



***Special Olympics***  
***SO Get Into It™***

Building Bridges:  
A Guide for Starting and Maintaining  
School-based Special Olympics Programs  
Using SO Get Into It and Unified Sports

Special Olympics

[www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org)

September 2004

## BUILDING BRIDGES

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This guide, originally developed in July 2001, is updated with support and assistance from the SO Get Into It Development Teams in every Special Olympics region. In addition, we wish to thank Manwadu Rofhiwa, Special Olympics South Africa athlete, and all his fellow members of the 2003-2005 Global Youth Advisory Council for their contributions.

Special thanks go to Hank Resnik, Dr. Pamela J. Luna, Dr. Donna Lloyd-Kolkin and Ted Martch, the principal editors of the original Building Bridges Guide, and to the Special Olympics athletes whose personal stories of triumph continue to inspire us.

This document can be downloaded on the Special Olympics Knowledge Management System (KMS). For those unable to access KMS, or for additional questions, please contact Ron Vederman, Ed.D., Director of Athlete Recruitment, School and Youth Outreach.  
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**“I want to see Special Olympics grow so we can participate in more sports like soccer and athletics and so that I can travel around South Africa doing sports. I enjoy meeting new friends and have the chance to play together in our school and feel safe around Special Olympics.”**

**Manwadu Rofhiwa, 18, Polakwane, South Africa,  
Participant in the 2003 Global Youth Summit in Dublin, Ireland,  
and member of the Global Youth Advisory Council**



## 1. ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was designed especially for Special Olympics Program staff and volunteers who want to develop school-based Special Olympics activities and programs in use with the Special Olympics Get Into It (SO Get Into It™) ([www.specialolympics.org/getintoit](http://www.specialolympics.org/getintoit)) curriculum and the Unified Sports® program ([http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Compete/Unified\\_Sports/default.htm](http://www.specialolympics.org/Special+Olympics+Public+Website/English/Compete/Unified_Sports/default.htm)). In particular, it will be useful to those countries where a Minister of Education approval is required before introducing these materials.

The guide was conceived as a set of tools to help Special Olympics staff and volunteers build bridges between two distinct environments—Special Olympics and schools. Recruiting and involving youth with and without intellectual disabilities is central to the mission of Special Olympics. Where Special Olympics leaders have been successful in reaching out to and involving youth, they have known how to involve educators, parents and others who support and participate in school-based Programs. The main purpose of the guide is to help people in Special Olympics at all levels build their own bridges and work more effectively with schools.

The element of “choice” is an important one to keep in mind for Special Olympics athletes and their involvement in Unified Sports. Not all will want to do Unified Sports; some will prefer only the traditional Special Olympics opportunities available to them. Some choose to take part in both aspects of Special Olympics and that is acceptable. It will be important to determine the interest level of both the school system and the athlete participants.

### **As a Result of Using this Guide ...**

You will:

- Have a good idea of the basic terrain of schools, including their needs and priorities;
- Know which key people at various levels of school administration to contact;
- Know about outreach and recruitment strategies that have worked in other settings; and
- Have tools for developing your own youth involvement and outreach action plan.

### **There’s No “Right” Way**

There is no single “right” way to start a school-based Special Olympics Program. Many different approaches and strategies have been successful, depending on the community and setting. The purpose of this guide is to offer a wide range of ideas and examples from which Special Olympics personnel may choose. Each outreach effort will be unique.

### **Start Small and Build Slowly**

One key principle should be kept in mind as you move forward in establishing school-based Programs: start small and build slowly with support of the national Program. It’s better to create an experience of success for everyone involved by beginning with a modest effort. Attempting to accomplish too much at the beginning can lead to disappointment. Small successes will be important building blocks for larger ones.

Keep in mind that, as the following pages make clear, today’s schools are under greater pressure than ever before to make sure that students succeed academically. In addition, most schools’ resources for new programs of any kind are extremely limited. Schools, ever mindful of students’ academic achievement, may question the relevance of introducing Special Olympics.

However, the opportunity to involve new schools has never been greater now that we have unique tools, SO Get Into It and Unified Sports, that can address many school needs. The challenge will be to convince school professionals and other representatives that Special Olympics not only has something significant to offer but will help schools address many of their major goals and priorities, creating a win-win situation for everyone involved.

## **2. SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL PROGRAM**

Without support from your national Special Olympics Program, SO Get Into It™ and Unified Sports® cannot succeed on their own to be fully utilized. Certainly, SO Get Into It can be used independent of the national Program in the classroom to educate young people about Special Olympics by teaching lessons one through three and using the supplemental materials such as videos, teacher resources and books. However, in lesson four, where we ask young people to complete an activity to benefit Special Olympics, having the Program know a school is using SO Get Into It and is willing to support that school will be important. Ideally, a Unified Sports experience for young people will be a very rewarding outcome to the lessons and activities.

### **Types of Support Needed from the National Program**

- Appoint a staff person or key volunteer to coordinate involvement with schools.
- Work with the regional Organizational Development staff person responsible for SO Get Into It and Unified Sports materials.
- Organize meetings with key educational leaders to introduce SO Get Into It and Unified Sports for initial permission to use it in schools; meetings could include the national Program Director, Board Chair or Member, prominent educator, parents, etc.
- Respond to inquiries from the SO Get Into It Web site where teachers may register and download materials.
- Deliver materials to schools through other channels upon request.
- Seek new schools to introduce SO Get Into It and Unified Sports.
- Follow up with schools once materials are in place. Offer technical assistance in starting programs, provide Global Messengers to speak with students, register youth and teachers as volunteers, register new athletes, etc.
- Conduct surveys (using instruments developed by Special Olympics) to determine the impact SO Get Into It is making on the school and Program.
- Connect schools with sub-Programs and local Programs where students can assist in some capacity. For example, they can:
  - Volunteer at local events;
  - Conduct fundraising activities;
  - Carry out an awareness activity; and
  - Take part in Unified Sports training and competition.

## **3. GETTING TO KNOW THE WORLD OF SCHOOLS**

One important way to gain entrée to schools is to understand their needs and priorities. The SO Get Into It™ curriculum and Unified Sports® program offer many benefits to schools and can help them address goals that are important to all educators. The programs can help schools to:

- Enhance students' achievement of academic standards;
- Support character education;
- Support positive youth development;
- Involve students in service-learning projects in the school and community;
- Change a young person's attitude toward individuals with intellectual disabilities; and
- Start new school-based local Programs in settings where students with intellectual disabilities are "mainstreamed," "included" or "integrated" with the regular student population.

For all schools today, academic achievement is the highest priority. Most educators recognize, however, that academic achievement does not occur in a vacuum. To succeed academically, students need opportunities to develop and grow socially and emotionally as individuals and as citizens and members of the school/community.

## **Character Education**

Character education is an approach that promotes core ethical values as the basis of good character. It is predicated on the belief that (1) certain core ethical values—such as caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect for self and others—are fundamental to good character and (2) there is basic agreement about these values across all segments of our society.

Character education is sometimes taught as a set of classroom lessons. It is also practiced schoolwide through actions, such as the school explicitly stating the values that it upholds, modeling those values, using them as the basis of human relations in the school and expecting all members of the school community to behave in ways that are consistent with the stated values.

Special Olympics and SO Get Into It are consistent with and support the character education approach. They promote the core values of caring, fairness, responsibility and respect for self and others. This is done through:

- Classroom lessons that counter negative stereotypes and promote respect and appreciation for others;
- Youth participation in Unified Sports programs, which give students with and without intellectual disabilities opportunities to compete together on the same sports team and practice fairness, responsibility and caring;
- Supplementary activities such as the chance to be an e-Buddy to a Special Olympics athlete; and
- Service-learning activities that provide opportunities for developing responsibility and respect for self and others.

## **Service-Learning**

Service-learning is receiving growing recognition as a powerful teaching strategy that involves students in learning across many different academic disciplines while they are planning and carrying out service projects in the school and community. Service-learning provides the means by which service to the community becomes an opportunity for reflection, learning and personal growth. Service-learning is increasingly employed in schools at all grade levels as a teaching method for students to achieve academic, civic, social, personal and career knowledge and skills.

Service-learning is built into the classroom lessons of SO Get Into It. Most importantly, the lessons lead logically to student involvement in service-learning projects such as Unified Sports that will support Special Olympics activities and events and promote greater involvement of regular education students with Special Olympics Programs and athletes. Encouraging the formation of new Special Olympic Programs within schools can be a direct result of service-learning projects.

## **Being Prepared**

An essential ingredient to communicating effectively with school officials is adequate preparation. Know the facts about your Special Olympics Program and anticipate the questions that will be asked. How teachers will find time to integrate these lessons and cost are two issues that continually surface, and you should be prepared to address them. Many school officials also view Special Olympics as a once-a-year event and are unaware that it is a year-round sports training program. Others hold the misconception that Special Olympics is only for children when, in fact, persons eight years and older are eligible. Be prepared to present basic information about your Program.

In addition to knowing about your own Program, it will be helpful to know about the needs and goals of the school system. Learn about the system's structure and the personnel who are influential. Pay attention to the actions of the school decision-makers and become familiar with laws affecting special education and sports. Find out about the issues and needs of the school systems and present some solutions. An example relating to Special Olympics would be to offer

Special Olympics sports training and competition programs to schools using their facilities after school with your volunteers as coaches providing a needed service to students with and without disabilities. Schools get to partner with a respected community service provider at little or no cost while meeting the needs of a traditionally underserved student population.

