





Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®

Family Engagement Toolkit

-  Build Equitable Schoolwide and Community Engagement
-  Enhance Communication with Families from Diverse Communities
-  Grow and Sustain the UCS Program

Developed by: Third Sight, LLC for
Special Olympics North America



Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools®**



Acknowledgements

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Overview

What is the Toolkit?

The Unified Champion Schools (UCS) Family Engagement Toolkit provides 14 resources designed to empower state Program leads and school personnel with strategies to promote equitable family engagement. Three primary themes are woven throughout the Toolkit:

- 1 build equitable schoolwide and community engagement
- 2 enhance communication with families from diverse communities
- 3 grow and sustain the UCS program

Who is this Toolkit for?

Special Olympics (SO) partners — state Program leads, school liaisons, coaches, and school administrators — can use the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® Family Engagement Toolkit to build school-wide knowledge about equitable family engagement and select strategies to enhance engagement in UCS programming.

Why is family engagement important to UCS programs and families?

Benefits of family engagement for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities include outcomes such as increased social skills, physical skills related to competitive sports, and inclusion in the broader school community and the community at large.

How do I use this Toolkit?

The UCS Family Engagement Toolkit provides downloadable and modifiable resources that promote more efficient, effective, and sustainable strategies for engaging all families. The Toolkit is modular by design — each resource is optional and can be used independently, allowing users to select what is most relevant and useful for their unique contexts.

What's included in the Toolkit?

The UCS Family Engagement Toolkit includes:

- a brief overview of why family engagement and cultural diversity, inclusion, and accessibility are important for SO partners and UCS families;
- downloadable and modifiable templates, resources, strategies, and videos to facilitate school, family, and community engagement;
- self-reflection questions to identify opportunities to improve UCS programming and increase family engagement; and
- school spotlights and videos to demonstrate how schools have promoted accessibility and inclusion through UCS.



What Research Says About Family Engagement and Cultural Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

What is family engagement?

Engaging families of children with disabilities from diverse backgrounds requires:¹

- creating more collaborative relationships with parents and families;
- supporting families in a way that is culturally relevant and inclusive, including the larger family, community, and cultural context of the family; and
- providing families with background information about their child's disability and possible supports provided.

What is the difference between family involvement and family engagement?

Family involvement does not always result in family engagement. Family involvement promotes taking part in school-sanctioned, school-based activities. Family engagement requires families to participate in self-directed, shared decision-making when collaborating with school personnel.² **Figure 1** illustrates that this happens through informed dialogues, families asking questions for clarification, and shared understanding with family members.³

Facilitating family engagement requires that Special Olympics (SO) Program leads and liaisons collaboratively plan over time. The transition from family involvement to engagement is incremental and includes continuous communication about UCS as a first step. Moving anywhere up the curve as shown in **Figure 1** can lead to increased family engagement.

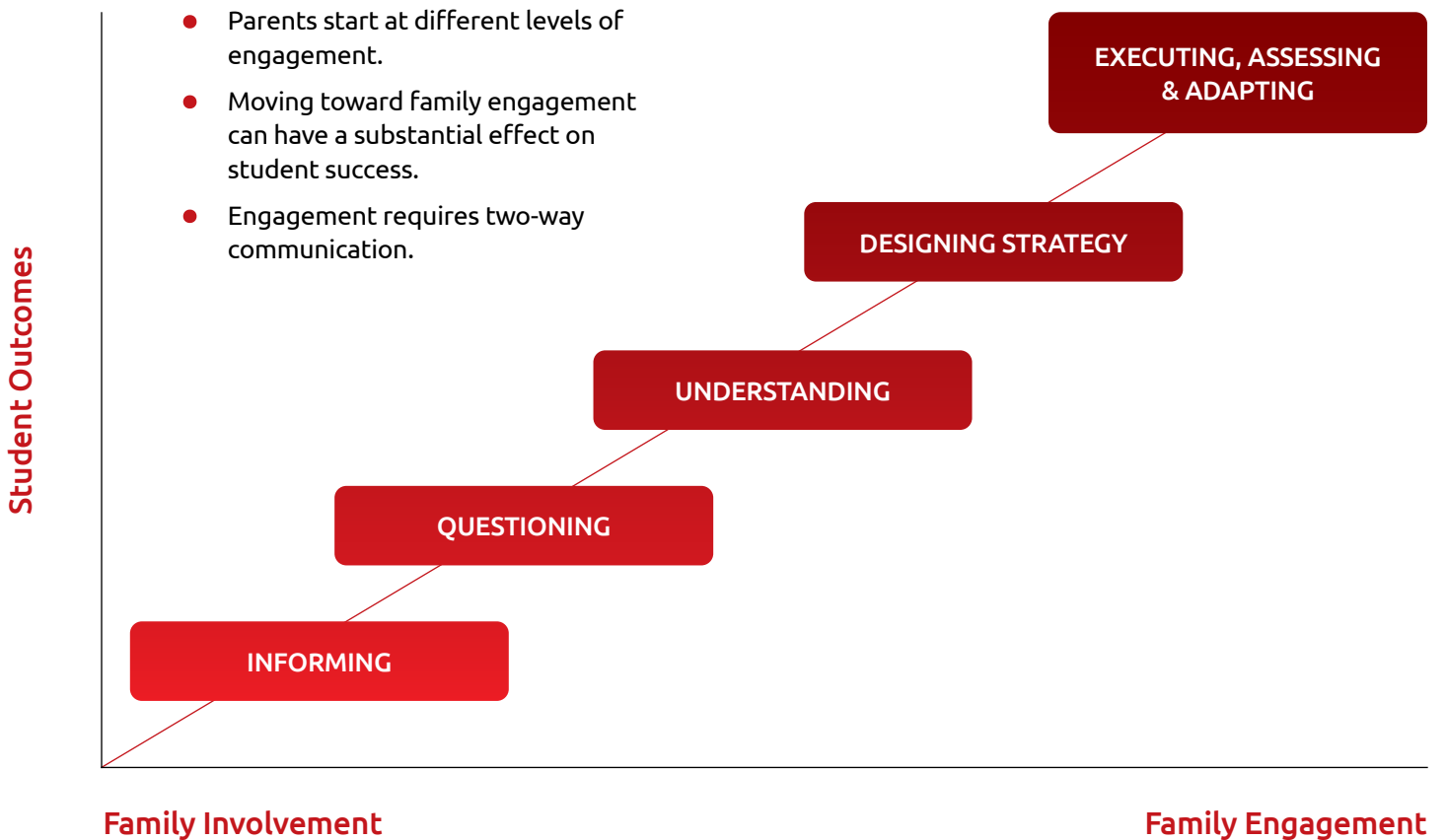
¹ Banks, J., Lamichhane, K., & Thomas, M. (2025). Engaging ethnically diverse families of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A systematic review. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2025.2491827>.

² The concept of family engagement as defined in *The Power of Parent Engagement: Sociocultural Considerations in the Quest for Equity* (2017).

³ Adapted from One Green Apple LLC (2021), Parent Engagement Curve.



Figure 1. Family Engagement Continuum



Why are cultural diversity, inclusion, and accessibility important for family engagement?

Working toward **equitable family engagement** requires that **all** Special Olympics partners — state Program leads, school liaisons, coaches, and school administrators — accept and learn from the diverse perspectives of the families who participate in Special Olympics. Effective and equitable family engagement activities can contribute to a positive shift in valuing the contributions and capabilities of children with disabilities of all backgrounds.

Equitable family engagement means building reciprocal partnerships with family members that include frequent two-way communication, home-school updates, shared strategies and supports, and mutual respect for one another's expertise. SO Program leads and school liaisons can learn from the perspectives of family members and collaborate with them to ensure UCS programs are inclusive.



Building equitable family engagement in schools may require SO Program leads and liaisons to be informed about the ways that families experience exclusion.⁴ SO Program leads and liaisons, other school staff, and families may have differing views about the capacity of students with disabilities. ALL Special Olympics partners will need to learn how to promote engagement strategies to address ableism⁵ and exclusion in order to build a culturally accepting and inclusive school climate. Failure to learn and practice these strategies may lead SO Program leads and liaisons to unnecessarily exclude students from UCS activities.

Building meaningful connections with families can further engage those who have doubts about participating in UCS programs and serve as an opportunity to increase understanding of UCS programs. Learning about equitable family engagement provides SO Program leads and liaisons with insightful strategies about how to communicate the benefits of UCS for all potential participants.

How to engage diverse families

Family engagement with diverse communities requires acknowledging and navigating cultural differences. For equitable family engagement, we recommend an approach that focuses on **reciprocity, transparency, empathy, and flexibility**⁶ to support UCS Program leads, liaisons, and family members in identifying problems and solutions. This approach ultimately allows liaisons to make programmatic improvements that result in greater inclusion for students and families.

Reciprocity allows SO liaisons and family members from diverse communities to view each other as valuable experts in a collaborative decision-making process.

Transparency builds trust between SO liaisons and family members by ensuring that families have access to timely and relevant information.

