



Special Olympics

USA NATIONAL GAMES • NEBRASKA

Special Olympics Project UNIFY Education Leadership Roundtable

July 18, 2010

Nebraska Governor's Residence, Lincoln

Background Materials



Special Olympics

Be a fan...

Project UNIFY



Agenda
July 18, 2010 11am to 2pm
National Education Leaders Roundtable
Governor's Residence
Lincoln, Nebraska

10:45 Meet and Greet in residence living room with Nebraska Governor, David Heineman and First Lady, Sally Ganem.

- Welcome in the meeting room downstairs (11:00)

First Lady Sally Ganem

- Short video (11:05)
- Project Unify overview and introductions (11:10)

Special Olympics Chairman, Timothy Shriver and Youth Council members

*Topics to explore: Leadership, School Climate, Sports as the Venue, **Get into It** in the Classroom*

- Special Video Message (11:20)

United States Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan

- Break for Lunch (working) (11:30 noon)
- Timothy Shriver introduces Roundtable Facilitator, Sam Chaltain (11:50)
- Lunch clean up and last minute facilitation set up (11:50- 12 noon)
- World Café introduction and discussion – format table hopping every 15 minutes (12:00)

Sam Chaltain

- Review of Overarching Statement, sector outcomes
- Review of 4 questions:
 - What is the best way to communicate this statement to our constituents so they own the goal and move toward action?
 - What does my network need to promote this “embracing” of differences among people?
 - How do we each mobilize around this statement to lead to collective action and meaningful impacts? (e.g., constituent task forces)
 - How does viewing this as a civil rights issue inspire and empower your constituents to be change agents for this work?
- Table discussions, table shifts
- Reporting out
- Outcomes conversations
 - How can we shift the paradigm? (Recommendations from the group)
 - Shape school climate
 - Advocate for physical activity
 - Advance “new” classroom strategies e.g. Service-learning
 - Incorporate our agenda into “Promise Neighborhoods”
- Declaration & Next Steps (1:45)
- Depart for Opening Ceremony of Special Olympics National Games in Omaha (2:00)

Special Olympics Project UNIFY Education Leadership Roundtable Background Materials

- **Special Olympics Project UNIFY Statement of Commitment**
- **Education Leadership Roundtable Case Statement**
- **National Education Issues**
 - I. **ESEA Reauthorization**
 - Overview
 - Key Implications
 - II. **School Climate Initiative**
 - Overview
 - Key Implications
 - III. **Engaged Teaching and Learning: Service-Learning**
 - Overview
 - Key Implications
 - IV. **21st Century Skill Building**
 - Overview
 - Key Implications
 - V. **Physical Education Initiatives**
 - Overview
 - Key Implications
- **Resources**
 - U.S. Department of Education Elementary & Secondary Education: A Blueprint for Reform
 - Council for Exceptional Children(CEC) Recommendations for ESEA
 - ARC, AAIDD, AUCD, UCP, NACDD AND SABE Recommendations on ESEA Reauthorization
 - Service-Learning and *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* - SEANet
 - A Position Statement by the National School Climate Council: *Safe and Supportive Schools through School Climate Interventions and the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*
 - 21st Century Skills, Education & Competitiveness - Partnership for 21st Century Skills
 - Learning from the Extremes - Cisco Systems
 - Business Coalition for Student Achievement - Principles Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
 - Testimony to House Education and Labor Committee Sub Committee on ESEA Reauthorization: Supporting Student Health, Physical Education, and Well-being

Special Olympics Project UNIFY Statement of Commitment

Together, let us commit to addressing one of the greatest civil rights issues of our time: a broader vision of inclusion, and a plan of action, in which all adults support and promote all young people -- with and without intellectual disabilities -- to become effective and visible leaders in their schools, communities and broader society by providing opportunities to use their voices and talents in meaningful and responsible ways.

We believe all young people must have a nurturing, collaborative, challenging and safe environment in which to work, learn and live. They must be valued for the contributions and strengths they bring to their schools, communities and places of work. All academic levels and programs must be considered of value and be resourced equitably, and with a shared commitment to the common good. And all adults must work together to develop and sustain the necessary policies, procedures, revenue streams, and organizational cultures that support the intellectual, physical, civic and emotional development of all students, including those with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics Project UNIFY Education Leadership Roundtable Case Statement

The American education system was founded on the principles of democracy, most important, equity and justice so that all youth would grow to be capable, active, and principled citizens. 21st century challenges and opportunities encourage us to re-visit our schools' civic mission and how effectively, consistently and fairly we provide quality opportunities for students from all backgrounds and all abilities to acquire and enhance the knowledge and skills necessary to sustain our democracy.