#### 4. REACHING OUT TO EDUCATION LEADERS

Ministers of Education, school directors/principals/heads of schools, local education leaders and teachers should be made aware of the strengths of SO Get Into It™ and Unified Sports® and the valuable role they can play in their schools. These programs:

- Are aligned with the school's achievement standards for curriculum;
- Promote a positive school climate;
- Support character education;
- Offer opportunities for student leadership through service-learning;
- Fit the curriculum on a class-by-class basis or districtwide adoption;
- Lend themselves to taking place during the school day, as an after-school extracurricular activity or part of a school's physical education program; and
- Are available to schools at no cost.

**“What is Your Ask” when you finally do get a high-level meeting with the key decision-makers within a ministry of education, association of private schools or network of religious schools (also know as a “Top Down” approach)?**

The “Ask” and Description	Resources Available from KMS or Special Olympics Regional Office
<p>1. <i>We want you to allow Special Olympics to offer SO Get Into It and Unified Sports to every school in your country.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the requirements of curriculum planning many schools follow is essential to being well-prepared as you begin discussions and interactions with schools. <i>Never assume that a school can immediately introduce SO Get Into It just because you and others support it enthusiastically.</i></li> <li>• A school principal or teacher may first need to have permission from the country's Minister of Education (or representative) in writing in order to receive a free copy of SO Get Into It. Without this approval, your request for their involvement may be denied. It can sometimes be very helpful when first approaching high-ranking officials to have testimony from other Ministers of Education, teachers, administrators, parents and students in order to help present a stronger reason to introduce these materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SO Get Into It brochure (in multiple languages)</li> <li>• SO Get Into It general orientation PowerPoint presentation (in multiple languages)</li> <li>• Unified Sports brochure</li> <li>• Unified Sports Handbook</li> <li>• Testimonials from user groups: students, teachers, parents, educational organizations</li> </ul>

<p>2. <i>We want to phase in SO Get Into It and Unified Sports over a period of time to allow for proper management, support and follow-up from a national Program to ensure success.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of the timing of your request. It may take a year or more to go through an “approval process” in place within an educational system. Committees and others may need to first review materials and, if necessary, offer minor revisions to be included before approval is given. This can actually work in favor of a Special Olympics Program, providing a window of time whereby local infrastructure can be developed and prepared for the arrival of an influx of new schools, student volunteers, new athletes and family members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum for review from selected age/grade levels (in multiple languages) at <a href="http://www.specialolympics.org/getintoit">www.specialolympics.org/getintoit</a></li> <li>• Unified Sports online information (<a href="http://www.specialolympics.org">www.specialolympics.org</a>—click on Compete, then Unified Sports on the left margin)</li> </ul>
<p>3. <i>We need your help in duplicating copies of SO Get Into It materials for schools throughout your system.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often, Ministries of Education have at their disposal printing services that can duplicate and bind hard copies of the essential components of the curriculum: Instructions to Teachers, Lessons, Athlete Photos, Activity Cards and Teacher Resources. This can be accomplished at no or little cost to the ministry. Perhaps the Special Olympics Program can offer to supply the paper through a donated source.</li> <li>• In some cases, the materials may be made available on CD-ROM. In this case, ask the ministry to duplicate the curriculum files onto CDs supplied by the ministry or, if necessary, the Special Olympics Program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft and/or hard copies of curriculum for selected age/grade levels</li> <li>• Art work (optional) and Special Olympics/ SO Get Into It logos</li> </ul>

<p>4. <i>We need your assistance in distributing materials to teachers throughout your system.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is where a ministry can really support your efforts through communication channels already in place. In some cases it may be through a monthly meeting of district leaders, principals or other network when face-to-face meetings occur. If not face-to-face, then delivery to geographic areas can be arranged.</li> <li>• A ministry may be taking advantage of Internet resources to communicate with educators. If that is the case, alert them to the SO Get Into It Web site (<a href="http://www.specialolympics.org/getintoit">www.specialolympics.org/getintoit</a>) where materials can be downloaded in a variety of languages. Work closely with the ministry in promoting this so that teachers know about it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples from other model countries</li> </ul>
<p>5. <i>We want to use your agency's logo in connection with promoting the materials.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to demonstrate to the users that support is evident from leading educational agencies. A logo on printed literature can be very helpful in indicating that SO Get Into It is a credible educational resource and tool. Carefully follow any guidelines for use of the logo as set forth by the agency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference existing logo usage and acknowledgements as examples</li> </ul>

6. *(Optional): We can be available if you would like to provide training for educators and/or administrators once they receive materials.*

- SO Get Into It and Unified Sports materials are self-explanatory for educators. This is how they were originally designed to be used. Teachers read the guidelines section which explains how to use the materials. Lessons are fully scripted and this removes the guesswork. However, some ministries conduct training seminars on a regular basis and can incorporate a brief session on SO Get Into It. It is a great idea to take advantage of this if available.

- SO Get Into It general orientation PowerPoint presentation (in multiple languages)
- SO Get Into It brochure (in multiple languages)
- Testimonials from users
- Curriculum in hard or soft copy on CD-ROM, including supplemental video, books, Special Olympics Local Program Start Up Kit, contact information, etc.
- Unified Sports Handbook available in hard copy or PDF format online

7. (Optional for mainstreamed, inclusive or integrated school systems): We want to see new Special Olympics Programs started that will be in alignment with your desire to make all students feel they are part of the school community, especially benefiting students with intellectual disabilities as well as their regular education peers.

- Using SO Get Into It as the catalyst to starting new Programs is the best-case scenario. It may be in the form of a sports program being instituted, Unified Sports team being formed, a Partners Club<sup>®</sup> being established, etc. It requires considerable effort on the part of everyone though—teachers, students, administrators, family members and the local Special Olympics staff and volunteers. However, reinforce that this school system will not be the first to accomplish this. Special Olympics has the resources and technical expertise to guide the school through the process to help ensure success for everyone involved.

- Special Olympics Local Program Start Up Kit
- General Orientation for Volunteers
- Additional resources available from the national, sub-Program and local Program

**“What is Your Ask” when you get a meeting with key decision-makers such as a principal, headmaster/headmistress or religious head within a government school, private school or religious school when it is not necessary to have permission first from a minister or agency head first (also known as a “Bottom Up” approach)?**

The “Ask” and Description	Resources Available from KMS or Special Olympics Regional Office
<p>1. <i>We want you to allow Special Olympics to offer SO Get Into It and Unified Sports to every classroom teacher in your school, phasing it in over a period of time.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assuming you have enough SO Get Into It materials available, it would be ideal to provide enough for each teacher to have the lessons. If necessary, teachers can share materials, especially videotapes and books that can become a permanent part of a school’s library for teacher resources. The key is to “institutionalize” materials so that they are used in the classroom as a teaching unit once per year at least. By institutionalizing this, we mean that it is not incumbent on any one teacher that uses the materials because if that person leaves, we want the materials to be taught by the next teacher who comes in. It then becomes “engrained” into the school curriculum.</li> <li>• Be aware of the timing of your request. If you approach them in the fall, for example, with a request to consider the curriculum, school officials may tell you they cannot even consider the program until the following spring—<i>the following school year</i>. Do not assume, therefore, that there is no hope. Schools actually have some flexibility to adopt a relatively short-term program like SO Get Into It, especially if it does not require additional funding and budgeting. You will need to be persistent, find teachers and administrators who will champion the program within the schools and pursue the goal of implementing the program as soon as targeted schools can reasonably accommodate it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SO Get Into It brochure (in multiple languages)</li> <li>• SO Get Into It general orientation PowerPoint presentation (in multiple languages)</li> <li>• Unified Sports brochure</li> <li>• Unified Sports Handbook</li> <li>• Testimonials from user groups: students, teachers, parents, educational organizations</li> <li>• Curriculum in hard copy or CD-ROM for selected age/grade levels (in multiple languages)</li> <li>• Supplemental resources like videos, books, Special Olympics Local Program Start Up Kit, contact information, etc.</li> </ul>

*2. We need your help in duplicating copies of the SO Get Into It materials for your teachers*

- Sometimes schools have at their disposal printing services that can duplicate and bind hard copies of the essential components of the curriculum: Instructions to teachers, lessons, athlete photos, activity cards and teacher resources. This can be accomplished at little or no cost to the school, especially if they have a vocational training program at the secondary school level that may have students help with this task. Perhaps the Special Olympics Program can offer to supply the paper through a donated source.
- In some cases, the materials can be copied to a CD-ROM, as long as the teachers will have access to the proper hardware and software to use this format.
- Another option may be taking advantage of Internet resources to communicate with educators. Alert them to the SO Get Into It Web site ([www.specialolympics.org/getintoit](http://www.specialolympics.org/getintoit)) where materials can be downloaded in a variety of languages. From there you may download and print materials if you provide hard copies.