Empathy requires the ability to listen to the perspectives of family members and make adjustments to ensure their needs are met.

Flexibility ensures communication is available in multiple modes and languages, and scheduling of events and meetings takes into consideration ways to increase accessibility for family members.

Overview of Strategies and Benefits to Increase Family Engagement

Research on evidence-based practices of family engagement⁷ identifies strategies and benefits that may increase and improve engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse families and families of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). These findings are shown below, and the strategies are woven throughout the UCS Family Engagement Toolkit resources. The evidence supports engagement strategies that may be adapted by Program Leads and SO liaisons to meet the localized needs of families in their communities.

⁴ Exclusion is used to describe the process that occurs when diverse students and families are denied opportunities to participate at school.

⁵ Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities.

⁶ Liberatory Design for Equity (<https://nationalequityproject.org>)

⁷ Banks, J., Lamichhane, K., & Thomas, M. (2025). Engaging ethnically diverse families of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities: a systematic review. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2025.2491827>.



STRATEGIES FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT



Collaboration with families of children and youth with IDD through inclusive strategies includes:

- building a relationship of connection and respect with families,
- conducting collaborative goal setting with families to support children and youth,
- establishing parents-as-partners in school processes, and
- including wider support networks such as extended family and community.

BENEFITS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR FAMILY MEMBERS



Family members benefit from meaningful engagement with schools and community members. These benefits include:

- higher levels of satisfaction with school personnel relationships,
- higher levels of mental health and general personal functioning, and
- greater connectivity with other parents of children and youth with intellectual disabilities.

BENEFITS OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FOR YOUTH



Children and youth with IDD benefit from having family members involved in interventions in school and in community settings. When family members are engaged, children with IDD experience increases in:

- social skill development,
- friendship-making,
- academic engagement, and
- improved relationships with peers.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



Six professional behaviors are foundational to facilitating successful family engagement: a) communication; b) commitment; c) equality; d) skills; e) trust; and f) respect. These professional behaviors can be exemplified by:

- recognizing the value and expertise of parents about their child,
- respecting the family culture,
- having a positive perspective on immigrant and bilingual parents,
- demonstrating knowledge of the profession and disability,
- avoiding jargon and defining key ideas, and
- building trust with family members.



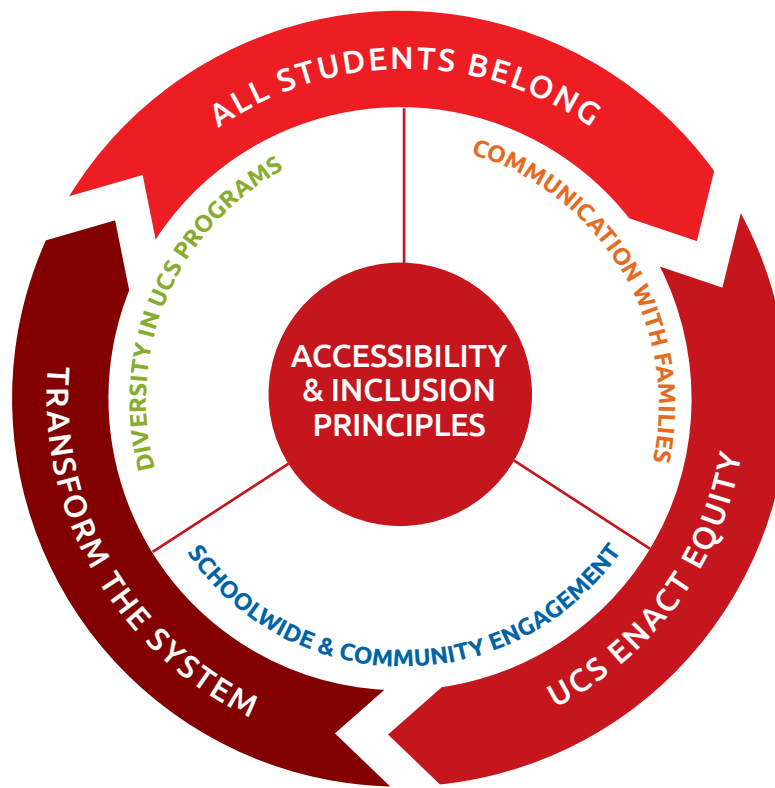
How to Build Schoolwide Accessibility and Inclusion for All

Equitable family engagement requires that Special Olympics partners — state Program leads, school liaisons, coaches, and school administrators — plan for accessibility and inclusion. Accessibility meets basic standards of ensuring that activities, including Unified PE, Young Athletes, and competitive opportunities are safe and fun for students with disabilities. Inclusion is a comprehensive way to make certain that the school leadership team, SO liaison, coaches, and youth strategically plan for and embrace all students and families.

Figure 2 illustrates the synergistic relationship between the beliefs and actions needed to build schoolwide inclusion for all. The arrows identify core beliefs while the white space represents the praxis — the behaviors or actions — needed to achieve full inclusion.

The first step in implementation of accessibility and inclusion principles is fostering the belief that **ALL students belong**. Unconscious bias can foster a narrative that all students and families must engage only in one way. For example, our school programs could be successful IF students come to school, IF they do their homework, and IF their families attend school events. These beliefs reflect limited views on family engagement and can uphold negative opinions and result in deficit mindsets about every student and family.

Figure 2: Family Engagement Toolkit Accessibility and Inclusion Principles





In contrast, equitable family engagement focuses on creating welcoming and inclusive environments where every student and their families can build genuine connections with other students and the UCS team. For example, our school programs could be successful if the curriculum incorporated the students' histories, if the school provided space during the school day for students to complete their homework, and if the school video recorded school events for families unable to attend.

The second step is to empower the SO Program leads and liaisons to **enact equity** through equitable family engagement. The focus of the Family Engagement Toolkit is on the professionals doing the work. Students and their families are recipients of an equitable system, but the designers and enactors of equitable family engagement are the SO Program leads and liaisons.

The third step is to **transform the system** to make sustainable improvements to implementation. Transforming the system for family engagement would mean to examine how the current school context is designed and to question who is included and who is excluded. Effective and equitable family engagement strategies examine how the current system involves families and is received by families, so we can redesign the system to be accessible for everyone.

The Family Engagement Toolkit provides processes, procedures, and protocols:

- to **create schoolwide and community partnerships** for inclusion with administrators, other school staff, and ultimately with families and students;
- to **establish and sustain communication with families**, so we can shift from family involvement to actively engaging families; and
- to **grow and sustain the UCS program** by increasing students' and family members' sense of belonging and enhancing their willingness to engage in UCS.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Family Engagement exists along a continuum.
- Implementation of Special Olympics components — whole school engagement, Unified Sports, and inclusive youth leadership — is a gradual process.
- Implementation of equitable family engagement will require the support of the SO Program lead, liaison, and school.
- Building equitable family engagement practices benefit SO liaisons, other staff, students, and family members.



About the Family Engagement Toolkit

The UCS Family Engagement Toolkit provides support to state Program leads and school personnel and promotes more efficient, effective, and sustainable strategies for equitable family engagement.

Themes within the Family Engagement Toolkit emerged from interviews and focus group sessions that were conducted with state Program leads; school liaisons, administrators, and other staff; and family members and guardians.



**BUILD EQUITABLE
SCHOOLWIDE AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**



**ENHANCE COMMUNICATION
WITH FAMILIES FROM
DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**



**GROW AND SUSTAIN
THE UCS
PROGRAM**

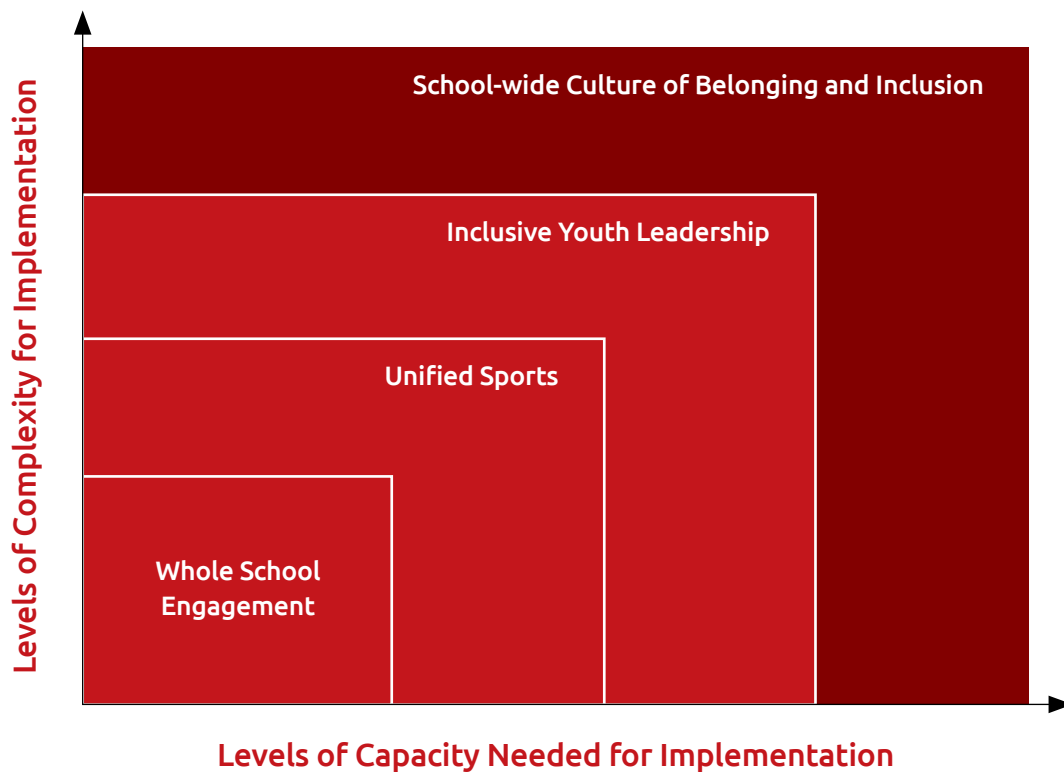
Each resource is designed to help state Program leads and liaisons consider the capacity and complexity needed to implement a UCS program. The Family Engagement Toolkit resources can be customized based on the resources and support available to meet the needs of families in each school context.

