportive students were even able to bring out local media. Not only does this show a great example of Fans in the Stands” but it also show how Project UNIFY® activities and initiatives can impact and bring change to the entire school climate. Each student involved with Fans in the Stands initiatives is considered to be involved with Project UNIFY®. Schools are encouraged to report these numbers to show the overall impact of Project UNIFY® initiatives school-wide.

Athlete Leadership Program is a program designed to empower athletes to become leaders “off the playing field” and in their communities. This program offers opportunities for greater participation in our movement beyond sports training and competition as coaches, officials, spokespeople, and Board members. Athletes undergo training to learn presentation and public speaking skills to spread the message of Special Olympics to the general public. Through ALP, athletes can learn how to speak persuasively; interview with the media; mentor and speak up for other athletes; and prepare for fundraising events, and more. The Athlete Leadership Program enhances leadership skills and encourages athletes to excel outside the realm of sports.



Power In Partnerships

Great things can be accomplished through Project UNIFY® when partnerships are formed within the school community. Some suggestions for partnerships include:

Partner with existing school clubs or student organizations such as student council, Key Clubs, Beta Clubs, National Junior Honor Society, FCA, Junior Civitans, student cadets, etc. Members of these organizations can serve as unified partners, volunteers for events, Fans in the Stands at local or state competitions, advocates during R-Word campaigns, etc.

Partner with civic clubs in the community for fundraising, awareness, supply and volunteer resources. For example, ask a local chapter of a civic club to come to the school once a week to assist with Special Olympics unified and traditional

tennis training. Members of the club could then assist with securing a tennis venue for an end of the year competition and supply the refreshments and volunteers.

Partner with a local business in the same capacity as you would a local civic club. Local businesses can become involved with a program a variety of ways which include sponsorship, special events, volunteers for training and competition

Partner with a junior varsity or varsity athletes from the school to assist with unified or traditional sports training/competition. For example, the varsity basketball team could put on a clinic for the Special Olympics basketball team or the varsity team could play the unified team in a fun school event.



Power In Partnerships (Continued)

Partner with administration and/or the Guidance Office to incorporate your Project UNIFY® goals and programs into the overall school structure and mission. One great example is the establishment of a Unified Sports® PE Class, which should be included in the school's course catalogue. Another example would be including Special Olympics athlete awards at the end of the year sports banquet. This could even include Special Olympics athletes receiving varsity letters for outstanding efforts and accomplishments in sports.

Partner with the local Parks and Recreation Commission for facility use, sports expertise, and additional training and competition opportunities for your athletes.

Partner with an existing Sports Club or Venue for facility usage, volunteers, and sport expertise. For example, a school participating in a Special Olympics golf program could partner with a local country club to use the course several times during the training season as well as utilize the golf pros for clinics and additional coaches during the events.

Partner with a local college or university for a variety of program resources. A local college could host a local competition for multiple schools and provide volunteers for an event. Another way to utilize a partnership with a college or university would be to work with the Adaptive PE or Special Education Department to arrange opportunities for their students to come in to your classrooms and train your athletes in Young Athlete Programs or traditional sports skills sets.

Partner with other schools participating in Project UNIFY® to combine efforts and resources for training and competition events. One example would be planning a unified basketball tournament with three other schools, where all teachers and youth involved work together on the event and give the athletes the awesome experience of competing against other athletes in the area.



Yield for Empowerment

State House Rally is an event that takes place at the end of March on the State House steps in Columbia to promote both Be a fan™ and End the R-Word campaigns by bringing together hundreds of youth and adults as they pledge to end the R-Word, all while promoting the respect and acceptance for more than 18,000 Special Olympic athletes statewide. This rally is designed to be youth-driven and focuses on the positive effects that the youth, through Project UNIFY® activities, are bringing to their schools, communities and state.



Eunice Kennedy Shriver Day is an annual event, taking place the last Saturday of September, to honor the late Eunice Kennedy Shriver who founded the Special Olympics movement. Mrs. Shriver broke down social and civil barriers to improve the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities. This day will be a celebration of her life and a call for people to commit actions of inclusion, acceptance, and unity for and with people with intellectual disabilities. It will be used to inspire new fans to experience her legacy and embrace the movement she founded. Leading up to EKS Day, it is our hope that you and your school take part in learning more about Eunice Kennedy Shriver and demonstrate acts of inclusion, acceptance, and unity through Special Olympic activities and initiatives. More information on Mrs. Shriver, her legacy, and EKS Day is available through the Specialolympics.org and Eunicekennedyshriver.org websites.



