

# Project UNIFY Key Characteristics



## Project UNIFY Characteristics Effective Practice

| CHARACTERISTIC          | DESCRIPTION   | WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN SCHOOLS  | WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN SO PROGRAMS   |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Youth Leadership</b> | <p>Youth representing the diversity of the student body are engaged in leadership positions</p> <p>Acknowledgement that youth leadership is a priority for the school/program</p> <p>All stakeholders <i>expect</i> youth to be leaders and contribute to school/program decisions</p> <p>There are formal opportunities for students to develop and enhance leadership knowledge and skills</p> <p>Students mentor each other to learn how leadership skills are most effectively employed</p> | <p>Students are appointed to school and district-level committees and expected to contribute to the conversations, deliberations and decisions on school policies and practices</p> <p>Students lead student councils, youth groups and other school-based groups that focus on school-based programs, specific content areas (e.g., the environment) and school-community collaborations</p> <p>Student leaders mentor other students to ensure emerging leaders are capable of taking responsibility to sustain youth voice and vote in school decisions</p> | <p>Young people are included in area committees and expected to contribute to the conversations, deliberations and decisions on Special Olympics plans and activities, policies and practices</p> <p>Students lead committees, event planning committees councils, youth groups and other school-based groups are involved and contribute to the year-long calendar of events.</p> <p>There are junior committees as part of State boards of directors</p> <p>Student leaders mentor other students and youth \ to ensure emerging leaders are capable of taking responsibility to sustain youth voice and vote in Special Olympics decisions</p> <p>Special Olympics Programs have policies that call for youth leaders to be standing members of boards and committees</p> <p>SO Youth leaders are a visible part of all SO activities, internal and external</p> |

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| <b>School-Community Collaborations</b> | <p>Sustainable collaborators exist to benefit the school and the community</p> <p>Collaborations are supported by commitments and formal policies</p> <p>School and community members create high levels of trust to work together for student achievement and success</p> <p>Collaborations model and reflect all elements of effective partnerships</p>  | <p>Schools create and nurture collaborations with community organizations that focus on assisting (1) students to acquire knowledge and skills and (2) the organization to serve its clients</p> <p>School creates and sustains collaborations with local SO programs that provides students with insights into community problem-solving</p> <p>Community collaborators gain insights from students as they consider and suggest ways to address social problems</p>  | <p>Education leaders sit on Special Olympics Program board.</p> <p>Special Olympics Programs have policies that call for school leaders to be standing members of boards and committees</p> <p>Special Olympics and local schools partner to conduct Special Olympics and school events to meet mutually beneficial objectives (i.e. MD, IL, PU project)</p> <p>Students, school leaders and Special Olympics personnel collaborate on creating and implementing co-branded events</p>                                |
| <b>Continuous Improvement</b>          | <p>Sustainable formal teams focusing on using data for improvement</p> <p>Team goals are aligned with those of the school and district</p> <p>Teams model the preferred school climate and effective learning environments</p> <p>Formal on-going teams meet regularly, engage in appropriate learning and assess individual and group's progress</p> <p>Team members analyze data to improve performance and impacts</p> <p>Team members examine one another's work and provide suggestions for practical ways to improve teaching and learning</p> | <p>School creates and sustains formal learning communities of teachers focused on analyzing data to improve their ability to reach and teach students</p> <p>School learning communities encourage teachers to bring specific course work, curriculum, lesson plans, texts and other resources to examine their impact on students with their fellow teachers</p> <p>School and community members meet regularly and reflect on the success of this strategy and methods to increase their effectiveness</p> | <p>Special Olympics Programs has evaluation teams in place to continually review and discuss the school partnerships</p> <p>Special Olympics Program provides tools and resources to schools to support the ability of SO programming to have impacts that meet school and teacher objectives</p> <p>SO Evaluation teams model the preferred climate and effective partnership environments</p> <p>Special Olympics Program regularly conducts self evaluation and adjusts course based on success and challenges</p> |