In doing so, the Family Engagement Toolkit addresses how to include families within the complexity of each UCS component and how to assess a school's capacity to implement each component (see **Figure 3**).

Levels of complexity means the degree to which implementing a UCS program or component is complex with lots of moving parts. Implementation requires coordination across multiple resources, staffing, family and students, school schedules, transportation, and other considerations.

Levels of capacity means the degree to which capacity is needed to implement a UCS program or component. Implementation requires a coordinated effort and capabilities across school staff, family, and students to successfully implement and sustain a program. Capacity includes not only the knowledge, skills, and attributes that staff need to implement a program, but also the time and resources needed for staff, family, and students to implement and sustain a program.

Figure 3: Levels of Complexity and Capacity in UCS Programs



How to Use the Toolkit

SO Program leads and liaisons can use each Toolkit resource independently to achieve a specific goal for family engagement. Resources can also be adapted to meet the needs of a localized context. However, the Toolkit is most effective when SO Program leads use all of the resources together to implement a strategic equitable family engagement plan.

Each resource includes guidance about who should use the resource, when, and how. Select resources also include reminders about how to integrate self-reflection and strengthen inclusion.

Resource Descriptions

The Toolkit resources and brief descriptions are organized below into the three primary themes that are woven throughout the UCS Family Engagement Toolkit. The first Toolkit resource — *Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection* — is the recommended starting point. We suggest engaging with this resource before interacting with the other resources.

Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection

This resource will help Program leads and SO liaisons begin to reflect on individual beliefs, school-wide engagement, and district supports that build accessibility and inclusion and how values and actions influence relationships with students, families, and the school system. This resource also provides ways to begin conversations about the importance of equitable family engagement with UCS team members and school administrators.



Build Equitable Schoolwide and Community Engagement

Designing and Facilitating Inclusive UCS Leadership Team Meetings

This resource will guide Program leads and liaisons through the phases needed to design and implement an inclusive team meeting. Each phase of the tool provides examples of ways to improve inclusion and collaborative decision-making with staff and family members. This resource also includes agenda templates for an introductory Leadership Team meeting and for a general Leadership Team meeting.

Family Engagement Community Asset Mapping

This resource is designed to document existing and needed resources to facilitate thinking and planning for Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons on how to build on community strengths to address family and community needs. It provides fillable forms, step-by-step procedures, and strategies for creating inclusive teams.

Strategies for Schoolwide and Community Engagement in Unified Champion Schools

This resource provides proven internal and external facing communication and engagement strategies for Program leads, liaisons, and school administrators. The internal-facing strategies focus on informing students, school personnel, and community partners about UCS programming. The external-facing strategies focus on how administrators can help their school's SO liaison in addressing perennial issues for UCS programs such as transportation, marketing, school recognition, and disability stigma.



Enhance Communication with Families from Diverse Communities

Communication Strategies for Family Engagement in UCS

This resource helps Program leads and liaisons, coaches, and other staff who engage in UCS outreach and engagement to promote inclusion for family members with different levels of communication needs, including families who speak a language at home other than English and those with different levels of literacy.

Family Engagement Short Survey

Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons can use this short, adaptable survey to get feedback on how connected parents feel to UCS activities. This quick survey can be used at any time during the school year to determine if family members feel welcome and have a sense of belonging. The survey is provided in English and Spanish.

Fillable Invitations to Parents, Family Members, and Caregivers

Family members want to understand what the UCS program is, what is going on with their students, and how they can participate in events. Program leads, Special Olympics liaisons, and physical education or Special Olympics coaches can use any of the five templates to inform families about or invite them to UCS activities. All fillable invitations are provided in English and Spanish; the four sample letters for parents are available in Amharic and Navajo.



Fillable Templates for 1) Family Contact and Outreach and 2) Student Information

Special Olympics liaisons, physical education or Special Olympics coaches, and other staff who engage in family outreach for student participation in UCS activities and/or manage administrative aspects of UCS at the school can use these templates for tracking communication with families and other pertinent details about students and their families. Included is space for students' dietary needs, motivators, and special considerations.

The STEP Framework: Participation and Inclusion in Unified Sports

Program leads, Special Olympics liaisons, and coaches can share this resource with families that are interested in how their child with disabilities can participate in Unified PE and Unified Sports. It explains how the Space, Task, Equipment, and People (STEP) framework supports participation and inclusion of students with disabilities in Unified Sports and how coaches are trained to make activities more accessible. The STEP Framework is provided in English and Spanish.

Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families

This resource will help Program leads, liaisons, and other school staff identify and select language translation tools to support communication with diverse families who speak languages other than English. The spreadsheet includes technology applications that can be used during in-person or virtual meetings, as well as tools to translate documents. This resource also includes information on video relay services available in every state to communicate with families who use American Sign Language.



Grow and Sustain the UCS Program

How to Create District and School Profiles

This resource provides a step-by-step process for Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons to develop a profile of a school and its district. The profiles include school and district data to better understand the cultural and linguistic context of a school and its school district, in addition to existing co-curricular and extra-curricular activities at the school.

Empathy Interviews: A Guide for UCS Programs

This resource offers Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons a guided process for engaging family members in an authentic, relational way. An empathy interview is designed to build trust and relationships with family members to better understand their experiences, identify where there may be opportunities for engagement, and create equitable systems that ensure all families have the opportunity to engage with UCS programming.

Reflection Tool for Family Engagement in UCS Activities

This resource presents a simple yet effective process for Program leads and liaisons to reflect on UCS program implementation and is designed to facilitate reflective practice and a continuous improvement mindset for both individuals and teams. The reflection tool also can be used to help teams share open and honest feedback about events and build trust and rapport while also helping the group evaluate UCS program outcomes.

Establishing a School-based Family Support Network

This resource provides a process for Special Olympics liaisons to establish a family support network where current or former UCS families are paired with new or potential UCS families to focus on specific technical tasks such as filling out paperwork and/or collaborative efforts that promote engagement in UCS programs. The family support outreach form to families is provided in English and Spanish.



Crosswalk of Toolkit Resources by Role, Implementation Time, and Theme

ROLE	TIME	BUILD EQUITABLE SCHOOLWIDE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	ENHANCE COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES FROM DIVERSE COMMUNITIES	GROW AND SUSTAIN THE UCS PROGRAM
ALL ROLES	0-15 min	Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection		
PROGRAM LEAD	0-15 min	Designing and Facilitating Inclusive UCS Leadership Team Meetings	Family Engagement Short Survey Fillable Invitations to Parents, Family Members, and Caregivers The STEP Framework: Participation and Inclusion in Unified Sports Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families	
	15+ min	Family Engagement Community Asset Mapping Strategies for Schoolwide and Community Engagement in Unified Champion Schools	Communication Strategies for Family Engagement in UCS	How to Create District and School Profiles Empathy Interviews: A Guide for UCS Programs Reflection Tool for Family Engagement in UCS Activities



Crosswalk of Toolkit Resources by Role, Implementation Time, and Theme

ROLE	TIME	BUILD EQUITABLE SCHOOLWIDE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	ENHANCE COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES FROM DIVERSE COMMUNITIES	GROW AND SUSTAIN THE UCS PROGRAM
ALL ROLES	0-15 min	Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection		
SPECIAL OLYMPICS LIAISON	0-15 min	Designing and Facilitating Inclusive UCS Leadership Team Meetings	Family Engagement Short Survey Fillable Invitations to Parents, Family Members, and Caregivers Fillable Templates for Family Outreach and Engagement and Student Information The STEP Framework: Participation and Inclusion in Unified Sports Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families	Establishing a School-based Family Support Network
	15+ min	Family Engagement Community Asset Mapping Strategies for Schoolwide and Community Engagement in Unified Champion Schools	Communication Strategies for Family Engagement in UCS	How to Create District and School Profiles Empathy Interviews: A Guide for UCS Programs Reflection Tool for Family Engagement in UCS Activities



Crosswalk of Toolkit Resources by Role, Implementation Time, and Theme

ROLE	TIME	BUILD EQUITABLE SCHOOLWIDE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	ENHANCE COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES FROM DIVERSE COMMUNITIES	GROW AND SUSTAIN THE UCS PROGRAM
ALL ROLES	0-15 min	Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection		
COACH OR OTHER STAFF	0-15 min		Fillable Invitations to Parents, Family Members, and Caregivers Fillable Templates for Family Outreach and Engagement and Student Information The STEP Framework: Participation and Inclusion in Unified Sports Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families	
	15+ min		Communication Strategies for Family Engagement in UCS	
ADMINISTRATOR	15+ min	Strategies for Schoolwide and Community Engagement in Unified Champion Schools	Communication Strategies for Family Engagement in UCS	



UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Resources



**Build Equitable
Schoolwide and Community
Engagement**



**Enhance Communication
with Families
from Diverse Communities**



**Grow and Sustain
the UCS
Program**

Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons.