- Soft and/or hard copies of curriculum for selected age/grade levels
- Art work (optional) and SO Get Into It logos

<p>3. <i>We want to use your school's logo and testimonial from students and teachers in connection with promoting the materials.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important to demonstrate to users that support is evident from actual users of SO Get Into It. A logo and brief testimonials on printed literature can be very helpful in indicating that SO Get Into It is a credible educational resource tool. Carefully follow any guidelines for use of the logo as set forth by the school, protecting confidentiality if necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference existing logo usage, testimonials and acknowledgements as examples</li> </ul>
<p>4. <i>(Optional): We can be available if you would like to provide training for educators and/or administrators once they receive materials.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SO Get Into It and Unified Sports materials are self-explanatory for educators. This is how they were originally designed to be used. Lessons are fully scripted and this removes the guesswork. However, some schools conduct training seminars on a regular basis and can incorporate a brief session on SO Get Into It. It is a great idea to take advantage of this if available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SO Get Into It general orientation PowerPoint presentation (in multiple languages)</li> <li>• SO Get Into It brochure (in multiple languages)</li> <li>• Testimonials from users</li> <li>• Curriculum in hard or soft copy on CD-ROM, including supplemental video, books, Special Olympics Local Program Start Up Kit, contact information, etc.</li> <li>• Unified Sports Handbook available online in PDF format (<a href="http://www.specialolympics.org">www.specialolympics.org</a>—click on <b>Compete</b>, then <b>Unified Sports</b> on the left margin)</li> </ul>
<p>5. <i>(Optional for mainstreamed, inclusive or integrated school systems): We want to see new Special Olympics Programs started that will be in alignment with your desire to make all students feel they are part of the school community, especially benefiting students with intellectual disabilities.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using SO Get Into It as the catalyst to starting new Programs is the best case scenario. It may be in the form of a sports program being instituted, Unified Sports team being formed, a Partners Club being established, etc. It requires considerable effort on the part of everyone though—teachers, students, administrators, family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Olympics Local Program Start Up Kit</li> <li>• General Orientation for Volunteers</li> <li>• Additional resources available from the national, sub-Program and local Program</li> </ul>

<p>members and local Special Olympics staff and volunteers. However, let the school know that they are not alone. Special Olympics has the resources and technical expertise to guide the school through the process to help insure success for everyone involved.</p>	
<p>6. <i>(Optional for segregated schools serving only students with special needs, including those with intellectual disabilities who are eligible for Special Olympics): We are interested in offering Unified Sports as an option for students who may be interested in a more integrated sports setting with peers who are close in age and ability.</i></p> <p>Several significant challenges when combining segregated schools with “mainstream” schools include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where to find Unified Sports partners who are geographically suitable and matched for compatibility of skills, attitudes, training and competition;</li> <li>• Time in the schedule to meet with Unified Sports partners for training;</li> <li>• Locations to meet for training; and</li> <li>• Transportation for either the segregated school or mainstream school to attend training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find Unified Partners among siblings, relatives, friends, neighborhood schools, community sports leagues, religious institutions, youth groups and clubs.</li> <li>• Time in schedule for training can be after school, on a weekend or part of a school day designated for service-learning.</li> <li>• Locations for training include: one another’s school, a centralized park or sports setting or another site as long as it is safe for all and suitable for the chosen sport.</li> <li>• Transportation if activity occurs during the school day:</li> <li>• Utilize school buses between 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., e.g., when they aren’t typically in use.</li> <li>• Borrow a bus from a city or governmental agency that may be available.</li> <li>• Utilize public transportation.</li> <li>• Rent a commercial bus.</li> <li>• Allow parents to drive students in personal vehicles.</li> <li>• Walk to a nearby facility for training.</li> <li>• Transportation if activity occurs after the school day or on weekends: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Utilize school buses after they have completed afternoon runs.</li> <li>b. Borrow a bus from a city or governmental agency that may be available.</li> <li>c. Utilize public transportation.</li> <li>d. Rent a commercial bus.</li> <li>e. Allow parents to drive students in personal vehicles.</li> <li>f. If the facility is close by, walk to a nearby facility for training.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**5. SIMPLIFIED CHART OF SO GET INTO IT™ DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR A SINGLE AGE GROUP (E.G., 11-13 YEARS).**

The chart below describes a typical process for developing a national Program’s SO Get Into It resource, beginning with forming a team to rolling out a final set of materials to schools. This timeline may be modified depending on circumstances such as ministry permissions needed, translations needed to be done, athlete stories to be gathered, etc.

TASK	Month											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Select Development Team	█											
Translate curriculum	█											
Meet with Development Team		█										
Meet with education officials for permission to field-test			█									
Introduce field test to selected schools				█								
Conduct field test					█	█						
Collect evaluations							█					
Develop final report on field test								█				
Reconvene meeting with educational leaders								█				
Meet with potential funders (ongoing)						█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Secure major endorsements (ongoing)						█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Develop a rollout plan								█				
Produce quantities of resources									█	█		
Distribute to schools (ongoing)											█	█
Conduct evaluation study (ongoing)												█
Begin next age group of curriculum (ongoing)									█	█	█	█

## 6. THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Encouraging students with and without intellectual disabilities to participate in a variety of activities and events related to Special Olympics is a central theme in the SO Get Into It™ curriculum, Unified Sports® and all related outreach and athlete recruitment. Youth participation in sports-related activities and events such as Unified Sports can and should be a key focus of these efforts. In addition to participation in Unified Sports, sports training that brings together students with and without intellectual disabilities can be a Program component at all levels.

The SO Get Into It curriculum at all grade levels focuses on the achievements of Special Olympics athletes and the ways in which they have modeled “skill...courage...sharing...joy” and the Special Olympics motto: “Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.” The lessons highlight Special Olympics athlete Loretta Claiborne, featured in both a Disney film and on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. They also present the stories of many other athletes who are not as well-known. The theme of setting goals and overcoming obstacles, particularly in relation to participation in sports, permeates the curriculum.

At the high school level, the SO Get Into It curriculum is designed specifically for physical education classes. Through the high school lessons, students experience what it is like to learn a sports skill with very limited information and a short time to complete the task, an experience similar to that of athletes with intellectual disabilities. Students explore ways to help others overcome challenges and obstacles in learning sports skills by modifying activities, teaching skills to their peers and encouraging others not to give up regardless of their limitations. The lessons conclude with a service-learning activity in which “mainstream” students interact with students with special needs who are learning sports skills.

All Special Olympics and SO Get Into It activities and events support the standards for physical education developed by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), which are described in detail in NASPE’s publication *Moving Into the Future: National Physical Education Standards: A Guide to Content and Assessment*. The NASPE standards address the key question: “What should students know and be able to do?”, which defines a physically educated person, including five major focus areas. A physically educated person:

- Has learned skills necessary to perform a variety of physical activities;
- Is physically fit;
- Participates regularly in physical activity;
- Knows the implications of and the benefits from involvement in physical activities; and
- Values physical activity and its contribution to a healthful lifestyle.

## 7. ENCOURAGING SCHOOL-FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

We can all agree that schools must be welcoming places where families feel wanted and recognized for their strengths and potential. When students attend schools that make a practice of encouraging parents to participate in their child’s education, this factor outweighs family characteristics like parental education, family size, marital status, socioeconomic level or student grade level in students’ success<sup>1</sup>. Mutual respect and trust from both parents and schools are the benchmarks for a successful working partnership.

**Several basic goals and implementation suggestions can help you work with families to achieve stronger relationships between families and their schools.**

Demonstrate the importance of family members/parents of Special Olympic athletes becoming actively engaged with the school.

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<sup>1</sup> Dauber, S. L., & Epstein, J. L. (1993). Parents’ attitudes and practices of involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. In N. Chavkin (Ed.), *Families and schools in a pluralistic society* (pp. 53-72). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Several specific strategies relating directly to this goal can be employed<sup>2</sup>. They are as follows:

- The best way to win family support for school efforts is to encourage parents to attend school sports events. Sixty-six percent of parents do attend school sports events. Special Olympics and schools can work together to promote Partners Club<sup>®</sup> programs and Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> initiatives that can bring parents of children with and without intellectual disabilities to school sports events.
- Teachers are the primary source of information to parents about what is happening in school. When considering the issue of retaining Special Olympics athletes after high school, we can begin to recognize why this becomes a challenge. Parents' lack of knowledge about Special Olympics and how to access Special Olympics for their post-high-school-aged children is a significant reason Special Olympics Programs often fail to retain athletes and their parents in the transition from high school.

### **Increase the level of information parents of Special Olympics athletes in school-based Programs receive.**

Here are some specific strategies currently being implemented through the Special Olympics Family Support Network initiative that can help to bring about a closer partnership between parents and schools.

- Forge partnerships with local community organizations that serve parents and families of children with intellectual disabilities. Examples include Parent To Parent, The Arc, the National Parent Network on Disabilities and the National Down Syndrome Congress. These groups support parents and family members through education, advocacy, research and counseling.
- Conduct "Family Forums" at schools and during Special Olympic events in order to bring together experts representing topics of importance to family members who have children with and without intellectual disabilities. This opportunity for discussion, dialog, and exchange of ideas will serve as a support network for new and veteran families alike.
- Make families aware of the Special Olympics Family Support Network Web site ([www.family.specialolympics.org](http://www.family.specialolympics.org)). This Web site will provide:
  - Information for parents new to Special Olympics as well as parents of existing athletes;
  - Opportunities for family members to "chat" with one another; and
  - Links to other relevant Web sites for families of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

### **Raise awareness among teachers, school administrators and other parents of the experiences of families and parents of children with intellectual disabilities.**

Here are some specific strategies parents can use to engage the school in a constructive manner to benefit their child's involvement with Special Olympics.

- Create a cadre of "Family Messengers" who are veteran Special Olympics family members and connect them to new family members of children with intellectual disabilities just entering the school community. The Family Messengers can provide mentoring and resource packets (e.g., info on SO Get Into It<sup>™</sup> or Unified Sports) for the family member to give to their child's teacher and can serve as a guide to new families during the early stages of involvement in special education and Special Olympics.

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<sup>2</sup> Farkas, Steve, et. al. (2001). Just waiting to be asked? A fresh look at attitudes on public engagement. Public Agenda, New York. [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org).

- Involve family members in presentations about Special Olympics at their local school board and PTA meetings.
- Encourage families to promote the adoption of the SO Get Into It curriculum in their schools by speaking with the principal, the district's curriculum supervisor, the school superintendent or other school officials.
- Provide ways for families to become involved with school governance and management teams that plan academic and environmental improvements.
- Make schools sensitive to the needs of some parents of Special Olympics athletes with regard to language barriers, use of educational jargon and various reading levels.
- Conduct surveys of parents of special needs children to find out their concerns and views about Special Olympics involvement.
- Encourage schools to expand the opportunity for meeting with parents by holding evening, weekend or before-school conferences.
- Encourage schools to use technology to link parents with the classroom. It can be as simple as a telephone voicemail system for teachers, parents and students calling for taped messages about activities and assignments to access to a school's Web site with schedules of events, dates for completing applications and sports training tips.