The Challenge

Due to numerous legislative and social changes throughout the United States, inclusion for young people with intellectual disabilities in school and community settings has been mandated for decades. Unmistakable progress has been achieved in bringing children with diverse abilities into the educational vision of the nation. The dark days of exclusion, institutionalization, and hopelessness are, for the most part, relegated to history.

Yet there is reason to believe that authentic inclusion is not yet the rule in U.S. schools. A vision for authentic inclusion focuses on the mutual and reciprocal learning that takes place when all children are engaged in meaningful social and academic opportunities. Authentic inclusion depends not just on services for people with intellectual disabilities but also on the attitudes and actions of children with no disability. Authentic inclusion is not just about what happens in the classroom; it is also about the informal culture of the school and the extent to which the climate of the school is one of high expectations and acceptance for all children. Authentic inclusion is about creating authentic communities where every gift is valued and every member's contribution is integrated into a vision of the whole.

Not surprisingly, today's schools still fall short of achieving a vision of authentic inclusion. In most schools, students with and without intellectual disabilities do not have opportunities to develop positive relationships with each other, decreasing the chance they will develop friendships and respect for each other. Students with intellectual disabilities continue to suffer from bullying and social exclusion. Students with intellectual disabilities lack leadership opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills and are routinely thought incapable of serving in prominent roles. There is little focus on their gifts and range of accomplishments.

And stereotypes persist everywhere—the stereotype that all people with intellectual disabilities are alike, unable to learn, undeserving of high quality opportunities, unable to work, unable to be contributing members of the community. Humiliating language like the taunt, “retard” reflect the stubborn stigma against people with intellectual disabilities. Schools generally struggle to focus on school climate and on changing these hurtful norms. Meanwhile, schools are forced to cut many of the most powerful vehicles for shaping more positive and healthy relationships and environments. Draconian cuts slash sports, the arts, service learning, and community engagement even as these interventions show their power to build community, fight obesity, reduce mental health problems, and promote a culture of youth empowerment.

The data emerging from our schools should prompt us to action. In one recent study, less than one-third of public school students acknowledge having a schoolmate or classmate with

intellectual disabilities; only 10% report having a friend with intellectual disabilities. Bullying is on the rise; 28% of students say they were bullied at school within the last six months. Disengagement in schools is prevalent and isolation for children with disabilities remains the norm; only 55% of high school students feel they are important in their school community. Only between 11%-25% of adults with intellectual disability have jobs as their transition from school to work leaves huge numbers lost and alone. Students are struggling emotionally and physically; despite rising obesity, only 34% of students engage in regular physical activity; 15% of high school students say they have seriously considered suicide within the last year.

A Movement Responds

For generations, millions of Americans have looked to the Special Olympics movement as being at the heart of building a more healthy, hopeful, and accepting nation. In our own time, this has not changed. As a new generation of athletes, volunteers, family leaders and committed citizens build the Special Olympics of the future, they are showing the urgency and dedication to be change makers anew. Based on their abiding belief in the power of sport and its power to build meaningful relationships and motivated citizens, young people throughout the country have launched Special Olympics Project UNIFY. Project UNIFY is Special Olympics operating at the level of school and community change--a multi level effort to promote a youth led vision of ending prejudice and creating schools and communities of acceptance for all, with Special Olympics Unified Sports® teams, and other inclusive sports activities as the primary platform. At the core of Project UNIFY is a paradigm shift with young people no longer seen as recipients of learning and programming but rather as architects of relationships and community building.

Project UNIFY consists of strategies to integrate Special Olympics programs with ongoing youth activities and focuses on creating and sustaining education systems, classroom practices, school climate and community engagement to ensure all students develop intellectual, physical, civic and emotional competencies. Specific elements of the Project UNIFY toolkit include service learning curricula, Unified Sports® and Young Athletes™ programs, R-word campaigns, youth volunteer training and leadership development opportunities for young people with and without intellectual disabilities.

These efforts are, however, not just a random array of feel good programs; rather, they are designed to create specific and measureable change.

First, Project UNIFY sees itself as an ally in fighting one of the leading health crises of our time, childhood obesity. Obesity cannot be fought without physical activity. Project UNIFY aims to make young people the leaders in promoting healthy lifestyles, year round sports training, skill development, and competition. Schools must respond

Second, Project UNIFY aims to promote schools where all young people are invited to serve. Citizenship and community engagement cannot be developed unless all serve, not just a privileged few. Project UNIFY offers lesson plans for teachers and volunteer opportunities for young people of every age and interest. Schools must respond.