Time Estimate

5-10 minutes to complete two self-reflection exercises; 5-10 minutes to share the resource with the UCS Leadership Team and school administrators.



**Recommended preparation for
engaging with the UCS Family
Engagement Toolkit resources**

Why would I use this tool?

This resource is recommended preparation for engaging with the Toolkit resources. It will help you begin to understand accessibility and inclusion and your own positionality as it relates to the school and district.

When should I use this tool?

This tool can help you begin conversations about the importance of equitable family engagement with UCS team members and school administrators. It will be most useful at the beginning of the school year or at the end of the school year to assess how you and your team have grown in the area of accessibility and inclusion.

You can learn more about Building Schoolwide Inclusion and Accessibility for All in the [Toolkit's Introduction](#).

How should I use this tool?

You should first complete the Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection. This self-reflection helps you think about how your school and district implement policies and practices that foster belonging and access for all.

You can then share this resource with team members so they, too, can explore their own implicit values and beliefs about culture and ability differences and reflect on how the school and district implement equitable policies and practices. You may decide to discuss the results in a UCS Leadership Team meeting.



Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection

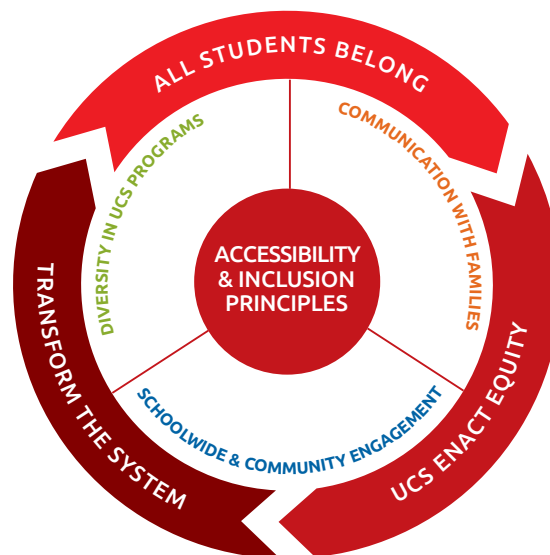
Working Toward Equitable Family Engagement

You will find many tools, strategies, and activities in the Special Olympics Family Engagement Toolkit. However, promoting **equitable family engagement** requires more than just implementing tools and strategies. Achieving equitable family engagement requires an approach to working with families that focuses on reciprocity, transparency, empathy, and flexibility.⁸ It is about ensuring that UCS programs are welcoming, supportive, and open to the full participation of all families.

Equitable family engagement means building reciprocal partnerships with family members that include frequent two-way communication, home-school updates, shared strategies and supports, and mutual respect for one another's expertise. SO Program leads and school liaisons can learn from the perspectives of family members and collaborate with them to ensure UCS programs are inclusive.

Equitable family engagement begins with whole-person and whole-system transformation that results in personal, interpersonal, and systemic changes. **Figure 4** is a reminder that the first step in building equitable family engagement is starting with the belief that all students belong. The second step is empowering Special Olympics Program leads and liaisons to implement equitable practices in their professional work. The third step is transforming the system to make sure strategies and processes are designed to improve equity and accessibility for all families.

Figure 4: Family Engagement Toolkit Accessibility and Inclusion Principles



⁸ Liberatory Design for Equity (<https://nationalequityproject.org>).



Equitable family engagement also focuses on ensuring diversity and building equitable outcomes for diverse students and families of students with disabilities. Many families from diverse communities have been historically excluded from school contexts based upon their background or experiences.

The Family Engagement Toolkit includes tools, strategies, and activities that will help you eliminate barriers to participation and promote inclusion for all families of children and youth with disabilities.

Reflect on Individual, School, and District Practices for Accessibility and Inclusion

The following self-reflection asks you to think about individual beliefs, school-wide engagement, and district supports that build equity and inclusion. This will help you to consider how your values and actions influence your relationship with students, families, and the school system.

In the first section, you can reflect on your own values and beliefs related to diversity and how you enact those values and beliefs. In sections two and three, you can reflect on ways your school and district promote belonging and access for all.



Directions. Carefully consider each statement in the first column. In the second column, rate each statement based on your own perspective using the rating scale below. In the third column, take notes on ways to increase your level of awareness, to enact equitable family engagement, and to enhance equity within school-wide engagement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree

I. INDIVIDUAL VALUES AND BELIEFS		
ENACTING EQUITABLE INCLUSION		
1. Think about how you act on your values and beliefs to ensure equitable inclusion for students and families.		
How Do I Enact Equitable Inclusion?	Level of Agreement	Ways to Improve?
I ensure families are valued partners and participate in their child’s education in a variety of ways.		
I view families as partners in the education of students and in UCS programs.		
I integrate families’ knowledge and wisdom of their children and community into UCS activities.		
I make every possible effort to communicate with families across linguistic differences, seeking out technology tools and other supports to make efforts to communicate across language differences.		
I use a variety of structures or channels to communicate with families and to get their input, perspective, and feedback on UCS programs.		



Directions. Carefully consider each statement in the first column. In the second column, rate each statement based on your own perspective using the rating scale below. In the third column, take notes on ways to increase your level of awareness, to enact equitable family engagement, and to enhance equity within school-wide engagement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree

II. SCHOOLWIDE ENGAGEMENT		
<p>PROMOTING SCHOOLWIDE EQUITABLE INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH TRANSFORMATION</p> <p>1. Think about ways school administration and leadership teams promote equitable inclusion for all.</p> <p>2. Think about ways you can help to transform school-wide systems from your current sphere of influence.</p>		
How does the school promote equitable inclusion and accessibility in its policies and practice?	Level of Agreement	Ways to Improve?
The school’s core policies and practices indicate a prioritization of equitable inclusion and accessibility.		
Staff, teachers, and leaders reflect the demographic composition of their students.		
Financial resources are allocated for the school’s equitable inclusion and accessibility plans, goals, and initiatives. A school’s budget reflects the prioritization of this commitment.		
Teachers, coaches, and administrators use data to see evidence of disproportionality and to determine where to allocate energy and resources in the curriculum and in extra-curricular programs.		



Directions. Carefully consider each statement in the first column. In the second column, rate each statement based on your own perspective using the rating scale below. In the third column, take notes on ways to increase your level of awareness, to enact equitable family engagement, and to enhance equity within school-wide engagement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree

III. DISTRICT SUPPORTS		
<p>PROMOTING DISTRICT-WIDE EQUITABLE INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH TRANSFORMATION</p> <p>1. Think about ways the school district promotes equitable inclusion for all.</p> <p>2. Think about ways you can help to transform the school district from your current sphere of influence.</p>		
How does the school district promote equitable inclusion and accessibility in its policies and practice?	Level of Agreement	Ways to Improve?
The district’s core policies and practices indicate a prioritization of equitable inclusion and accessibility.		
District staff and leadership reflect the demographic composition of their community.		
Financial resources are allocated for the district’s equitable inclusion and accessibility plans, goals, and initiatives. A district’s budget reflects the prioritization of this commitment.		
District staff and leadership use data according to see evidence of disproportionality and to determine where to allocate energy and resources in the curriculum and in extra-curricular programs.		

Adapted from: Aguilar, Elena. (2020). *Coaching for equity: Conversations that change practice*. Jossey-Bass.



UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Resources



**Build Equitable Schoolwide
and Community Engagement**

Designing and Facilitating Inclusive UCS Leadership Team Meetings

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons.

Time Estimate

10-15 minutes for planning and an additional 10 minutes for self-reflection.



Build Equitable Schoolwide and Community Engagement

When should I use this tool?

Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons can use this resource while planning and facilitating UCS Leadership Team meetings.

This resource provides strategies you can use before, during, and after holding a UCS Leadership Team meeting.