By putting these practices into place, schools will benefit from having involved family members helping to make their schools a more welcoming place for all students. Thus, Special Olympics, a well-respected and highly regarded stakeholder in the community, can be a leader in creating more effective school-family partnerships.

## **8. VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT\***

Volunteers can be a valuable resource in promoting and implementing Special Olympics in schools. They can serve as coaches, officials, committee members, advocates and much more. The impact Special Olympics volunteers make is immediate. The contribution, whether it be time, expertise, goods and services or money directly affects the lives of children and families and helps establish Special Olympics as a priority for the entire community.

Here are some volunteer opportunities to consider:

### **School-based Programs**

- Include Special Olympics sports training programs in an existing adapted physical education curriculum.
- Utilize Special Olympics coaching guides in an after-school sports program.
- Start Special Olympics Unified Sports® teams.
- Open school facilities to Special Olympics events.
- Help start a Special Olympics Partners Club®.

### **Sports Training**

- Become a certified coach.
- Organize, coach or play on a Unified Sports team.
- Use specific sports expertise to help set up sports clinics.

### **Competitions**

- Serve as a competition director, venue supervisor or certified official at Special Olympics competitions.
- Organize special events.

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\* Adapted from *Navigating the Way to a Promising Future*. No date. Outreach Handbook, Special Olympics Texas.

- Act as a day-of-event volunteer in multiple capacities such as greeter, timer, stager, escort, statistics recorder, measurer, line judge, pit crew, ball shagger, spotter and more.
- Set up and support the event area for competition (drawing lines, putting up tents and tables, filling water coolers, etc.).

### **Public Relations**

- Assist with implementing public relations initiatives.
- Assist with building media contacts.
- Write articles about Special Olympics.
- Serve as a speaker.

### **Friends of Special Olympics Athletes**

- Serve as greeters, escorts and cheerleaders at Special Olympics Games.
- Transport athletes to practice and competitions.
- Work as a volunteer at a group home or institution.

### **Recruitment**

It is important to ask yourself some questions before you begin recruiting volunteers. First, what type of person will have the skills you are looking for? Think of education, gender, age and experiences. Second, where would you find these people? Consider service clubs, churches, corporations or universities. It is important to look in the right place for the type of volunteer you need. For example, you would probably not want to look for somebody with accounting skills at a high school, but doing a presentation at a business or Rotary club might yield somebody with the skills needed.

When people call to volunteer, it's important to have quick access to all the available volunteer positions in your Program or area. Knowing exactly what your needs are maximizes the chances of matching with a volunteer's interest. For example, a person who doesn't like to sweat might be turned off by the idea of coaching softball, but an offer to write the volunteer newsletter from home might be perfect for him or her.

Most important, knowing your needs will prevent you from making the worst mistake possible—turning a potential volunteer away. Many people who experience Special Olympics get “hooked” and become involved for life. If, by chance, you are experiencing a slow period and already have enough volunteers for the job, tell potential volunteers about upcoming events and ask if it would be okay to contact them in the future.

### **Designing Volunteer Positions**

Job descriptions for volunteers can serve as part of the screening process, as a selling tool and as a contract between the volunteer and the organization.

Initially job descriptions can serve as part of the screening process. Potential volunteers should receive all the information necessary to make an informed decision about taking the position. This can prevent potential confusion and misunderstandings between the volunteer and the organization later on.

A job description can also serve as a selling tool. By fully describing the position, you'll be more likely to appeal to an interested “taker” who will be enthusiastic and serious about the job. In addition, if at first glance a job appears intimidating to a potential volunteer, the job description will provide a visual breakdown of the required duties, thus possibly rendering the job more inviting.

Finally, a job description can function as a contract providing mutual accountability for the organization and the individual volunteer. A contract ensures that if a problem were to arise with a volunteer's performance of his or her duties, the supervisor could sit down and review the agreed-upon duties with the volunteer. Reviewing the contract with the volunteer can be a way to channel the volunteer's energy toward an agreed-upon goal.

## **Recognition**

Recognition is an important element of working with volunteers, but it has to be meaningful. Not everyone thinks a button is an appropriate form of recognition. In fact, for someone who has put in countless hours of volunteer work, a button would probably be inappropriate. One way to determine appropriate ways to recognize volunteers is by assessing what motivates individuals. For example, if a volunteer has done an outstanding job as an assistant coach, why not ask her to consider leading her own team as head coach?

It may be difficult to find room in the budget for volunteer recognition. However, don't forget that it is always possible to seek donations to provide creative gifts for volunteers. Passes to museums, gift certificates, movies and dining coupons to restaurants are ways to recognize volunteers on a regular basis.

## **9. MAKING EVERYONE PART OF THE TEAM**

This section describes four programs that promote interaction within the community of Special Olympics athletes, their high school and adult peers, volunteers, coaches and families. These programs help to dispel the notion that Special Olympics does not encourage integrated activities by creating a variety of opportunities for everyone in the school/community to participate.

### **Unified Sports<sup>®</sup>**

Increasingly, Special Olympics is encouraging the participation of athletes with intellectual disabilities in activities that involve persons without intellectual disabilities. Unified Sports serves as a catalyst for providing such opportunities.

Unified Sports combines athletes with and without intellectual disabilities of similar ages and abilities on teams that compete against other. The program expands sports opportunities for athletes seeking new challenges while dramatically increasing inclusion.

Unified Sports is unique and influential because it:

- Brings together athletes with and without intellectual disabilities in a setting where everybody is challenged to improve;
- Provides a valuable sports opportunity to individuals with intellectual disabilities who are not presently involved in Special Olympics, especially those with mild disabilities and those in communities where there are not enough Special Olympics athletes to conduct team sports;
- Allows athletes to develop specific sports skills and prepares them for participation in other community sports;
- Increases public awareness of the abilities and skills of individuals with intellectual disabilities;
- Builds self-esteem and sports ability in all athletes by ensuring that each participant plays an important, meaningful and valued role on the team; and
- Enables Special Olympics athletes' families to participate as team members or coaches on Unified Sports teams.

A Special Olympics Unified Sports program can be conducted in a variety of settings, including:

- A program organized by a Special Olympics group;
- A community or church sports program such as an adult softball league or YMCA volleyball league;
- An interscholastic or intramural after-school league at the junior high or high school level;
- As part of the league system at a local bowling center;
- An independent league sponsored by business or civic groups; and
- A program in cooperation with a local parks and recreation agency.

Athletes with intellectual disabilities who participate in Unified Sports may or may not be involved in traditional Special Olympics Programs and athletes without intellectual disabilities can be recruited from schools, corporations, civic groups and other community organizations. Again, these athletes are generally similar in age and skill level to the athletes with intellectual disabilities, depending on the sport.

Unified Sports teams are coached by volunteers who have to attend a Special Olympics coaches training school in the appropriate sport. Teams may participate in Unified Sports divisions at Special Olympics area, Program, State and World Games.

### **Partners Club®**

Another effective tool to promote the interaction between athletes with and without intellectual disabilities is the Partners Club. These clubs initiate and sustain friendships between Special Olympics athletes and their school peers. The program's advantage is that it facilitates the sharing of ideas and the forging of relationships. Partners Clubs benefit the volunteer student just as much as the Special Olympics athlete.

Partners Clubs offer:

- A chance for the Special Olympics athlete and high school student to meet and train for competition after school (or on weekends);
- The opportunity for athletes and high school students to socialize outside of school by attending sporting events, movies or just visiting with friends and family; and
- A learning experience where the volunteer partner will serve as a role model for the Special Olympics athlete and visa versa.

### **School Sports Partnerships**

In schools, athletes with intellectual disabilities train and compete alongside varsity, junior varsity and club teams. They wear school uniforms, ride the same school bus to competitions, participate and are recognized in school sports award ceremonies, qualify to earn school athletic letters and represent their school in Special Olympics sub-Program, local, sectional, and Program-level competitions.

Training and competition is supervised by the team's head coach in a particular sport or an assistant coach specifically assigned to coach Special Olympics teams. Stipends for coaches and the number of coaches needed generally follow accepted school policies and procedures.

Athletes without disabilities from existing sports teams serve as peer coaches, scrimmage teammates and boosters during competition.

## Goals of the School Sports Partnership

- To assist agencies and school systems in offering sports programs to athletes with intellectual disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers.
- To open new avenues of communication and friendship among all athletes both with and without intellectual disabilities.
- To include Special Olympics athletes in existing school and community sports programs.
- To better serve athletes with intellectual disabilities who may be sensitive to participating in the traditional Special Olympics Program.
- To encourage Special Olympics sports training and competition as a part of the agency's or school district's existing sports program.
- To encourage new friendships and sports opportunities for Special Olympics athletes, their families, volunteers and coaches.
- To help athletes with intellectual disabilities improve their self-esteem.
- To foster greater community understanding, respect and acceptance of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

## Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)

The Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) provides comprehensive motor activity and recreation training for people with significant physical, cognitive and multiple disabilities. The emphasis is on training and participation rather than competition. MATP is part of the commitment by Special Olympics to offer sports training opportunities to individuals with intellectual disabilities of all ability levels.

MATP trains participants in motor-based recreation activities and enables them to take part in a program that is appropriate to the age and ability of each individual. After a training period of at least eight weeks, participants may take part in a Special Olympics Training Day, giving each participant a chance to demonstrate his or her "personal best" in an activity and to be recognized for this accomplishment. The skills learned through MATP also enable people with significant challenges to participate in community recreational activities with their non-disabled peers.