Third, Project UNIFY aims to target intolerance, hate speech, and bullying by awakening a new generation to discrimination about which they are frequently unaware and which they often

unwittingly perpetrate. The common and humiliating use of the word “retard” is only a symptom of a larger pattern of exclusion and marginalization—a pattern which creates untold struggle for people with intellectual disabilities but which also creates a corrosive fear of difference among others. Schools must respond.

Finally, Project UNIFY aims to act as a tipping point for school culture and climate as young people with and without intellectual disability are encouraged to collaborate as architects of their community values and norms. Project UNIFY offers leadership training, on line networks, and local, state, and national convenings for young leaders to enhance and hone their skills as champions of social justice in our society. Schools can and must respond.

Together, these elements of Special Olympics Project UNIFY are, we believe, powerful catalysts for change. But for them to be effective, public policy, educational practice, and social expectations must change. There is little doubt that many young Americans care deeply about others and express a concern for the welfare of all human beings. We believe our schools should build on these sentiments and combine the idealism, enthusiasm, and zeal of our youth with the academic, civic, social, and career development necessary for them to be successful throughout their life. It is time for policy makers to join this important and urgent challenge.

Our Recommendations

We believe that there are specific current and anticipated national education issues, legislation, support and initiatives that can be effectively re-shaped to increase the development of youth and the health of our citizens and communities and ignite a movement toward our re-imagined broader vision of inclusion. An overview on each of these topics and their potential implications for our discussions and work are outlined on the following pages. They are:

- **ESEA Reauthorization**
- **School Climate Initiative**
- **Engaged Teaching and Learning: Service-Learning**
- **21st Century Skill Building**
- **Physical Education Initiatives**

Our deliberations at the National Education Roundtable will create a collective vision and empower participants and their constituents as change agents, advocating for education reform that creates safer, healthier, more engaging and deeper relationships for all students. We will learn from each other, share our ideas, and create a strong network devoted to establishing a culture where young people are the architects of their own future.

We stand ready to make that evolution in our sports movement and in this civil rights movement of the heart. We are confident of its importance and relevance in our world, as the issues we face are greater than ever. We commit to making this a priority in all we do. It is a commitment we invite all of you to join.

ESEA Reauthorization

Overview

The federal Department of Education's blueprint for reform builds on the significant reforms already made in response to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 around four areas: (1) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness to ensure that every classroom has a great teacher and every school has a great leader; (2) Providing information to families to help them evaluate and improve their children's schools, and to educators to help them improve their students' learning; (3) Implementing college- and career-ready standards and developing improved assessments aligned with those standards; and (4) Improving student learning and achievement in America's lowest-performing schools by providing intensive support and effective interventions.

In addition the federal priorities for reauthorizing ESEA include:

- *College- and Career-Ready Students*
- *Great Teachers and Leaders in Every School*
- *Equity and Opportunity for All Students*
- *Raising the Bar and Rewarding Excellence*
- *Promoting Innovation and Continuous Improvement*

Key Implications

- Support funding for student-led initiatives. Develop formal opportunities for students to lead education reform efforts – engaging students as leaders in designing, implementing and sustaining education reforms based on their experiences, wisdoms, aspirations and strategies.
- Advocate for a comprehensive, student-centered strategy. Without a cohesive national strategy to integrate the many dimensions of learning, many students with and without intellectual disabilities will not get the support they need.
- Promote blending the science and practice of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) with the accountability culture of contemporary education. Students will be supported by comprehensive efforts to lower the barriers to learning and those schools facing the greatest challenges will be strengthened. All students will be fully supported and included, and tapped as leaders to create a better school climate.
- Support an expanded view of educational assessment. No Child Left Behind benefited students with intellectual disabilities by requiring that their academic achievement be measured, which resulted in more children having opportunities to learn and master grade-level content. ESEA reauthorization can build on that progress by improving our systems of assessment to ensure that all students – including those with disabilities – can demonstrate the full range of their knowledge and skills.
 - Supplement academic testing, which captures one critical dimension of students' competence and can identify – individually and in the aggregate – where

improvements are needed, with a more comprehensive approach that requires assessments of school climate and children's social and emotional skills. These assessments should be scientifically sound, feasible to administer, understandable to multiple stakeholders and actionable. Further, these assessments would allow all students to demonstrate the full range of their academic, social and emotional achievements – what they know and what they can do. Lastly, these data would help educators and parents understand and utilize each child's strengths to support continuing growth. Assessment of schools and programs would be similarly organized.