Be a fan of IMPACT

Ideas for School-wide Activities, Events and/or Projects...

Pass out Be a fan™ or End the R-Word stickers to fellow students during lunch period or at the entrance of a school sporting event.

Organize a “Special Olympics Night” at a school varsity game where the Special Olympics athletes receive free admission and the athletes and unified partners/student volunteers are recognized during halftime.

Plan (with the approval of administration) a school-wide pep rally or assembly in support of Special Olympics athletes and Project UNIFY® activities. This event also ties directly in to the Fans in the Stands initiative.

Organize a school-wide Be a fan™ or End the R-Word poster campaign to be judged by Special

Olympics athletes, school administration or local celebrities (winning poster could even be turned into a banner to be hung in a common area of the school).

Create pledge banners for students to pledge against the use of the R-Word, which can be set up for signing in cafeteria or hallways.

Designate an entire week as Be a fan™ Week to promote and educate the entire school on the purpose of Project UNIFY® and Special Olympics and how it impacts the athletes and student volunteers through a variety of ways while celebrating the fun being had by participants.

Organize a t-shirt design contest with a theme of Be a fan™ or End the R-Word and allow the winning design serve as the school's official t-shirt design for Project UNIFY® (or even Spring Games)



Be a fan of IMPACT (Continued)

Create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) featuring students, faculty, and administration promoting Be a fan™ or End the R-Word campaigns. These PSA's can be broadcasted throughout the school during morning "news" production.

Incorporate Eunice Kennedy Shriver and Special Olympics lessons in all Social Studies classes, school-wide, for a designated period of time (one week, one month, etc.).

Organize a school-wide Torch Run event to promote an upcoming Special Olympics competition and/or event.

Promote Fans in the Stands by setting up a station in the cafeteria for students to sign up to serve as Fans in the Stands for their Special Olympics athletes at upcoming Special Olympics events.

Share the purpose of Project UNIFY® and Special Olympics including the importance of treating students with intellectual disabilities with respect

and acceptance over the school announcements or news broadcast.

Profile one Special Olympics athlete each week during school announcements to highlight their personality, attributes, and accomplishments, especially those achieved or enhanced through their participation with Special Olympics.

Design a bulletin board in common area of the school to promote Project UNIFY® and update the school on what's happening with the grant's activities in the school.

Promote a pledge campaign to End the R-Word by challenging the school principal (or favorite sports coach, local celebrity, etc.) to get up on the roof for an entire day, shave their beard, or wear a sports uniform to school if the goal of 1000 pledges is met.

Partner with a drama class to create a skit based on Project UNIFY® initiatives that includes roles for some Special Olympics athletes and can be performed for the entire school.



Be a fan of FUN!

Other Fun Ideas of School and Community-based Activities for Fan Clubs, School Coordinating Teams and/or Participating Classes...

Participate in a “game show” for students to test their knowledge of Special Olympics and Project UNIFY®.

March in a community parade and pass out promotional items/information for Project UNIFY® and Special Olympics, wear Project UNIFY® t-shirts, and carry school’s Project UNIFY® banner to promote the students’ involvement.

Organize a torch run through the town to promote Be a fan™/ End the R-Word campaign(s) or upcoming Special Olympics competition.

Partner with school’s varsity sports team to plan a special training session or clinic for the Special Olympics unified or traditional team.

Set up a Project UNIFY® and/or Special Olympics booth in a local festival to educate the community on the school’s involvement with Project UNIFY® and promote Be a fan™ or End the R-word campaigns to the community at large.

Mark off a unified area of the lunchroom for Fan Club members, other interested student “fans”, and Special Olympics athletes to enjoy lunch together. These lunches can take place on a regular basis, whether it’s every day, once a week, or once a month. Administration, faculty, and/or sports coaches could get involved with these lunches as well.



Be a fan of FUN! (Continued)

Plan sports practices for younger grades that will be run by Special Olympics athletes and unified partners. This could be a high school group going to a middle school group or middle school group going to an elementary school group to help with a specific sport.

Work with Fan Clubs to produce a Unified section of the school paper or even an exclusive unified newsletter to promote, communicate, and explain unified activities happening at the school throughout the school year.