You may also connect the UCS Leadership Team meeting with the [Community Asset Mapping](#) resource, [Family Engagement Short Survey](#), and the [Reflection Tool for Family Engagement in UCS Activities](#). You can also use the [Technology Tools](#) resource if you need to translate an agenda or other meeting materials.



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You may access [Community Asset Mapping](#) [here](#).

You may access the [Family Engagement Short Survey](#) [here](#).

You may access the [Reflection Tool for Family Engagement in UCS Activities](#) [here](#).

You may access [Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families](#) [here](#).

Why would I use this tool?

When you plan UCS Leadership Team meetings, it is important to ensure that family members feel a sense of belonging. It is also important for family members to feel like they are an equal partner with the school-based UCS team.



You can use the strategies and questions in this resource to increase opportunities for families to have a voice in the decision-making process. With time, family members may begin to volunteer their ideas and contributions without prompting.

This resource can help you to:

- make planning easier;
- increase the participation of parents from all communities;
- gain a better understanding of how parents would like to participate;
- build trust between school personnel and parents; and
- foster bi-directional collaboration.

How to use this tool?

This resource will guide you through the phases needed to design and implement an inclusive team meeting. Each phase of the tool provides examples of ways to improve inclusion and collaborative decision-making with staff and family members. You can use all the questions or modify the questions to better fit your school context. This resource also includes agenda templates for an introductory Leadership Team meeting and for a general Leadership Team meeting.



Tips for Planning, Implementing, and Reflecting on Inclusive UCS Leadership Team Meetings

Planning Phase: Applying Actions that Build Trust

- Identify the purpose of the meeting and the desired outcomes. The outcomes are the goals or objectives of the meeting (i.e., What do I want to know or understand from this meeting? What do I want others to know or understand from this meeting?) Include this information on the agenda.
- Involve staff and parents in the planning process to identify and agree on goals and expectations of the meeting outcomes.
- Share the agenda ahead of time. This helps set expectations and is an opportunity for team members to think about and prepare for agenda items. Include the date, time, and location. If needed, include information for participants to join virtually.
- Be sure to arrive on time and stay for the duration of the meeting.
- Provide any accommodations to meet the ability and language needs of all parents and staff members.
- Encourage everyone to participate and speak their truth — that is make sure that everyone has time to share their perspectives, ideas, and inspirations.

Facilitation Phase: Basic Tips and Implementing Questions to Increase Engagement During UCS Leadership Team Meetings

An effective facilitator is a prepared and organized facilitator. This includes setting the purpose of the meeting, managing time, and identifying roles and responsibilities and next steps. Effective facilitation also includes creating a safe environment, listening, guiding discussions, and encouraging participation. Below are steps to take to strengthen your facilitation skills for team meetings.

- Review the agenda and the purpose of the meeting.
- Guide members through the content and decision-making process.
- Ensure equal participation.
- Synthesize information.
- Reach consensus on next steps and who is responsible for what.
- If needed, decide on the purpose, date, and time of the next meeting.

Increasing Engagement During UCS Leadership Team Meetings

The sample questions below are designed to help you encourage family members to contribute their ideas during your UCS Leadership Meetings and feel included in the decision-making process. Remember, creating a safe environment where all participants are comfortable and encouraged to participate is part of being an effective facilitator!

You can modify an existing team meeting to ensure that the relevant questions below are included in the agenda, and you will want to keep notes as parents respond.



You can provide the following instructions to parents before asking any of the questions.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ENGAGE FAMILY MEMBERS: Please share your thoughts and feelings. There are no right or wrong answers. The information you share will help us improve family engagement in UCS programs.

Questions to Enhance Belonging

1. Do you feel that the teachers and staff at our school value you as a partner in your child's social and emotional development? Please explain or give an example.
2. What kinds of things help you feel confident that your child's teacher wants the best for your child?
3. Can you share a time that you felt really good about your child's participation in UCS? Tell me more.

Questions to Increase Engagement in UCS Event Planning

1. What do you see as the first priority to promote UCS at our school?
2. How would you like to be included in UCS activities for your child?
3. If you were in charge of communications for UCS at our school, what would be your first priority? What would you change? How would you improve communication with other family members?

Questions to Increase Effective Communication with Family Members

1. Do you believe that you receive adequate information about UCS programs?
2. How comfortable are you in reaching out to the UCS program at our school and sharing your ideas or comments or feedback?
3. In what ways do you contribute your ideas, concerns, and insights?
4. How do school personnel/your child's teacher respond when you share ideas or concerns?
5. What are the best ways for the school to share information with you (e.g., email, take-home forms, website, meetings, other)?



Reflection Phase: Reflection Questions to Improve Inclusion During UCS Leadership Team Meetings

Increasing family engagement requires planning and thoughtful implementation during meetings. Use the template below to determine your success at implementing an inclusive UCS Leadership Team Meeting.

	If yes, describe how you did this?	If not, what could you try next time to make this better?
Did you create opportunities for everyone to share ideas and contribute to the discussion?		
Did you allow others to volunteer for roles, duties, or tasks?		
Did you clarify points of misunderstanding in the meeting or ask for help for clarification?		
Were you mindful of the use of time in the meeting (staying on task, bringing others back on task, ensuring that no one person monopolizes the meeting)?		
Did you affirm team members' contributions? Did you use praise or paraphrase other team members' contributions?		
Did you ask team members' opinions?		
Did you use humor to either relieve tension or energize the team?		
Did you have meeting materials in other languages for those who needed them?		



KICK-OFF MEETING AGENDA TEMPLATE

COPY & PASTE



[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

UCS Leadership Team Kick-off Meeting

[insert date / time / location]

Meeting Objectives:

- To set the tone for UCS Leadership Team meetings
- To establish the purpose of the UCS Leadership Team and member roles and responsibilities
- To discuss the frequency of UCS Leadership Team meetings

Agenda [50-minutes]

I. Welcome and Introductions (7 minutes)

- a. In addition to introductions, consider an ice breaker activity if parents, students, and/or community members are involved.

II. Walk Through Agenda and Meeting Objectives (2 minutes)

III. Introduction to Unified Champion Schools (UCS) Programming (10 minutes)

- a. Explain what UCS is and how it looks at your school.
 - i. What programs are active, who is engaged, etc.
- b. Consider discussing challenges and how the UCS Leadership Team could help solve those challenges.

IV. Establish the Purpose of the UCS Leadership Team (15 minutes)

- a. Discuss the purpose behind the UCS Leadership Team generally.
- b. Discuss the specific role of the UCS Leadership Team in your state, district, or school and/or what the needs are in your state, district, or school.
- c. Reminder that athletes, partners, and families drive the work of UCS.
To accomplish collaborative goals, it is important to include representatives from general education, the community, and family members.

V. UCS Leadership Team Roles (5 minutes)

- a. Ask participants to volunteer for a particular role during the meeting. You may need a facilitator, timekeeper, and note taker. Or you may assign the roles prior to the meeting.

VI. Time for Questions (5 minutes)

- a. Allow time for leadership team members to ask questions or get clarification.
- b. Encourage leadership team members to share what they liked about the meeting.

VII. Identify purpose, date, time, and location for the next meeting (3 minutes)

VIII. Wrap Up: Summarize Main Points and Action Items (3 minutes)

- a. Thank everyone for coming to the UCS Leadership Team meeting kick-off



GENERAL MEETING AGENDA TEMPLATE

COPY & PASTE



[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

UCS Leadership Team Meeting

[insert date / time / location]

Meeting Goal / Objectives:

- [insert meeting objective]
- [insert meeting objective]

Agenda

I. Welcome and Introductions [X minutes]

- Recap of previous meeting
- Walk through agenda and meeting objectives

II. Updates [X minutes]

- Status of action items from previous meeting

III. Topic [X minutes]

IV. Action Items and Next Steps [X minutes]

- Summarize main points of meeting
- Summarize tasks and responsibilities as agreed
- Confirm deadlines for completion
- Identify date, time, and location for the next meeting

V. Questions [X minutes]

- Leadership team members may have questions that allow for clarification.
- If there aren't any questions, this is a good place to encourage leadership team members to share what they liked about the meeting.

VI. Wrap-Up

- Thank everyone for coming to the UCS Leadership Team meeting.

Family Engagement Community Asset Mapping

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons.

Time Estimate

The length of time needed to complete an asset map depends on how much detail your team wants to collect about each asset. You can complete an asset map in 1 hour or you can take 3-5 days to explore the school's neighboring community.



**Build Equitable Schoolwide
and Community Engagement**

When Should I Use this Tool?

You can use community **asset mapping** any time you need to identify community resources that can help make your UCS program a success—whether at the start of your UCS program, or intermittently as needed.

An **asset map** is a visual representation of a community's way to uncover strengths, resources, and assets that exist in the neighboring community. The process of community asset mapping allows schools to link with local assets — for example, buses, parks, or people. It is typically visualized on a map or diagram to show connections across the various assets.