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| <b>Communications</b> | <p>Quality communications strategies are employed to inform and influence critical education stakeholders</p> <p>Communication products are shared with networks that offer the greatest opportunity to be read, reviewed and considered by target audiences</p> <p>Communication products are reviewed and enhanced based on feedback and project progress</p> <p>A set of Talking Points accurately reflect the values, beliefs, activities and anticipated outcomes of the project's efforts</p> <p>All communications are consistent with the set of Talking Points to ensure fidelity to the values and beliefs</p> <p>Project representatives understand why and how to effectively communicate about the project</p> | <p>School creates a consistent message about Project UNIFY so that all internal and external stakeholders understand why the project exists, how it operates and its intended impacts</p> <p>School frequently informs internal (school) and external (public) audiences about Project UNIFY, particularly stories that highlight student achievement and success</p> <p>School assesses the impact of its communications and enhances messages and strategies to improve its impact</p> | <p>Special Olympics Program creates a consistent message about Project UNIFY so that all internal and external stakeholders understand why the project exists, how it operates and its intended impacts, utilizing be a fan messaging, and youth and athletes as spokespersons</p> <p>Project UNIFY messages are embedded in all SO Program communications materials and communications opportunities</p> <p>Special Olympics Program has an information package of communications tools and presentation materials including fact sheets, brochures, talking points, videos, PSAs specific to Project UNIFY</p> <p>Special Olympics Program frequently informs internal (school) and external (public) audiences about Project UNIFY, particularly stories that highlight youth and athlete achievement and success in local media, and via newsletters, websites, and email blasts</p> <p>Special Olympics Program assesses the impact of its communications and enhances messages and strategies to improve its impact</p> |

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| <b>Professional Development</b> | <p>Creating structured time for project members to acquire and enhance knowledge and skills to effectively implement and sustain quality projects</p> <p>Creating diverse opportunities for project members to learn and share knowledge and skills is critical to successful professional development</p> <p>Professional development reflects the values and beliefs of projects</p> <p>Professional development engage all project members including community representatives</p> <p>Professional development is assessed: reflecting on success and modifying areas that are challenging</p> | <p>School creates specific times for professional development to ensure teachers and partners acquire and enhance their knowledge and skills to successfully implement Project UNIFY components</p> <p>School creates multiple strategies (e.g., lecture, small group conversation, guest speaker, etc.) for professional development – ensuring diverse learning opportunities for teachers and partners</p> | <p>SO Program creates specific times for professional development to ensure volunteers and all staff acquire and enhance their knowledge and skills to successfully implement Project UNIFY components</p> <p>SO Program incorporates Project UNIFY messaging and training into new staff orientation, Board development, General Sessions, and other volunteer training opportunities.</p> <p>Special Olympics implements strategies (e.g., at state and regional conferences, staff development, etc.) to provide training to volunteers and staff on how to model the Project UNIFY principles of youth leadership in their work with young people</p> |
| <b>Unifying Programming</b>     | <p>A commitment to bring the diverse programs together focusing on student development</p> <p>Programs are coordinated to ensure they are unified for all participants</p> <p>Stakeholders assess the degree of unity and impacts, and make necessary changes to achieve high levels of success</p>   | <p>School brings together various quality Special Olympics programs (e.g., Young Athletes, unified sports, etc.) in a coordinated way so that there is consistency in quality and impacts of the programs</p>   | <p>SO Program introduces menu of multiple combinations of SO Programming and other strategies to fulfill the broad objectives of Project UNIFY</p> <p>SO school programs strive to always include three components of Project UNIFY: sports activity, youth leadership/expression of impact, institutionalized into school practice</p>   |

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| <b>Creating and Sustaining Relationships</b> | <p>A commitment to bring youth with and without intellectual disabilities together through programs</p> <p>All youth benefit from the cohort by focusing on responding to societal issues</p> <p>Youth with and without intellectual disabilities are invited and engaged in programs focused on their development and solving social problems</p> <p>All participants enhance their understanding of the importance of respecting individuals different from them</p> | <p>School provides quality opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to work together to the benefit of others, within school structures</p> <p>School provides formal methods to assist students with and without intellectual disabilities to assess the knowledge and skills they acquire and enhance</p> | <p>SO Program seeks to include youth involvement in all interactive events and environments it conducts.</p> <p>SO Programs provides opportunities for young people to continue their relationship with SO beyond the school relationship.</p> <p>Continuous communication, or transition plans, are created for youth leaders created through the Project UNIFY school partnerships</p> |