Participate in the Special Olympics South Carolina Essay Contest for Project UNIFY® during late-Spring for the chance to win great acclaim and a cash prize.

Coordinate with the Yearbook Staff at school to create a Project UNIFY® page in the yearbook or even a Special Olympics spread in the sports section.

Organize a unified talent show that can be closed off to just Special Olympics athletes and unified partners or could be opened up to the entire school.

Collaborate with school sports teams to hold joint practice sessions a couple times during a specific sports season.



Planning an event...

It's a piece **A** PIE!

A = Access

The first step is to access what programs/sports/events would interest and best serve your school. Talk to your students and see what they would like to do. Hold informal surveys with other teachers in the school and your School Coordinating Team to see what they feel the needs are in your school/community. Think of timing! When is the best time to hold an event in your school? Think of weather, other big events in your school, testing schedules, etc.

P = Plan

So now you have decided what the needs are in your school. It's time to pick your event! Decide the goal of your event. What initiative are you trying to promote? How best can you meet this goal? Brainstorm! Use your resources, other teachers, the School Coordinating Team, South Carolina Youth Council for Project UNIFY® members, students, SOSC staff, etc. Get as many ideas as you can, then narrow them down by what is feasible and would most likely be successful.



Once you have your program/event idea, it's time to plan! Decide on your location and time. If you are going off campus, you may need city or town permits. Be sure to get approval from your administrators. Create a timeline of what needs to be done. Delegate responsibilities and use your resources! Clearly mark on your timeline who will be responsible for each task. Create a budget. Do you need extra funding outside of the funding you received through Project UNIFY®? If so, how will you find this funding (additional PU grants, sell merchandise, community sponsorships, school-wide fundraisers)? Always promote your

event. Get the school media outlets involved (Yearbook, Newspapers, TV news shows, morning announcements, etc.). Pull in the community media as well. Send out press releases two weeks before the event. You may want to follow up a few days before as a reminder. Last thing, have a backup plan. What if it's raining?



I = Implement

Prepare beforehand and arrive early to set up the location. Have volunteers or other staff on hand to help. Check all PA equipment and have someone on call if it is not working. Set up chairs, equipment, decorate as needed.

Have someone in charge of PR/Media. This person will give interviews or introduce the media folks to others to be interviewed, and answer any questions.

Participate! Enjoy your event and all the work that went into it. Be sure and take pictures! The SOSC Project UNIFY® staff would love to see/have pictures from your event so be sure to send extra copies.

E = Evaluate

After you have had some time to rest and recover from the big event, make sure to evaluate and make notes for next time. Get feedback from participants, parents, teachers, and administrators. What did they like, what did not work?

Record any issues that you saw, and what you could do to make it easier next year. Be thorough, the evaluation notes can help you next year or someone else should they take over the event. Finally, brag on your event! Let everyone know the success stories, including your administration, the SOSC staff, and others in your district.

Planning a Special Olympics Competition

- If holding a competition, complete the Local Games Sanctioning Form and return it to the SOSOC Staff.
- Arrange to have Medical Staff at the event. This can be a school nurse, EMT, Athletic Trainer, etc.
- All Athletes competing MUST have valid and up to date Medical/Release forms. Have your Medical Staff check these as the Athletes arrive. Coaches must keep medicals with them at all times during the Competition.



- Order ribbons or medals through the SOSOC staff. Allow at least 3 weeks for delivery. Remember, only official Special Olympic ribbons/medals can be used for awards. All Athletes who compete must receive an award. Participation Ribbons are to be used for all Young Athletes, or an Athlete who gets disqualified, or comes in 8th place. Local Area medals can be used for 1st-3rd place, these are smaller in size than the State Games medals.
- Plan an Opening Ceremony. Must include the Athlete Oath and a declaration of the "Games Open". Can also include the National Anthem, the Pledge of Allegiance, a Parade of Athletes, a guest speaker, Torch Run, and lighting of the Flame. Contact your SOSOC staff to reserve the torch and/or Cauldron.



- Arrange volunteers. Have Day of Event volunteers sign in when they arrive, delegate someone on your committee to register the volunteers and assign their tasks.
- Athletes should be divisioned based on criteria used in all Special Olympics divisioning, which includes ability, age, and gender; in that order. For more information on appropriate and effective divisioning, contact Special Olympics staff.