## 10. GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

Educating the public about Special Olympics, Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> and the SO Get Into It<sup>™</sup> curriculum will be an important part of the success of these materials. Here is a list of ideas that will help promote and publicize them throughout your Program.

- Customize the attached "Swiss Cheese" Sample Press Release. Distribute it to education reporters at daily and weekly newspapers and radio news shows.
- Send a letter to the editor about the importance of the curriculum and students' participation in Special Olympics. Letters can be signed by school leaders, Special Olympics representatives, principals or influential educators within the community.
- Organize a community event featuring students who have "taken action" as a result of service-learning activities and lessons learned from the curriculum.
- Work with media outlets that promote education, youth and tolerance.

## Story Angles

Consider inviting local news programs or reporters to do a story about any or all of the following:

- Visit a classroom using the Special Olympics curriculum and interview students about what they are learning.

- Focus on Special Olympics Unified Sports teams made up of youth between the ages of 8-18.
- Interview a Global Messenger.
- Interview a teacher or education official on the impact of the SO Get Into It curriculum within the school.
- Feature a school-aged Special Olympics hero.
- Tie-in with “back to school” stories—for example, a new curriculum launch on the first day of school.

**SAMPLE "SWISS CHEESE" PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
[DATE]

**CONTACT:** [NAME]  
[TITLE]  
[PHONE]

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS [PROGRAM] ALONG WITH [SCHOOL] INTRODUCE  
Special Olympics Get Into It (SO Get Into It™)**

***Special Olympics Service-Learning Curriculum will Bring Together  
Students With and Without Intellectual Disabilities***

[CITY] — Special Olympics [Program] announced today that [School] will be teaching the new Special Olympics Get Into It (SO Get Into It™) service-learning curriculum developed to bring together students with and without intellectual disabilities.

"Special Olympics is opening its doors to young people in a new and important way," said Special Olympics Chairman and CEO Timothy Shriver. "From now on, all young people, both those who compete as athletes and those who serve with them, can be a part of the Special Olympics family through SO Get Into It. We are asking young people to 'be the difference' by learning the values of inclusion, tolerance, respect and welcome. And then we are asking young people to join the world of Special Olympics and 'make a difference' in their families, in their communities and in their world."

SO Get Into It is designed with four lesson plans that teach awareness and understanding as well as inspire students and encourage them to take action. The curriculum begins by introducing intellectual disabilities and Special Olympics to students through a discussion of stereotypes about people who are different. The curriculum continues with the compelling and inspirational stories of Special Olympics athletes and how they set goals and achieved them. Finally, the curriculum encourages students to take action with Special Olympics and become involved with their local Special Olympics Program.

[INSERT QUOTE FROM LOCAL EDUCATOR ABOUT CURRICULUM]

In addition to increasing the participation of children and youth in Special Olympics, the SO Get Into It curriculum addresses current trends in schools such as volunteerism, character education, positive youth development and service-learning.

[ADDITIONAL LOCAL PROGRAM INFORMATION]

SO Get Into It is sponsored by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education and generous gifts from Ray and Stephanie Lane, AOL Time Warner Foundation, Gang Family Foundation and Universal Studios Foundation. Other supporters include Disney Studios, Nickelodeon, MTV, Phoenix Wealth Management and Lucky Duck Productions. In addition, the following leading educational organizations have endorsed SO Get Into It: (INSERT YOUR ASSOCIATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS HERE).

Special Olympics is an international year-round program of sports training and competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities. More than 1.3 million athletes in more than 150 countries train and compete in 26 Olympic-type summer and winter sports. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to develop fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy as they participate in the sharing of gifts and friendship with other athletes, their families and the community. There is no cost to participate in Special Olympics.

Visit Special Olympics online at [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org) or on AOL (Keyword: Special Olympics).



## FACT SHEET

### **SPECIAL OLYMPICS GET INTO IT (SO GET INTO IT™) DESCRIPTION**

A service-learning curriculum developed to introduce Special Olympics and explain intellectual disabilities to youth and encourage them to become involved in the Movement.

### **SO GET INTO IT GOALS**

The overall goal of SO Get Into It is to increase the participation of children and youth with and without intellectual disabilities in Special Olympics by establishing school-based Special Olympics Programs and activities. This encompasses the following related goals:

- To develop new constituencies and leaders for the Special Olympics Movement;
- To promote greater understanding and acceptance of similarities and differences in others among school-age youth; and
- To involve school-age youth in a variety of activities centered on Special Olympics, including participation in Special Olympics sports and events that will enable them to play a positive role in their schools and communities.

SO Get Into It is made up of four lesson plans compatible with curriculum standards in areas of language arts, social studies, history, health and physical education and other areas. The four lesson plans consist of:

- Awareness: Learning how stereotypes are formed and how they can be hurtful
- Understanding: Overcoming unfair treatment, adversity and discrimination
- Inspiration: Goal-setting with Special Olympics athletes as role models
- Action: Encouraging students to make a difference in school and community with Special Olympics

### **HIGHLIGHTING THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS ATHLETE**

SO Get Into It highlights Special Olympics athletes and their compelling stories of overcoming odds to live their dreams.

- Attitudes (ages 5-7): An introductory, fast-paced four-minute video set to music consisting of inspirational footage from the 1999 Special Olympics World Summer in North Carolina. Achievements of Special Olympics athletes are highlighted.
- The Loretta Claiborne Story (ages 11-14): A 90-minute Disney movie about Special Olympics Pennsylvania athlete Loretta Claiborne. Set mostly during her school days, the film focuses on goal-setting, achieving dreams, overcoming barriers and celebrating differences.
- Nick News Special Edition: A World of Difference (ages 11-14): This 21-minute show was filmed in March 2001 at the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Anchorage, Alaska, and focuses on youth with and without intellectual disabilities discussing their friendships, celebrating their differences and seriously discussing the changes that need to be made in public perception of those with intellectual disabilities.
- Changing Attitudes—One Person at a Time (ages 14-18): A 46-minute video filmed at the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games and Global Youth Summit in Dublin,

- Ireland, with part one highlighting youth from the Summit speaking about overcoming obstacles with Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa (18 minutes). Part two, a youth forum featuring celebrities Colin Farrell and Samantha Mumba, focuses on young people discussing ways that everyone can be an inspiration and leader in their school and community.
- Life in the Shadows (ages 14-18): This 10-minute video, much of it in black and white, describes the long-standing practice of institutionalizing people with intellectual disabilities in the United States. It illustrates the current trends leading toward more community-based involvement and acceptance for people with disabilities.

## **GLOBAL REACH**

- SO Get Into It has been distributed for free to more than 3,000 elementary, middle and high schools throughout North America since school year 2001-2002.
- Development of SO Get Into It in all other regions: Africa, Asia Pacific, East Asia, Europe/Eurasia, Latin America and Middle East/North Africa. Presently, SO Get Into It is translated into the following languages: Arabic, Bahasa, Chinese, French, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish.

### **The SO Get Into It curriculum kit also includes the following teacher resources:**

- Activity cards for action-oriented involvement with Special Olympics;
- Fact sheets on Special Olympics, intellectual disabilities, Unified Sports<sup>®</sup>, Partners Club<sup>®</sup> and other related topics;
- Web-related resources and links relevant to the lesson plans;
- Special Olympics athlete bios and stories with pictures; and
- Local Program contact information.

Special Olympics is an international year-round program of sports training and competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities. More than 1.3 million athletes in more than 150 countries train and compete in 26 Olympic-type summer and winter sports. Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides people with intellectual disabilities continuing opportunities to develop fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy as they participate in the sharing of gifts and friendship with other athletes, their families and the community. There is no cost to participate in Special Olympics.

**For more information on Athlete Recruitment, School and Youth Outreach Resources and Volunteerism, contact Ron Vederman, Ed.D., Director of Athlete Recruitment, School and Youth Outreach, Special Olympics, at [rvederman@specialolympics.org](mailto:rvederman@specialolympics.org), or call +1 (202) 824-0275 (direct) or +1 (800) 700-8585 (general information).**

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is an initiative that combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities (called Partners) on sports teams for training and competition. Age and ability matching of athletes and Partners is defined on a sport-by-sport basis.



Throughout the year, in a variety of sports ranging from basketball to golf to figure skating, Unified Sports athletes improve their physical fitness, sharpen their skills, challenge the competition and have fun, too.

The concept of combining athletes with and without intellectual disabilities and those without was first introduced in the mid-1980s to provide a challenge for higher-ability athletes and to promote equality and inclusion. Today, the initiative includes virtually all Special Olympics sports, and Unified Sports competitions are an important part of Special Olympics World Games, as well as local, State/Provincial and National Games.



**These young men from the Special Olympics Kay Center in Peach County, Georgia, USA, have played basketball and volleyball together for three years. On and off the court, they have developed a binding friendship. When they're not playing sports, they put their teamwork to use on community service projects for others.**

**Unified Sports enables athletes to:**

Learn new sports;

Develop higher-level sports skills;

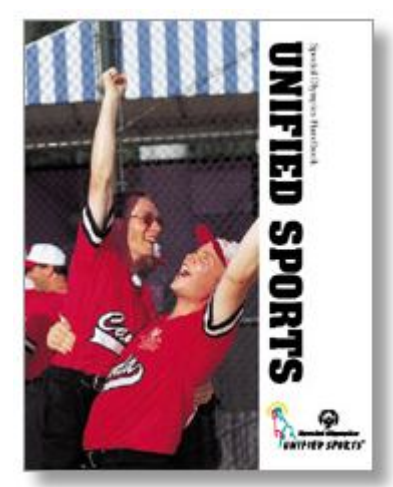
Have new competition experiences;

Experience meaningful inclusion as each athlete is ensured of playing a valued role on the team;

Socialize with peers and form friendships—the initiative provides a forum for positive social interaction between teammates and often leads to long-lasting friendships; and

Participate in their communities and have choices outside of Special Olympics. Unified Sports programs are often initiated by community partners, including parks and recreation departments, schools, Boys & Girls Clubs of America and community sports organizations. These partnerships help further include athletes in their community.