- The Department of Education should be encouraged to develop new assessment instruments that can be validated as effective and appropriate for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities and be rooted in the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

School Climate Initiative

Overview

The federal Department of Education acknowledges the importance of the school environment on student performance. To that end, this summer the DOE designed a school climate initiative that provides federal financial assistance to eligible state educational agencies to develop rigorous measurement systems to help assess individual school climates to determine how safe and supportive they are. The program also provides funding for programmatic interventions in the schools with the biggest challenges, as determined by the measurement system the state develops. By bringing a rigorous measurement system to the issue, we seek to help states target interventions to their most at-risk communities.

Key Implications

- Advocate for a comprehensive school climate implementation and assessment that focuses on safety, teaching and learning, student engagement and inclusion as critical elements.
- Encourage the federal DOE and its pilot states to focus on the broader concept of inclusion in its pilot programs and collect, analyze and share information on the impacts of an inclusion school climate on student achievement, development and leadership; teacher relationships; leader support; and parent/community contributions to quality successful schools.
- Share, through technical assistance and professional development, effective strategies to integrate and sustain a quality school climate that engages and benefits all stakeholders.
- Recommend that school climate can be measured with the same scientific rigor used to measure academic achievement.
- Ensure that all stakeholders understand that a local school climate initiative is not a single program, but a coordinated, data-driven community effort.

Engaged Teaching and Learning: Service-Learning

Overview

The federal government, company foundations and non-profits provide leadership, encouragement, technical assistance and support for quality service-learning in P-12 school systems. Over the past three years, with increasing research findings, the quality of service-learning has increased in schools throughout the nation. Special Olympics Project UNIFY this year enhanced its service-learning curriculum, Get Into It™, and web-based resources and activities that emphasizes using this engaging pedagogy as an effective strategy for students with and without intellectual disabilities to address community problems through curriculum-based service.

Key Implications

- Encourage the use of Special Olympics inclusive service-learning curriculum Get Into It and corresponding resources in schools to increase academic, social, civic and career development of students of all ages.
- Provide quality professional development for:
 - teachers to successfully integrate Get Into It curriculum
 - school and district administrators to understand, encourage, support and sustain quality service-learning that engages students with and without intellectual disabilities in the service of their communities
 - community partners to engage with schools as true partners in quality service-learning experiences
- Share Project UNIFY evaluation and service-learning research that demonstrates the positive impacts on students, teachers, schools and communities to deepen and broaden Get Into It throughout the nation.

21st Century Skill Building

Overview

With the current and anticipated fundamental changes in the economy, jobs and businesses workforce skill-building focuses on developing skills necessary to fairly compete with workers throughout the world. As a result of these changes, industry, businesses and organizations have made significant organizational and behavioral shifts that focus on decentralized decision-making, teamwork, networking, flexibility and communicating across constituent groups. The new and different skill demands require more educated workers with the ability to manage information, respond effectively to complex challenges/problems, manage information and produce new knowledge – thus policymakers and education leaders at the federal, state and local levels are creating policies, standards, effective practices and school-community collaborations to ensure all students are capable workers in the predicted and unpredictable future.

Key Implications

- Encourage policymakers and education leaders at federal, state and local levels to ensure that part of the school curriculum at all levels (P-12) focus on student acquisition and enhancement of critical thinking and making judgments.
- Share Project UNIFY strategies on communicating and collaborating with youth teams made up of youth from diverse backgrounds, learning styles and skills and focus on developing positive relationships.
- Encourage education and business collaborations at federal, state and local levels to implement and sustain 21st Century Skill Building across all grades.
- Encourage effective teaching and learning strategies that focus on skill building, including mentoring, internships, job shadowing, project and community-based learning, service-learning and interdisciplinary instruction.
- Advocate for rigorously measuring and broadly sharing results of student skills development.

Physical Education Initiatives

Overview

Physical education and sports are powerful vehicles to promote health and federal, state and local policies and initiatives must elevate the importance of physical education and sports for all children. Physical education teaches students the importance of working together as a team toward a common goal as well as learning “good sportsmanship” and “teamwork.” Current efforts reverse the trend of reducing or eliminating physical education as well as combining physical education with nutrition for students to exhibit healthy eating habits as well as understanding the benefits of exercise.

Key Implications

- Support federal, state and local education leaders in setting policies to increase the formal and informal opportunities for students to establish healthy habits through physical education and nutrition, the corresponding standards and measurements should include the full range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to healthy lives.
- Utilize Special Olympics sports and games strategies that engage students with and without intellectual disabilities should be used to guide schools implementation and sustainability of physical education – ensuring students exercise and while doing so understand the critical elements of inclusion, teamwork and differential abilities.
- Support and collaborate with partners as part of the First Lady’s national Let’s Move! Program to combat obesity and promote healthful living and nutritional education.

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