Web-based Media Outlets

There are a variety of web-based media outlets that can be used to share pictures, videos and information regularly with SOSC Staff, as well as other programs. Using social media is an exciting way for students with and without intellectual disabilities to work together and promote their projects and inclusive activities to a much wider audience. Below you will find different tools for incorporating web-based media into your Project UNIFY® programs.

- Special Olympics Fan Community-
<http://www.specialolympics.org/community/>

Fan Community is a social networking site designed for Special Olympic State Programs and participating Project UNIFY® schools to connect with others through Special Olympics initiatives, projects, and events. This site was created to share information on your different programs and can serve as your school's Project UNIFY® website. Special Olympics, Inc. looks closely at each site and will comment on the exciting work that you post. You can upload documents, videos, pictures as well as "blog" posts.

The idea behind Fan Community is to get your students involved in creating and maintaining your site in order to promote inclusive activities. Many pictures and blogs from Fan Community sites are featured in National publications for Special Olympics!



Web-based Media Outlets (Continued)

- Facebook- www.facebook.com

Facebook is another social networking site that is used to connect with individuals by setting up your own personal “profile”. You can add friends, support causes, join interest groups, share photos and videos, all while promoting the importance of inclusion and acceptance. Many of our Project UNIFY® programs have developed group pages to share their activities and promote the movement. Facebook can be a productive website venture for your students and for your school program to continuously update and add photos or videos to support/promote your project.

- Twitter- www.twitter.com

Twitter is an interactive social media site that allows you to post and promote upcoming events, ideas, projects to a wider audience from the convenience of a cell phone or computer. Many students have accounts and can upload announcements quickly to spread the word of upcoming events/activities in your school and surrounding community.

- YouTube- www.youtube.com

YouTube is a website that has been created to upload videos of your different activities and events and share them with a much wider audience. For privacy issues, videos can be uploaded to be shared with the public or with a private audience. Either way, this is a great tool to use to share videos of your events or projects with other students, administration, and SOSC Staff.



Template of a Press Release

From a School Participating in
Young Athletes Program with Project UNIFY®

Date

School name is proud to partner with Special Olympics South Carolina's Project Unify® to promote inclusive sports opportunities for Special Olympics athletes. Through a grant from the Federal Department of Education, school name will receive **amount of grant** to promote the Young Athlete Program within the school setting.

Both **school name** and Special Olympics feel strongly that inclusive activities enhance the overall education for both Special Olympics athletes and non-handicapped students. The Young Athlete Program is designed for special needs students as young as three years old to develop sports skills and prepare athletes for Special Olympics sports competition at age eight. Project Unify® will pair students within **school name** to assist with weekly activities.

Past projects of Young Athletes in a unified setting, show that non-handicapped students involved in activities with Special Olympics athletes realize the two groups are "more alike than different".

Template of a Press Release

From a School Participating in
Unified Sports or Traditional Sports program with
Project UNIFY®

Date

School name is proud to partner with Special Olympics South Carolina's Project Unify® to promote inclusive sports opportunities for Special Olympics athletes. Through a grant from the Federal Department of Education, **school name** will receive **amount of grant** to promote sport within the school setting.

Both **school name** and Special Olympics feel strongly that inclusive activities enhance the overall education for both Special Olympics athletes and non-handicapped students. Project Unify® promotes Unified Sports® as well as unified awareness activities. Unified Sports offers opportunities for Special Olympics Athletes to pair with non-handicapped individuals for sports training and competitions. The program has proved successful in highlighting abilities of Special Olympics athletes and offering inclusion in the community and schools.

In addition to the sports opportunities, **school name** students will be challenged to develop a plan to promote the Special Olympics "Be a fan" campaign, stressing school wide inclusive activities.

Sample Letter to Parents

Date

Dear Parent,

We are pleased to share with you an exciting initiative that (name of school) is launching (or continuing) called (insert name or Project UNIFY). The focus of this initiative is to engage students with and without intellectual disabilities in activities to create a school community that fosters respect and dignity for all. Doesn't that sound exciting?

(Name of project or Project UNIFY) is made possible through a competitive grant process, funded by a U.S. Department of Education award to Special Olympics. For over 42 years, Special Olympics has evolved as more than an organization focused on just delivering sports training and competition as a means to building skills and competencies in persons with intellectual disabilities, showcasing their skills and gifts to others. We have become a global movement relevant to all of us, where, through inclusive programming, young people with and without intellectual disabilities engage together, using sports as the platform for community change and social impact. Our innovative approach using inclusive sports as a means toward social justice serves to benefit school communities and creates positive school climates where students are appropriately engaged in school-based programs and activities that lead to their achievement and success. Special Olympics believes deeply in the value of sports along with the school environment as important co-contributors to providing a sense of accomplishment, confidence and pride for students with intellectual disabilities, and to increasing the understanding, acceptance and sensitivity towards them by students without intellectual disabilities.