**For more information, contact Dave Lenox, Acting Vice President, Sports and Competition & Director of Athlete Leadership Programming, Special Olympics, at [dlenox@specialolympics.org](mailto:dlenox@specialolympics.org) or +1 (202) 824-0231.**



**This Special Olympics Unified Sports Handbook includes all the information coaches need to start and maintain a successful Unified Sports program.**  
**Download Adobe PDF version of Handbook — 1MB file**

**11. Q&A: COMMON QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS**

**Q. *Who should be approached within a school system to obtain support for Special Olympics?***

**A.** Many individuals should be approached including superintendents, principals, special education teachers, adapted physical education teachers, regular education teachers and parents. It is very important to obtain support from school officials at the highest administrative level (i.e., superintendents), because once their endorsement is received, it will be easier to obtain support at all subsequent levels. However, individuals within other levels (teachers, principals, etc.) should also continually be approached and can be very helpful in implementing Special Olympics programs. Support from a combination of sources is what makes for successful Special Olympics involvement in schools. For example, the reasons for success in many Programs is that support comes from a combination of special education teachers, top educational officials, adapted physical education teachers and parents.

Parents are strong advocates for their children's education and should not be overlooked as supporters for Special Olympics. Special Olympics information should be disseminated to parent groups and parents of Special Olympics athletes should be asked to discuss the Program with other parents and school officials. School officials do respond to parental requests and concerns.

**Q. *What aspects of Special Olympics should be highlighted in discussions with school officials?***

**A.** Special Olympics should highlight the following aspects:

- Special Olympics is instructive. The Program offers effective adapted physical education activities to meet the physical conditioning needs of students. (Special Olympics should not be marketed only as an extracurricular activity but as an integral part of the curriculum.)
- Special Olympics is cost-effective. It will not cost school systems a lot of money. In fact, Special Olympics offers schools the following resources:
  - Instructional curriculum
  - Volunteers
  - Access to funds raised by local communities
- Special Olympics fosters integration in many ways. For some participants, it provides an opportunity to develop athletic and physical conditioning skills needed to move into regular sports programs. In addition, many of the skills learned in Special Olympics can also help an individual prepare for employment. For example, participation in Special Olympics requires a person to follow rules, be punctual for practices and competitions and increases physical tolerance. All of these Program effects are work-related and can help students make the transition from school to work. Also, Special Olympics can provide one-to-one interaction between students with and without intellectual disabilities, and this interaction can develop peer relationships that break down misconceptions associated with intellectual disabilities while promoting positive attitudes toward others with disabilities.
- Special Olympics can tie into a student's total curriculum and it can be part of a community-based curriculum using community facilities and volunteers.
- Special Olympics can aid in the transition of special education students from high school to employment and community living by developing recreational and leisure time interests. Also, participation in Special Olympics is an excellent example for the students on how to set and achieve goals.

**Q. *Is it true that Special Olympics is open only to individuals with intellectual disabilities?***

- A.** Yes, it is true that only individuals with intellectual disabilities are eligible to be Special Olympics athletes. However, some flexibility is left to local and area Special Olympics Programs for determining the eligibility of participants because of the variety of situations, needs and definitions in the many localities where Special Olympics has and will be instituted.

Special Olympics was created to provide individuals with intellectual disabilities sports training and competition opportunities because many of those who participate are unable to compete in their school's regular sports program. Through Special Olympics they can learn to play sports with their peers and possibly develop the skills to compete in a regular sports program.

**Q. *Is it true that Special Olympics segregates individuals with intellectual disabilities from individuals without disabilities?***

- A.** No. Special Olympics promotes and fosters integration in a variety of ways, which include:
- One-on-one interaction with non-disabled peer coaches and other volunteers. This helps break down stereotypes and stigmatization by demonstrating individual capabilities and is effective in developing positive attitudes about people with intellectual disabilities;
  - Participation in Unified Sports® alongside peers without intellectual disabilities;
  - Participation in sports, which allows individuals to make decisions and belong to a team;
  - Utilizing community sports and recreational facilities used by non-disabled persons;
  - Promoting social opportunities in the community through corporate fundraising projects; interaction with high school, college and professional sports teams; in training clinics; special exhibitions; and other events;
  - Having Special Olympics athletes participate in community sports programs such as mini-marathons, marathons and other events; and
  - Promoting Special Olympics athletes and their achievements through the media at area, local, Program, National and Special Olympics World Games.

**Q. *How can Special Olympics be used in our school system and how does it benefit students?***

- A.** In a variety of ways:
- Special Olympics can be used to meet the physical conditioning needs of individual students;
  - Special Olympics coaching guides can be used by coaches and physical education teachers as educational resource materials for students' Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and as lesson plans;
  - Coaching guides can be used in the curricula for all adapted physical education classes; and
  - Special Olympics Programs can promote growth in cognitive and social development while helping people with intellectual disabilities learn to adjust to many life situations. In Special Olympics, tasks are provided on a hierarchy along with training, reinforcement and role modeling—ingredients necessary to learn any task.

**Q. *How much time is needed to teach the lessons?***

- A.** The most common concern you will hear from administrators and teachers will be that they do not have the time to teach these materials. The reply will be that as long as teachers are teaching lessons involving language arts, social studies, history, character education, service-learning or health and physical education, there will be time for these lessons. It is not necessary to create additional time to present the lessons.

Each lesson is designed to be taught in one class period (approximately 40-60 minutes, depending upon the age of students). However, if you want to include the videos—which are important parts of the lessons—additional time will be needed (from 10 to 45 minutes more, depending on the students' age and length of the video).

The service component of the curriculum will also add time depending upon which one(s) are selected. It can take anywhere from one class period, several hours, a single semester to a full school year in planning and implementing the activities. The longer the activity, the more meaningful it will be in terms of attitude change and students making a difference in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.

## RESOURCE SECTION

### SAMPLE LETTERS

#### To Parents from the School Principal

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing this letter to introduce you to Special Olympics Get Into It (SO Get Into It™), Special Olympics' service-learning curriculum that your child's class will be studying very soon. Our school is interested in providing all students with current and relevant information concerning diversity as it relates to people with disabilities. Through our state's Special Olympics Program, these free materials do a wonderful job of providing regular education classes with lessons in the areas of awareness and understanding of people with disabilities. The materials also provide strong support for our school's service-learning program.

SO Get Into It is designed for students to become more aware of and better understand the issues of diversity as they relate to people with intellectual disabilities and other types of disabilities.

The curriculum goes beyond attitude change by incorporating an important character education/service-learning component to involve students directly in service toward people with disabilities. This is accomplished end of the four lessons, students will have had an opportunity to become actively engaged in a Special Olympics activity with fellow students with intellectual disabilities in the school or community.

Please discuss SO Get Into It with your child and encourage him or her to become as involved as possible with the classroom and service-learning activities. If you need additional information concerning the curriculum, please contact me.

Sincerely,

School Principal

## To School Principals from Supervisor of Schools

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am writing this letter to introduce you to Special Olympics Get Into It (SO Get Into It™), Special Olympics' service-learning curriculum and resource kit now available through our state's Special Olympics Program. These free materials do a wonderful job of providing regular education classes with lessons in the areas of awareness and understanding of people with disabilities. The materials also provide strong support for our district's service-learning program.

SO Get Into It is designed for regular education students to become more aware of and better understand the issues of diversity as they relate to people with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities.

The curriculum goes beyond attitude change by incorporating an important character education/service-learning component that involves students directly in service towards people with disabilities. This is accomplished through four lessons compatible with curriculum standards in language arts, social studies, history, health and physical education. Included in the kit are support materials such as stories about Special Olympics athletes, videos from Nickelodeon, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and ABC Entertainment/Disney and other teacher resources. By the end of the four lessons, students will have had an opportunity to become actively engaged in a Special Olympics activity with fellow students with intellectual disabilities in the school or community.

Please review the enclosed materials and encourage your teachers to consider incorporating them into your school's program. To speak with a Special Olympics representative about getting a review copy of the kit, please contact \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Supervisor of Schools

## To School Supervisors from a Lead Sponsoring Organization

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Are you aware that more than 1.3 million athletes are involved in Special Olympics, competing in 26 Olympic-type sports in more than 150 countries? More than 1.3 million athletes is exciting, but we know there are more than a million potential participants with intellectual disabilities waiting on the sidelines, not getting the chance to compete and grow as people. Therefore, Special Olympics is proud to announce, and the Education Commission of the States (U.S.) is pleased to endorse, Special Olympics Get Into It (SO Get Into It™), which is being made available to schools at no cost.

SO Get Into It is designed for regular education students to become more aware of and better understand the issues of diversity as they relate to people with intellectual disabilities and disabilities in general.

The curriculum goes beyond attitude change by incorporating an important character education/service-learning component to involve students directly in service towards people with disabilities. This is accomplished through four lessons compatible with curriculum standards in language arts, social studies, history and health and physical education. Included in the kit are support materials such as stories about Special Olympics athletes, videos from Nickelodeon, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and ABC Entertainment/Disney and other teacher resources. By the end of the four lessons, students will have had an opportunity to become actively engaged in a Special Olympics activity, along with fellow students with intellectual disabilities in the school or community.

That's how the next million athletes will be moved off the sidelines and onto the playing fields.