This Family Engagement Community Asset Mapping resource is an extension of the **UCS Urban District Strategy: Community Asset Mapping** resource.



SO UCS Resource

[UCS Urban District Strategy: Community Asset Mapping](#)

UCS Urban District Strategy: Community Asset Mapping provides community partner examples, planning questions, and connections to Unified Sports, youth leadership, and whole school engagement. You will also find recommendations about resources that you will need for the implementation of Unified Sports, youth leadership, and whole school engagement.



This Family Engagement Community Asset Mapping resource provides you with fillable forms, step-by-step procedures, and strategies for creating inclusive teams. It can be adapted for multiple purposes, such as finding resources for UCS programs or locating resources to assist students with their transition out of high school.



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You may connect the community asset mapping process with **Designing and Facilitating Inclusive UCS Leadership Team Meetings**, available [here](#).

Why Would I Use this Tool?

You can use the asset mapping process to uncover strengths in your community, identify gaps in your UCS programs, and determine what resources are available to support UCS events. The asset mapping process is essential to becoming aware of all the different resources available in your community, which can help to increase partnerships and collaboration with community organizations. You will also gain valuable input from family members.

Each community will be different and each UCS program will require a different type of support. A community asset map can be completed with a small (3-5 people) or large (10–15 people) team of school-based participants. Community asset mapping can be a helpful tool for school liaisons who do not live near the school or are unfamiliar with the community.

If you are a Special Olympics Program lead, you can use the community asset mapping process with an entire school district or individual school. You also can train school liaisons to use this tool with their UCS team.

How Should I Use this Tool?

You can use this tool to increase collaboration among school staff and enhance family engagement by including family members as part of the team. Family members will have the most insight into resources in the community and, as a result, are critical to understanding which neighborhood resources are available within a 1-5 mile radius of the school. A larger radius may be appropriate if you are in a less densely populated area.



Step 1: Establish an Asset Mapping Workgroup

Invite teachers, parents, and/or administrators to examine current school, district, and community resources. At a minimum you will want to identify 3-5 participants. Ideally, your workgroup will include at least one representative from each of the following: parents of children with disabilities, parents of children without disabilities, general education teachers, and a community member. Including parents and other community members is particularly valuable if you are unfamiliar with the school's neighborhood.

You can also use data from the district and school profiles resource to identify the community's diverse cultures and languages to ensure that your team represents the community's diversity.



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You can access **How to Create District and School Profiles** [here](#). This resource guides you in the process of developing a profile of a school and its district to better understand the local context of a school and its community.

Step 2: Gather Initial Thoughts on Assets in the Neighborhood

Schedule a time to meet with the asset mapping workgroup.

- Identify one UCS program and talk about what your UCS program needs to be successful. This could be refreshments, a venue for an event, or uniforms. You may even consider ways to partner with other schools.
- Think about resources that you need for your UCS program. Consider the following:
 - What do we need? Who can provide that?
 - What can we achieve by using our own resources?
 - What can't we do that we need community partners to help with?
- Community assets fall into 5 categories: people, physical space, public/private transportation, parent/family member volunteers, and partnerships with businesses, organizations, or local agencies.



- Use poster board paper, sticky notes, or an interactive white board to write down everyone's ideas about what you need and what resources are available in the community.
- Complete the brainstorming session on what your team knows about community resources in your school's neighborhood. Those may include educational organizations, financial assistance organizations, healthcare facilities, elected officials, first responders, and religious and community organizations. These will be guesstimates about which organizations are willing to partner with your UCS program. While some may not be needed immediately, they may turn out to be very helpful later. The brainstorming process is important because it provides parents with the chance to be valued contributors.



SO UCS Resource

UCS Urban District Strategy: Community Asset Mapping

You can learn more about the 5 Ps — people, physical space, public/private transportation, parent/family engagement, and partnerships — [here](#).



Step 3: Create an Asset Resource File

The Asset Resource File will include businesses, organizations, and people that are in the community where the school is located and have been identified by your asset mapping workgroup.

- Using the list generated in Step 2, make a list of businesses, organizations, and people that could connect with your UCS program.
- Identify at least 2 potential assets that can support your program needs identified in Step 2. For example, you may need physical space and volunteers.
- Identify the resource and the person you will contact.
- Identify the primary contribution for the resource. There may be more than one contribution for each resource. For example, someone who owns a nearby restaurant may be willing to donate refreshments.

Sample Community Asset Resource File

ASSET RESOURCE FILE			
Resource	Primary Point of Contact	Asset Type	Notes
El Tamarindo	Junior Diaz, Restaurant Owner 210-555-5555 342 N. Florida	<input type="radio"/> People <input type="radio"/> Physical space <input type="radio"/> Public/Private transportation <input type="radio"/> Parent/Family engagement <input type="radio"/> Partnerships <input checked="" type="radio"/> Other(s): Refreshments for unified sport events	Management at El Tamarindo restaurant has agreed to provide 30 empanadas on UCS game days
Masjid al Islam	Nazar Ali, Director of Community Outreach 210-534-1234 642 Cardinal Rd.	<input type="radio"/> People <input checked="" type="radio"/> Physical space <input type="radio"/> Public/Private transportation <input type="radio"/> Parent/Family engagement <input type="radio"/> Partnerships <input type="radio"/> Other(s)	Director of Community Outreach at the Masjid al Islam has agreed to allow for Saturday practice in the gym at the community center
Healthy Families Medical Center	Nadine Brockman, UCS Parent and physician 210-645-8967 554 Sycamore Lane	<input checked="" type="radio"/> People <input type="radio"/> Physical space <input type="radio"/> Public/Private transportation <input type="radio"/> Parent/Family engagement <input type="radio"/> Partnerships <input type="radio"/> Other(s)	Physician at Healthy Families Medical Center has agreed to provide free physicals for athletes and partners



Step 4: Engage with Potential Partners

Phase 1: Make Connections.

Prioritize the needs of your UCS program and select 2 locations from the Five Ps found in your community asset resource list that you believe can best meet those needs.

- Have team members sign up to do outreach at the 2 locations that you have prioritized. Try to create groups of 1-2 people and, if possible, include a family member.
- Establish a connection with the organization by sending an email to an identified point of contact.
 - Your email can summarize the purpose of UCS programs, your upcoming events, and ways their business or organization can contribute to UCS program events.
- If the person is available to meet, schedule a time to meet with a contact person at two or more of the organizations identified above.
- Determine where and at what time your group will meet.
- As a team, plan to drive or take public/private transportation to various locations on your community resource list. Alternatively, you can schedule a virtual meeting.

Phase 2: Gather Information.

Select at least 2 locations from the Five P's found in your asset resource list. Your group should identify a community resource and learn about the resource so that your conversation with the point of contact begins with understanding and respect for their business and contributions to the community. As an example, you may want to identify the mission or vision statement of the organization, determine if the organization has a current partnership, or determine if the community member has children in your school.

Introduce yourself as a Special Olympics UCS Team from your school who wants to learn more about their organization and develop a potential partnership. Share your goals for the Special Olympics UCS program and explain how their organization might be able to support you.

- Give them information about Special Olympics.
- Explain the importance of Unified Sports, whole school engagement, or inclusive youth leadership.
- Provide background information about your UCS program.
- Make the request for support and partnership by summarizing what was discussed during the initial contact or email. Explain how their donations can support UCS programming.
 - The business owner or community member may not be able to commit to a formal partnership, but this is also a chance to gather more community support and invite them to a UCS event.
- Your conversation should be brief and take about 5- 8 minutes.

Phase 3: Follow Up with Community Point of Contact.

Follow up with an email or another visit to thank them for their commitment. Send an email even if the person or organization is not able to assist. They may be able to support you at another time. The first steps in the development of your Community Asset Mapping are complete.



Step 5: Debrief

Get together with your UCS Asset Mapping Team and share what you learned. Review your field notes for interesting opportunities for partnership. Make a note of the people you did not have the opportunity to talk with. Make a note of the resource gaps that you were able to close.

Step 6: Update the Asset Resource File

Update and finalize your team's Asset Resource File with the resources that you found in your school's community. Highlight important findings and discoveries that emerged through the conversations. From the example above, you might report that the owner of a local restaurant has agreed to provide refreshments on game days. Finally, discuss ways you can integrate these community resources into UCS programs to support parent and student engagement.

Step 7: Identify Remaining Gaps

You may also find that there are additional needs that have emerged. Use the list of asset types from Step 2 to determine what additional resources are needed for your UCS program to be successful.

Determine if your team needs to connect with additional assets in the community. Or connect with your school's administration or school district to help you close the remaining gaps. You can complete these steps in the asset mapping process as many times as you need.