At (insert school name) we are pleased to announce that your child will have the opportunity to participate in our (Young Athletes/Unified Sports/Partners Clubs/Fans in the Stands/other) Program. Students with and without intellectual disabilities will participate together in activities that will serve as the foundation for future participation in sport, in life and in the greater community. In Young Athletes, skills such as running, jumping, throwing, and general play activities will be used as preparation for future success in softball, track and field, basketball or whatever sport your child chooses to participate. In Unified Sports, your child will have the opportunity to participate in competitive sports, while learning to appreciate the skills and abilities of his or her peers, and build teamwork, character, understanding and awareness about different abilities. Through sport, friendships will be formed that will last long after school has ended.

Please join us in celebrating this opportunity for children to see and appreciate the abilities of their peers and to see them as friends, teammates and classmates rather than just different. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact (). We look forward to sharing our successes.

Sincerely,

Your name
Your Contact Info

Levels of Relationships and Influence

There are many different ways to interact with Special Olympics athletes. The following separates each different level of influence you can incorporate into daily Project UNIFY® activities.

Level 1 – Basic Positive Social Interaction

By: smiling, waving, high-five, pat on the back, “good to see you”, “how’s your day?”, etc. Tell youth to incorporate this influence on an everyday basis when they see their peers with intellectual disabilities. By incorporating this social interaction, you are establishing a basic positive relationship.

Level 2 – Taking a Personal Interest in the Student

By: initiating conversations and finding out their interests, family information, pets, favorites, aspirations, nicknames, etc. Encourage athletes and partners to get to know each other on a more personal level. This can be accomplished by incorporating activities in your training sessions or by partners taking the initiative to walk with athletes in the halls, sit with them at lunch, etc.

Level 3 – Identifying, Acknowledging and Encouraging Young People’s Gifts and Talents

By: conversing with them, observing them, playing with them, looking closely at their work, listening to them, and by words of affirmation, writing notes, attending events, a pat on the back, etc. Make sure to acknowledge those individuals that are putting in the extra effort to impact their school community and bring about change.

Level 4 – Challenging Young People

By: having high expectations, issuing challenges, helping them to set goals, using affirmations, checking in with them, etc. You can challenge youth to take on a project/activity and make it their own. Encourage them to take a leadership role in changing the social climate at their school.

Level 5 – Focusing on Building Specific Assets

By: developing a plan for building specific external assets and working with them directly on key internal assets. For instance, provide key instruction to the sport as a whole and also keep a strong focus on building potential in each member of the team.

Level 6 – Keeping in Touch Over Time

By: sending a card, a phone call, e-mail, attending an event they are involved in, etc. Remind youth that they are key advocates for their friends with intellectual disabilities and that they have been given the tools and resources to keep in touch with them for the rest of their lives. They can continue to volunteer for Special Olympics but they can also always keep in touch with the friends they made through this Project UNIFY® experience.



Athlete Behavior Characteristics & Strategies to Improve Learning

The goal of the chart below is to provide coaches with information (not labels) and strategies regarding different functional and learning behavioral characteristics (not labels) of athletes. The goal is for coaches to teach and coach Special Olympics athletes more effectively. However, a coach may have certain expectations of an athlete that may not be realistic ... not because the coach does not care, but because the coach does not understand or appreciate the differences that may exist.

When an athlete exhibits what is generally perceived as inappropriate behavior(s), the inappropriate behavior(s)

may not be defiance, acting out or silliness.

These behaviors may simply be a reflection or part of the person and/or what is operating at the moment.

When possible, talk with parents, providers, teachers, former coaches, etc. about an athlete's characteristics and the successful strategies used to affect learning. Use the characteristics as a checklist. Ensure that one or more of the strategies opposite the respective characteristics are employed in each practice.