When Eunice Kennedy Shriver founded Special Olympics in 1968, she dreamed of helping people with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities develop independence, community acceptance and self-esteem through sports training and athletic competition. That dream has grown into a worldwide Movement and you can take an important step to help us reach the next million athletes.

Please review the enclosed materials and consider incorporating them into your district's curriculum and instruction. For more information about SO Get Into It, or to request materials for your school district, please contact (local contact here).

Sincerely,

Minister of Education, or other prominent leader

## **GUIDELINES FOR SETTING UP A PARTNERS CLUB®\***

Special Olympics Partners Clubs are sanctioned school clubs formed to provide volunteer coaching to Special Olympics athletes. Club members also spend additional time with Special Olympics athletes enjoying other social and recreational activities in the school and community.

A Partners Club helps non-disabled students and Special Olympics athletes learn to appreciate the value and strengths of each other as individuals. A bond of friendship and respect is developed and the intrinsic rewards are limitless for both partners and athletes. Partners also benefit by learning the responsibilities that comes from helping their peers with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics Partners Clubs offer people with intellectual disabilities a variety of sports training and competition opportunities at little cost.

Training and competition are supervised either by the club advisor or head coach. Club members act as assistant coaches, scrimmage or Unified Sports teammates and boosters during school and Special Olympics competitions.

Partners Clubs are sanctioned school clubs with all the benefits of any other school club. They should have weekly or monthly meetings that follow school policies and procedures with elected officers. Partners Clubs need to have a faculty advisor and student officers who network through student council (leadership class) to school administration, athletic and physical education departments.

### **Goals of the Partners Club**

1. To encourage Special Olympics sports training and competition in the school district sports program.
2. To include Special Olympics athletes in existing school sports programs.
3. To create age-appropriate sports training and competition opportunities for Special Olympics athletes with their peers.
4. To help Special Olympics athletes improve their self-esteem and self-image among their friends and Partners.
5. To open new avenues of communication and friendship among Partners Club members, Special Olympics athletes and other school peers.
6. To foster greater understanding, respect and acceptance of individuals with intellectual disabilities.
7. To certify Partners Club members as coaches in one or more of the 26 Special Olympics sports.
8. To provide experience working with individuals with intellectual disabilities and to gain references for college and employment opportunities.
9. To create the opportunity for members to explore potential careers in special education, adapted physical education, physical, occupational or recreation therapy or sports management.

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\* Adapted from Douglas High School, Winston, Oregon; Ted Martch, Special Education Teacher.

## **Starting a Partners Club**

### **Step 1. Contact your local Special Olympics**

#### **Program for additional resources.**

Schedule a meeting with your local Special Olympics representative to plan and coordinate your activities, learn more about Special Olympics and obtain the following materials:

- Partners Club brochures
- Special Olympics video, *Special Olympics Unified Sports Activities: The Spirit of the Law*
- Special Olympics coaching guides
- Special Olympics Application for Participation form (one for each athlete participating)
- Annual calendar of local and Special Olympics Program competitions and coaches training schools

### **Step 2.** Make a presentation to the school principal or administrator for approval of club.

If you wish to start a Partners Club in your school district, schedule a meeting with the athletic director, special education director or principal. If appropriate, include student leaders. Your local Special Olympics Program representative should be included as well as a parent and a Special Olympics athlete (preferably from the school).

### **Step 3.** Recruit a faculty advisor to sponsor the club.

The athletic director, principal or vice principal should be able to assist in the search. The following would qualify as a faculty advisor:

- Special education teacher
- Regular education teacher
- Physical education teacher
- Coach

### **Step 4.** Complete a Special Olympics Partners Club Registration Form.

This registration form:

- Officially notifies Special Olympics that you are initiating a Partners Club program;
- Enables Special Olympics to provide support to your program, thereby insuring its success; and
- Provides information that can be distributed in regular publications. These publications provide information about Special Olympics' successful programs, sports and intellectual disabilities.

### **Step 5.** Make presentations to student leaders.

Once a faculty advisor is selected, schedule your Special Olympics contact to conduct a Special Olympics awareness presentation for the student council, leadership class or interested others who could potentially be club officers; an assembly for the general student body is suggested as well.

### **Step 6.** Identify eligible Special Olympics athletes.

With the principal or director of special education, determine students eligible to participate in Special Olympics. Potential Special Olympics athletes are often in special education classes and inclusive education classes, but can also be found in "mainstreamed" classes, special schools, vocational education programs and residential development centers.

**Step 7.** Make presentations to the student body.

The faculty advisor and student leaders recruited in Step 5 should make a presentation to an assembly of the general student body. This presentation should include:

- Overview of Special Olympics with a video or slide show.
- Special Olympics athlete demonstration.
- Explanation of Partners Club from faculty advisor.
- Planned activities.
- Responsibilities and commitments of Partners Club members.
- Schedule of club meetings.
- Introduction of students from leadership group who will conduct a general membership registration.

**Step 8.** Conduct a general membership registration during lunch or a designated class period.

Announce a general registration date, time and place in the school paper, over the public address system and on strategically placed posters. Student leaders should personally recruit from the student body in advance of the general registration date.

**Step 9.** Hold the first club meeting.

Announce the first Partners Club meeting using the school's communication network system, e.g., daily public address announcements, club news and school newspapers. Determine how the Partners Club will be organized and on which days of the week it will hold practices. Remember: Special Olympics athletes must receive eight weeks of sport-specific training prior to competing in that sport. Weekly Partners Club meetings are encouraged if the program is to be conducted year-round.

**Step 10.** Recruit Special Olympics athletes.

Survey eligible students with intellectual disabilities to determine their interest in joining Special Olympics and in which sports they wish to participate. Depending on the ability levels of those you are surveying, be prepared to ask what sports he/she likes or to ask parents or teachers what sports the individual likes. Ask the special education teacher to provide a short biography of each student who wants to train and compete in Special Olympics.

Select the Special Olympics sport(s) in which athletes will train and compete. Selection should be based on athlete interest (as determined from the survey); sport season; availability of facilities and equipment; and ease of transitioning from school to Special Olympics local, area and state competitions in that sport. Inform all eligible Special Olympics athletes about the sports selected and determine who will participate.

**Step 11.** Complete Special Olympics Medical/Parental Release.

Any person wishing to participate in Special Olympics must first have a medical examination, a signed Special Olympics medical/parental release and a signed Special Olympics parent/individual release form. These forms are available from your local Special Olympics Program.

**Step 12.** Confirm the training facility, equipment and schedule with the athletic director, physical education director or head coach of that sport.

**Step 13.** Have the partners meet the athletes.

Schedule this for 60 to 90 minutes and in the gymnasium if possible. Along with the principals, invite an area Special Olympics representative, as well as interested teachers and parents. After introductions of officers, partners and athletes a group game or event should be conducted. The club advisor should observe athlete and partner interaction to help assign athletes to partners for future training sessions.

**Step 14.** Conduct Special Olympics Coaches Training for partners.

If possible, conduct Special Olympics coaches training for partners prior to the first training session with athletes. Partners completing this eight-hour training will become certified Special Olympics coaches upon completing an additional 10-hour practicum with their athlete. Partners will learn about Special Olympics and intellectual disabilities as well as how to coach their athlete according to the rules of the sport he/she has chosen. Your local or state Special Olympics contact should be able to arrange this training program at your school or at a nearby site.

**Step 15.** Conduct the first training session.

The first training session should be at least 60 minutes. Have partners and athletes assigned and schedule activities so all participate. For example, do group warm-ups and stretching, then set up many different skill development stations so partners and athletes can learn and practice specific sport skills. Follow with a practice game or scrimmage in which all athletes and perhaps their partners participate. A group cool-down should conclude the session. Subsequent training sessions should be at least twice a week for a minimum of two hours.

**Step 16.** Hold Partners Club meetings following the first training session.

This should be held in a classroom during lunchtime or designated period. A Special Olympics athlete representative should be present to give input when necessary. The agenda should include training challenges and the planning of both social activities and future participation in Special Olympics local, area and state events. Partners Club meetings should be held on a regular basis thereafter.

## HOW SO GET INTO IT™ ADDRESSES ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The SO Get Into It lessons address selected academic standards within the framework developed by the Mid-Continental Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL), in conjunction with a comprehensive review and study of key education standards documents. In the following outline, specific standards addressed by SO Get Into It, either directly or indirectly, appear in italics.

### Health Standards

1. Knows the availability and effective use of health services, products and information.
2. *Knows environmental and external factors that affect individual and community health.*
3. *Understands the relationship of family health to individual health.*
4. *Knows how to maintain mental and emotional health.*
5. Knows essential concepts and practices concerning injury prevention and safety.
6. Understands essential concepts about nutrition and diet.
7. *Knows how to maintain and promote personal health.*
8. Knows essential concepts about the prevention and control of disease.
9. Understands aspects of substance use and abuse.
10. *Understands the fundamental concepts of growth and development.*

### Language Arts Standards

#### Writing

1. *Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.*
2. *Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing.*
3. *Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions.*
4. *Gathers and uses information for research purposes.*

#### Reading

5. *Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.*
6. *Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts.*
7. *Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts.*

#### Listening and Speaking

8. *Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.*

#### Viewing

9. *Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.*

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<sup>1</sup>See: *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education, 3rd Edition*, 2000, by John S. Kendall and Robert J. Marzano.