Fillable Form: Community Asset Resource File

ASSET RESOURCE FILE			
Resource	Primary Point of Contact	Asset Type	Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> People<input type="radio"/> Physical space<input type="radio"/> Public/Private transportation<input type="radio"/> Parent/Family engagement<input type="radio"/> Partnerships<input type="radio"/> Other(s)	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> People<input type="radio"/> Physical space<input type="radio"/> Public/Private transportation<input type="radio"/> Parent/Family engagement<input type="radio"/> Partnerships<input type="radio"/> Other(s)	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> People<input type="radio"/> Physical space<input type="radio"/> Public/Private transportation<input type="radio"/> Parent/Family engagement<input type="radio"/> Partnerships<input type="radio"/> Other(s)	



SAMPLE INVITATION TO PARTNER WITH SPECIAL OLYMPICS PROGRAM

(Email, Text, Letter)

COPY & PASTE



[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

Subject: Invitation to Partner with Special Olympics Program

Dear [name of business owner or community member]:

Our Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS) program at [name of your school] offers students with and without disabilities to participate in [name of your UCS program component].

We would like to learn about ways that our Special Olympics UCS program can partner with your [business/organization name] to provide [enter one or more of the 5 P's].

We would like to talk with you to discuss potential ways you or your organization can get involved with UCS programs. A few examples include making a donation, volunteering, or attending our Special Olympics UCS program events.

For a short 6-minute introductory video to Special Olympics UCS, click [here](#).

Are you available for a short 15-minute conversation to share ideas about ways you can help to sustain and partner with our UCS program? What are the best days of the week and times of day to reach you for a quick visit, phone call, or virtual meeting?

Please respond with your availability by text or email to [insert name and role] by [insert number, email address].

Thank you,
[insert name, title]
[Insert contact information]

Strategies for Schoolwide and Community Engagement

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads, Special Olympics liaisons, and school administrators.

Time Estimate

Varied.



Build Equitable Schoolwide and Community Engagement

Why would I use this tool?

Program leads, SO liaisons, and school administrators **all** play a role in **equitable family engagement**. This includes strengths-based communications and collaborations that advance Unified Champion Schools (UCS) and impact participating students, families, and schools.

Equitable family engagement means building reciprocal partnerships with families, learning from their perspectives, and collaborating with them to ensure your programs are inclusive.

This resource provides proven internal and external facing communication and engagement strategies. The internal-facing strategies focus on informing students, school personnel, and community partners about UCS programming. The external-facing strategies focus on how administrators can help their school's SO liaison in addressing perennial issues for UCS programs such as transportation, marketing, school recognition, and disability stigma.

When should I use this tool?

You can use this tool in your planning process to identify creative and strategic ways to promote UCS programs in the school building and community.



How should I use this tool?

Program leads can use this resource to support SO liaisons in their schoolwide and community outreach and engagement efforts.

SO liaisons can use this resource to consider which communication and engagement strategies might work best for their school and community context.

Both **Program leads and SO liaisons** can use this resource to engage the school administrator in conversations about the UCS program and how they can best support it through internal and external facing strategies.



Strategies for Schoolwide and Community Engagement in Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools

Equitable family engagement in Unified Champion Schools (UCS) programs requires collaboration with Special Olympics Program leads and liaisons, district leaders, school administrators, special education teachers, general education teachers, coaches, and physical education teachers. This collaborative approach ensures that everyone feels informed and connected to students and families who are involved in UCS programs.

Below are internal and external-facing strategies that schools can put into practice to advance Unified Champion Schools and have a greater impact on participating students, families, and schools.

Internal-Facing Strategies for Schoolwide and Community Engagement

Below are strategies that Program leads, SO liaisons, and administrators can use to inform school staff and students about UCS, the first step to engagement.

STRATEGY	LEAD		
	Program Lead	SO Liaison	Administrator
<p>Hold a school-wide UCS information session or lunch-n-learn to inform staff and teachers of the school's Unified Champion Schools program and activities and to welcome their participation in UCS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share this 4-minute video of Fisher Magnet Upper Academy (Detroit, MI) with school staff or others for an introduction to the 3 Component Model of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®. 	X	X	X
<p>Host a UCS orientation or training for participating school staff on how to incorporate UCS components into the curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include all staff working directly with UCS (e.g., coaches and school-level aids), not just the SO liaison. Be explicit about the different UCS roles at a school and their responsibilities and expectations. Share a Special Olympics UCS organizational chart so that school staff understand how Special Olympics UCS is structured. 	X	X	
<p>Incorporate UCS information into onboarding for any new school staff member.</p>		X	X



STRATEGY	LEAD		
	Program Lead	SO Liaison	Administrator
<p>Include information on UCS in first-year orientation or when students transition from one school level to the next.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask current and former students to serve as UCS ambassadors who attend first-year orientation to talk about UCS opportunities. 		X	X
<p>Create a UCS leadership team or committee composed of school leadership, UCS staff, other school staff, a student, and a family member; consider rotating positions every year to build awareness and support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To access the Special Olympics guide on establishing a leadership team, click here. 		X	X
<p>Obtain the school administrator’s commitment and convey the role they can play in leveraging their external facing presence to collaborate and communicate with allies to help address perennial challenges to engagement.</p>	X	X	

External-Facing Strategies for Schoolwide and Community Engagement

Collaboration and communication also need to extend outside the school building. Administrators play a crucial role in helping to address perennial challenges by engaging district and community partners and supporters in external-facing strategies.

- Transportation.** Work with the district to include UCS as a line item in the budget and secure additional resources to provide transportation access to athletes and families. Other means of transportation could include:
 - pairing up parents (one of which has a car), or
 - offering prepaid rides to families and athletes for key or important events.

Parent volunteers who have passed background checks may also be able to travel to UCS events with students on school or district-provided transportation.



SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT

Obtaining Resources across District Office, Athletic Department, and Student Government

Lincoln High School, Tacoma, Washington

The school district has a line item for Unified Champion Schools in its budget that covers the cost of transportation to all athletic events and coaches' stipends.

Funds from the school's athletic department and student government fundraising efforts are combined to cover other program costs. The Unified Team Members, for example, will run the concessions stand during home football games to raise funds and gain valuable work experience.

- **UCS Inclusion Across School.** Encourage the school to collaborate with the Unified coach to develop or contribute to the school's athletics web page and/or social media to include Unified Sports highlights and information as part of the school's broader activities. For example, the website could spotlight each of the Unified athletes and partners with a photograph of the students and brief description of the sport they participate in.
- **Community Outreach.** Establish relationships with local newspapers, radio stations, or podcasts and share information about your school's Unified program. Use these opportunities to recognize sponsors or contributors and to connect with potential sponsors. Invite media to events or to speak with teachers, students, and families about the benefits of Inclusive Youth Leadership, Unified Sports, and/or Whole School Engagement.
- **Disability Stigma.** Work with community partners such as other schools—including daycare facilities and preschools—clinics, libraries, and faith-based institutions to address the stigma associated with students with disabilities and special education. Begin with informing the community about different types of intellectual or developmental disabilities and the importance of early intervention and inclusion.



Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection: Disability Inclusion

Use the Harvard University Implicit Association Test (IAT) to assess your own implicit bias toward people with disabilities, and consider ways to promote disability inclusion at your school.



1. Take the Harvard University Implicit Association Test
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
 - Scroll down to the bottom of the page and select 'I wish to proceed'
 - Select 'Disabilities IAT'
 - Start the test

2. Reflect on Disability Inclusion at Your School
 - How is your school (or school district) advancing attitudes toward disability inclusion?
 - In what ways does your school promote inclusion?
 - Where are the opportunities for growth in the area of equity and inclusion?
 - How can UCS programs contribute to advancing equity and inclusion in your school?



UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Resources



Enhance Communication with
Families from Diverse Communities

Communication Strategies for Family Engagement

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads, Special Olympics liaisons, coaches, other staff who engage in UCS outreach and engagement.

Time Estimate

Varied.



Enhance Communication
with Families from
Diverse Communities

Why would I use this tool?

Equitable family engagement strategies are essential for the UCS program to increase and maintain its presence in racially diverse, immigrant and refugee, or economically diverse communities.

This resource provides proven communication strategies that you can use to successfully communicate with diverse families, including families who speak a language at home other than English and those with different levels of literacy.

Equitable family engagement means building reciprocal partnerships with families, learning from their perspectives, and collaborating with them to ensure your programs are inclusive.

When should I use this tool?

You can use this tool when communicating with families from various family contexts and communities. Alternatively, when you are not receiving the response you expect, refer to this resource to identify new types of effective communication strategies to support your family engagement efforts.

How should I use this tool?

You can use this resource as a guide to create new communication strategies and materials to engage former, current, or potential UCS families. You can also use this resource to modify or update existing materials or communication strategies that reach current, former, and potential UCS families.



Communication Strategies for Family Engagement in Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools




When communicating with families from various family contexts and communities, it is important that you meet families where they are to ensure UCS information is available and accessible to them. This is particularly important when sharing foundational program materials to inform families about the purpose and benefits of Unified Champion Schools.

To ensure written and spoken communications are culturally and linguistically accessible to diverse families, adopt the following strategies for effective communication:





Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection: Equitable Family Engagement

- How well do you know your audience?
- Do you use communication that is more convenient for you than it is for families?
- Does your communication meet the literacy and language needs of families?