Special Olympics
South Carolina

Be a fan™

	Athlete Behavior	Strategies to Improve Learning
<input type="checkbox"/>	Learning occurs at a slower rate	1) Provide structure & train more frequently. 2) Provide repetition and review. 3) Break skills down into smaller parts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Short attention span	1) Train for short periods of time; provide numerous activities focusing on same task. 2) Provide repetition & review (key to gaining new skill). 3) Work one-on-one (gain full attention).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Resistance to change; stubborn	1) Structure training with clear rules, consistent routines, smooth transitions and signals for changing activities. 2) Establish routines (provide flexibility within routine); 3) Identify motivating factors; build on successes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Behavior problems – acting out; mood swings	1) Set clear rules, expectations and limits; specify location for individual to regain self control. 2) Speak calmly, enforce rules but provide conditions for coming back. 3) Reinforce acceptable behaviors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Verbal expression difficulties	1) Allow for additional time to express thoughts. 2) Use picture boards/other assistive devices. 3) Ask him or her to demonstrate or show what he/she means.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Verbal interpretation difficulties	1) Provide the appropriate level of instruction beginning with demonstration followed by physical prompt and physical assistance. 2) Keep verbal instructions to a minimum. 3) Use key words/cues, sign language or pictures to communicate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prone to seizures	1) Know signs and symptoms of different types of seizures. 2) Control atmosphere/triggers (heat, sun, sugar, loud noise, etc.) of seizures; respond appropriately. 3) Prepare teammates to respond appropriately should a seizure occur.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Poor muscle tone	1) Provide specific exercise and strengthening programs. 2) Stretch within normal range of motion. 3) Uneven surfaces increase risk of injury.

	Athlete Behavior	Strategies to Improve Learning
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lower pain threshold; sensitive to touch	1) Establish eye contact when talking, unless individual is autistic. 2) Use softer/adaptive equipment; minimize loud noises like whistles. 3) Forewarn if any touch is necessary; respect wishes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Failure to form social bonds	1) Work in small groups. 2) Have each child work in pairs (same 2 people for several weeks). 3) Provide highly structured and least distracting environment; expose to individual or dual sports.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Easily over-stimulated	1) Remove or lessen distracting stimuli (dim lights; soften sounds; remove unnecessary objects). 2) Train in separate room or smaller group; gradually add people. 3) Train with athletes who tend to be nonverbal.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty with balance or stability	1) Provide physical support, as needed, via partner or other assistive device. 2) Broaden base of support such as sitting down or leaning against wall; minimize uneven surfaces. 3) Allow for extra time to complete a task.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compulsive eating	1) Remove food from practice/competition sites. 2) Do not use food as reward (especially for individuals with Prader Willi). 3) Provide structure and routine for eating.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Poor coordination	1) Break skills down into sequential tasks; substitute easier movement patterns such as walking instead of running. 2) Progress from athlete's current level of performance. 3) Allow additional time with one-on-one support.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical limitations or impairments	1) Utilize those skills or parts of skills athlete can perform. 2) For those skills or parts of skills athlete is unable to perform, allow athlete to substitute other skills, have partner execute those skills or use assistive device. 3) Focus on activities that develop mobility and stability.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Visual impairments	1) Use verbal cues, physical prompt and physical assistance. 2) Utilize sound or physical devices such as beep balls, guide rope along lane line, tether when running with partner, etc. 3) Provide precise and action-specific and feedback.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hearing impairments	1) Establish eye contact when talking. 2) Use signs, pictures or sign language; keep cochlear implants dry. 3) Demonstrate what is desired.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Autism spectrum disorders	1) Minimize verbal; emphasize visual (Board Maker) because of difficulty in processing sensory stimuli (overarousal); provide only one item per picture. 2) Individualize schedule with known start & known finish (predictability); use clear, consistent cues & prompts; cue transition from one activity to next. 3) Reduce sensory overload like whistles (some athletes are hypersensitive to noise).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hyperactivity	1) Use three or more sensory channels – tactile; kinesthetic; visual; auditory. 2) Set clear rules, consistent routines and smooth transitions with signals for changing activities with motivating reinforcement. 3) Keep directions simple; minimize information.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lethargy (due to disability or medication)	1) Provide frequent rest intervals. 2) Expose to sports that provide natural rest periods such as bocce, bowling, golf, etc. 3) Slowly progress to longer periods of activity.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of motivation to push self	1) Be aware that the greater the intellectual disability, the less motivated to continue activity once individual feels uncomfortable. 2) Add positive consequence/reward to continue activity such as peddling on stationary bike to drive power to TV or music player; transition to sport). 3) Reward even small improvements in performance.