## **Media**

10. *Understands the characteristics and components of the media.*

## **Self-Regulation Standards**

1. *Sets and manages goals.*
2. *Performs self-appraisal.*
3. *Considers risks.*
4. *Demonstrates perseverance.*
5. *Maintains a healthy self-concept.*
6. *Restrains impulsivity.*

## **Working with Others Standards**

1. *Contributes to the overall effort of a group.*
2. *Uses conflict-resolution techniques.*
3. *Works well with diverse individuals and in diverse situations.*
4. *Displays effective interpersonal communication skills.*
5. *Demonstrates leadership skills.*

## **Physical Education Standards**

1. *Uses a variety of basic and advanced movement forms.*
2. *Uses movement concepts and principles in the development of motor skills.*
3. *Understands the benefits and costs associated with participation in physical activity.*
4. *Understands how to monitor and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical fitness.*
5. *Understands the social and personal responsibility associated with participation in physical activity.*

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

Words matter. Words can open doors to enable persons with disabilities to lead fuller, more independent lives. Words can also create barriers or stereotypes that not only demean persons with disabilities, but also rob them of their individuality as well. The following language guidelines have been developed by experts in intellectual disabilities for use by anyone writing or speaking about persons with disabilities to ensure that all people are portrayed with individuality and dignity.

### Appropriate terminology

- Refer to participants in Special Olympics as **Special Olympics athletes**, rather than Special Olympians or Special Olympic athletes.
- Refer to individuals, persons or people with **intellectual disabilities**, rather than mentally retarded people or the mentally retarded.
- A person has **intellectual disabilities**, rather than is suffering from, is afflicted with or is a victim of intellectual disabilities.
- Distinguish between adults and children with intellectual disabilities. Use **adults** or **children**, or **older** or **younger athletes**.
- A person **uses a wheelchair** rather than is confined or restricted to a wheelchair
- **Down syndrome** has replaced “Down’s Syndrome” and Mongoloid.
- Refer to participants in Special Olympics as **athletes**. In no case should the word appear in quotation marks.
- When writing, refer to persons with intellectual disabilities in the same style as persons without intellectual disabilities: **full name on first reference and last name on subsequent references**. Resist the temptation to refer to an individual with intellectual disabilities as “Bill,” rather than the journalistically correct “Bill Smith” or “Smith.”
- A person is **physically challenged** or **disabled** rather than crippled.
- Use the words **Special Olympics** when referring to the worldwide Special Olympics Program.

### Terminology to avoid

- Avoid using the label **kids** when referring to Special Olympics athletes. Adult athletes are an integral part of the Program.
- Never refer to the organization as **the** Special Olympics, except as a compound adjective (the Special Olympics Movement).
- Avoid using the adjective **unfortunate** when talking about persons with intellectual disabilities. Disabling conditions do not have to be life-defining in a negative way.
- Avoid sensationalizing the accomplishments of persons with disabilities. While these accomplishments should be recognized and applauded, people in the disabilities rights movement have tried to make the public aware of the negative impact of referring to the achievements of physically or intellectually challenged people with excessive hyperbole.
- Use the word **special** with extreme care when talking about persons with intellectual disabilities. The term, if used superfluously, can become cliché in contiguous references to Special Olympics.

## Special Olympics Local Program Start Up Kit

### Welcome to Special Olympics!

Thank you for your interest in starting a local Special Olympics Program. The attached packet of information will help you and potential Special Olympics athletes become fully involved in this Movement. Launched in 1968, Special Olympics currently involves more than 1.3 million athletes in more than 150 countries worldwide. This free, year-round sports training and athletic competition program offers eligible athletes a choice of 26 Olympic-type sports.

Who is Special Olympics for? Any person aged eight years or older with intellectual disabilities is eligible to compete. An athlete's present skill level in sports is secondary because Special Olympics is available for all ability levels. Athletes of all ability levels can choose from 26 Olympic-type sports, while those with significant cognitive and physical disabilities can participate in the Motor Activities Training Program (MATP); for advanced athletes, Special Olympics also offers Unified Sports<sup>®</sup>, which teams athletes with and without intellectual disabilities for competition against each other.

In this packet you will find the following materials to get started:

- Steps to organize a local Special Olympics Program
- Registered Local Program Form
- Local Program Roster Form

Simply complete the forms and send them to your Special Olympics Program office. Someone will then follow up with you about sports training and competition opportunities where you live. For additional information and to locate the Special Olympics Program nearest you, visit [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org).

## **Steps to organizing a local Special Olympics Program**

Before taking the first step to establish a local Special Olympics Program, assess your currently available resources.

### **Step 1:**

- ✓ Identify leadership:
  - Identify contact persons at the local level to whom you will go for additional assistance, perhaps the person who sent you this packet of information, or—if you have access to the Internet—visit [www.specialolympics.org](http://www.specialolympics.org) and click on **find a location**.

### **Step 2:**

- ✓ Plan your local Program operations:
  - Choose one sport per season for one calendar year. Ask for a competition calendar so you can plan your schedule.
  - Determine where and when you will conduct sports training.
  - Consider transportation options to and from training and competition once you know who the athletes will be.
  - Consider your plans for fundraising—if needed—and public awareness.

### **Step 3:**

- ✓ Recruit and register coaches:
  - Identify your needs based on athlete interest (for example, 10 athletics coaches to work six hours per week over a 15-week season).
  - Determine available recruitment channels (schools, sports organizations, etc.).

### **Step 4:**

- ✓ Promote public awareness (your Program office can help with this).

### **Step 5:**

- ✓ Raise funds, if necessary, for facility rental, uniforms, equipment, transportation, awards for athletes and recognition for volunteers, etc. (your Program office can help with this).

### **Step 6:**

- ✓ Conduct initial athlete recruitment and registration:
  - Recruitment is done by all local Program representatives, not just coaches.
  - Initial athlete and coach recruitment efforts are closely interrelated to match athletes' interests and needs with coaches' availability and skills.
  - Offer athletes the choice of sports available for training and competition, then conduct a team meeting with coaches and athletes.

### **Step 7:**

✓ Train and register coaches:

- Take advantage of the Special Olympics Coaches Education System for your sport of interest.
- Coaches training should cover: Special Olympics Mission and Philosophy; Coaching Special Olympics Athletes; Rules; Divisioning and Expectations; and How to Spot and Foster Athlete Leaders (your Program office can help with this).

### **Step 8:**

✓ Establish relationships:

Some of the key partners of a local Program can include:

- Schools (for athlete recruitment, volunteers, transportation, facilities, coaches and families)
  - Special Olympics sports
  - Unified Sports
- Families (for volunteers, transportation, athlete recruitment and coaches)
  - Family participation
  - Family committees
  - Unified Sports
- Community (for facilities, fundraising, public awareness, volunteers and coaches)
  - Other community organizations
  - Religious institutions
  - General public
- Residential Settings (such as institutions, group homes and orphanages for athlete recruitment, transportation, coaches and volunteers)
  - Peer involvement
  - Motor Activities Training Program (MATP)

### **Step 9:**

✓ Conduct athlete training (Special Olympics Sports Rules and coaching guides are available from your Program office).

### **Step 10:**

✓ Train Games organizers (your Program office can help with this).

What will they do?

- Conduct competition
- Present awards
- Conduct ceremonies
- Provide food
- Register athletes and volunteers
- Medical support

Who can help?

- Teachers
- Coaches
- Government officials
- Sports technical experts
- Sports officials
- Corporate and civic groups

**Step 11:**

- ✓ Organize competition events:
  - Request assistance and a Games Management Guide as well as a Special Olympics Local Program Start Up Kit from your Program office.
  - Invite other registered Special Olympics athletes and teams to participate.

**Step 12:**

- ✓ Expand your local Program:
  - Recruit and train new coaches.
  - Conduct training for increased numbers of athletes.
  - Expand partnerships, funding and media relations.
  - Empower athletes to participate in new, meaningful roles.

**Step 13:**

- ✓ Evaluate Program:
  - Collect and organize data.
  - Fulfill sub-Program and Program reporting requirements.
  - Seek athlete input on how they enjoy participation in the Program and their suggestions on ways to improve the experience.

**REGISTERED LOCAL PROGRAM FORM**

Complete two copies of the form (photocopy the original). Retain one copy for your records and send the second copy to your higher-level sub-Program. If your local Program offers more than one sport, copy this form and complete the Athlete Information; Training Site & Schedule Information; and Assistant Coach/Volunteer Information list for each sport offered.

Note: Athletes must have a current/valid medical and release form to compete. If an athlete's form is not on file with the appropriate sub-Program it should be sent along with the current form.

**Local Program Name:**

**Local Program Coordinator Information:**

<input style="width: 235px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Phone (daytime)	<input style="width: 205px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
<input style="width: 235px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Phone (evening)	<input style="width: 205px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
<input style="width: 400px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>		

<input style="width: 235px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Phone (daytime)	<input style="width: 205px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
<input style="width: 235px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	Phone (evening)	<input style="width: 205px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
<input style="width: 400px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>		

<i>Total number of athletes registered with your local Program</i>	<input style="width: 210px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
<i>Total number of Unified Sports<sup>®</sup> partners registered with your local Program</i>	<input style="width: 210px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
<i>Total number of MATP participants registered with your local Program</i>	<input style="width: 210px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

<b>Training Site &amp; Schedule Information</b>	<b>Sport</b>
Training Site Name & Address	<input style="width: 500px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
<input style="width: 500px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	

**Practice Schedule**

Time	Date	Time	Date	Time

**Assistant Coach/Volunteer Information (list all assistant coaches/key volunteers)**

1 <input style="width: 450px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	3 <input style="width: 450px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
2 <input style="width: 450px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	4 <input style="width: 450px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

**LOCAL PROGRAM ROSTER FORM**

Complete two copies of this form. Keep one copy for your records and send the second copy to the respective sub-Program with the Registered Local Program Form. If you have more than 15 athletes, make extra copies of the form as needed.

Local Program Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (daytime) \_\_\_\_\_

Leader's Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (evening) \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:    School             Community program             Family             Other

	<b>Athlete Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender (M/F)</b>	<b>Unified Partner (✓)</b>	<b>MATP (✓)</b>
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					