STRATEGY	DON'T DO THIS	DO THIS
 Create written and spoken communication that is simple without using jargon and idioms.	Coach was throwing up all night, but is on the mend after his bout with food poisoning. Friday's practice is back on!	Coach is feeling better after being sick last night. Basketball practice is still scheduled for Friday, May 16, 2020 at 3:00pm.
 Define key ideas and terms.	Your child has a partner who works with him.	Students with and without intellectual disabilities are teammates who train and compete together. We refer to students without intellectual disabilities as Unified partners and students with intellectual disabilities as athletes.
 Speak slowly and clearly and avoid using slang.	"You wanna go to the courts to see em' play?"	"Do you want to watch your child play basketball?"



STRATEGY	DON'T DO THIS	DO THIS
 <p>Be concise.</p>	<p>The school's playing field will be off limits some time next semester. Apparently the plumbing that runs under the field is old and made of lead pipes. We have to coordinate with the city to replace the pipe since they connect to the pipes that run along the street. We will have a parent meeting to discuss the situation in two weeks. The superintendent wants to be present so we need to coordinate schedules...</p>	<p>The school is working with the city and district to coordinate lead pipe replacement under our playing field from Elm to Davis Roads. This is scheduled to happen next semester. The playing field and surrounding areas will be unavailable during this time. We will share additional information as it becomes available.</p>
 <p>Practice active listening.</p>	<p>"Sorry, I was answering a work email. What did you say?"</p>	<p>"Let me put my phone down so I can give you my full attention. What would you like to talk about?"</p>
 <p>Be curious and ask open, non-judgmental questions.</p>	<p>"Can you believe (insert group)? I don't understand where they are coming from."</p>	<p>"I asked a (insert group) teacher to help me understand the distance I feel from Ray's family. She told me that disability is shameful in their culture and the family is struggling with how to engage their extended family in a way that is best for their child."</p>
 <p>Use two different kinds of communication, including a combination of text, audio, and visual tools, and media.</p>	<p>The only form of communication with families is text-based – email, text, flyers, etc.</p>	<p>With your regular updates to families, include photos and video clips; experiment with audio files. These different modes are especially important for those families who are unable to attend events in person.</p>



STRATEGY	DON'T DO THIS	DO THIS
 <p>Provide information in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Notify families of events a day or two before they happen.</p>	<p>Share a calendar of events at the start of the school year and send regular reminders before individual events. If creating a calendar of events is not possible, send information at least 1-2 weeks ahead of time. This gives families time to respond, invite other family members, and/or arrange their schedules.</p>
 <p>Inform families of how UCS activities are accessible and safe for their child with disabilities.</p> <hr/> <p>You can inform families of access and safety issues by sharing The STEP Framework: Participation and Inclusion in Unified Sports. Click here for the English version and here for the Spanish version.</p>	<p>Be reactive. Wait for families to reach out with basic questions about their child's safety.</p>	<p>Be proactive. Let families know that coaches are trained to assess and work with students of differing abilities and to modify activities accordingly. Each sport follows rules regulated by a national governing body for that sport.</p>

TIP for Outreach to Families

Consider one-on-one calls or conversations with parents about the program, either to introduce the program to them or as a check-in at the start of each new school year. This may be time consuming, but it establishes connections and begins to build trusted relationships.



Communication Channels

Use multiple modes of communication with families based on the purpose of the communication (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Examples of Communication Methods for Engaging Families

COMMUNICATION ITEM	METHODS	TIMING
<p>Initial outreach or introduction to UCS</p> <hr/> <p>Here are two family and partner-centered videos you can use to introduce families to UCS:</p> <p>Catherine and Claude's Moment [7:45min] Catherine and Claude, emigrants from Cameroon, have a son who got involved in Special Olympics Unified Sports® in middle school. They now have a different view of their son's future.</p> <p>Rashaan's Moment [6:51min] Rashaan found his community as a partner in his Unified Sports team at university.</p>	<p>Method 1: phone / email Method 2: email / phone</p>	<p>At start of school year or a few weeks prior, call parents to introduce them to UCS; if they are alum, reintroduce the program to maintain relationship and talk about any changes or concerns they may have</p>
Schedule of games or events	<p>Method 1: email Method 2: paper</p>	<p>At start of school year or a few weeks prior to season; with every update, send revised schedule as soon as possible</p>
Forms or program information other than schedules	<p>Method 1: email Method 2: paper</p>	<p>At least two weeks in advance, followed by reminders if input is needed</p>
Invitations	<p>Method 1: email / text Method 2: paper / flier</p>	<p>At least a week in advance, followed by reminders</p>
Reminders or check-ins	<p>Method 1: text Method 2: phone / email</p>	<p>Day before event and/or day of event; as needed</p>
Event follow up or weekly updates or highlights	<p>Method 1: text Method 2: email</p>	<p>At end of week or a day or two after event</p>
Emergency	<p>Method 1: phone Method 2: text</p>	<p>ASAP</p>



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You may access the **Contact and Outreach Information** spreadsheet [here](#). It can help you track parent outreach and student information.

You may access **Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families** [here](#). It can help you identify a translation app for communicating with families who may be more comfortable communicating in a language other than English.

Family Engagement Short Survey

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads, Special Olympics liaisons.

Time Estimate

Approximately 5 minutes for parent/family member to complete the survey; additional time to collect and analyze results, depending on how many surveys are completed; optional – some time to input the survey into an online format if desired.



Enhance Communication with Families from Diverse Communities

Why would I use this tool?

Family members want to be engaged in Unified Champion Schools (UCS) programs that involve their children with and without disabilities. This quick survey can be used at any time during the school year to determine if family members feel welcome and have a sense of belonging.

The survey is provided in English and Spanish.

When should I use this tool?

You can share this short survey with families at regular intervals to learn how engaged they are with UCS at your school. For example, you can ask parents to take the survey at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to measure changes in how engaged they feel.

How should I use this tool?

You can print this document and share it with parents and families or create an electronic version that can be emailed or texted to families.

You can use free online tools like Google Forms to create a simple survey. Online survey tools can be accessed through mobile phones using a link or a **QR code**, which may be more convenient and accessible to some families.

QR codes provide links to websites; you can search online for free QR code generators to use in your materials.



What do I do after parents complete the survey?

One approach is to enter the questions into a tool like Google Forms, which will collect and analyze the data for you. This and other similar tools can provide web links, QR codes, or links for mobile devices.

If you share the survey multiple times during the school year (e.g., at the start, middle, and end of the year) you can also look at trends—are you doing a better, worse or the same job at engaging parents?

How do I interpret the results?

It is important to note that unless you have a 100% response rate from parents, you cannot be sure that the responses represent **all** parents. However, you can get an idea of what **some** parents are thinking or how they feel about their engagement with UCS from their responses.

How do I share the results?

You can share the results with other UCS staff, the school administrator, and parents. One way to share results is to list the questions and the average rating for each item and list the open-ended comments (or summarize them).

A great way to understand the results is to share the overall summary of ratings and comments back to the parents. This helps them see that you are paying attention, and it may lead to additional helpful conversations about how UCS can engage with families.



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You may access **Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families** [here](#). It can help you identify a translation app if you need the Family Engagement Short Survey in a language other than English or Spanish.



Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS) Family Engagement Short Survey

Your child takes part in the Special Olympics UCS program at [name of school]. This includes [types of activities at your school]. We want to know how involved and included you feel with the UCS program to help us identify areas of improvement and/or success.

Please check the box (X) for the rating that best matches your opinion.

Your Name (optional): _____

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I know what is going on with UCS activities at the school.					
I feel welcome to attend UCS activities or events.					
I am encouraged to help plan UCS activities or events.					
When I have a question about UCS, I feel comfortable asking [insert name of UCS coach or teacher] at school.					
[insert name of UCS coach or teacher] listens to me when I have concerns about UCS.					
I receive communications about UCS activities in a timely manner.					
My child receives the support they need to participate in UCS.					
My child feels included in UCS activities and events.					

What can the UCS staff do to help you and other families get more involved in UCS activities and events?

If you would you like someone from the school to follow up with you about your survey responses, please provide your contact information: _____

Thank you for completing the survey! Your responses will help us to identify areas of improvement and/or success. Please feel free to contact [insert name, phone email] with any additional comments or questions.

Please return this survey to [insert name of school staff and/or email address here]



Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS) Encuesta Corta de Involucramiento Familiar

Su hijo/a participa en el programa Special Olympics de UCS en [name of school]. Esto incluye [types of activities at your school]. Queremos saber qué tan involucrado e incluido se siente con el programa UCS para ayudarnos a identificar puntos de mejora y de éxito.

Por favor, marque la casilla (X) con la valoración que mejor refleje su opinión.

Su Nombre (es opcional): _____

	Nunca	Rara vez	Algunas veces	A menudo	Siempre
Sé lo que está ocurriendo con las actividades de UCS en la escuela.					
Me siento bienvenido(a) a asistir a las actividades o eventos de UCS.					
Me siento animado a ayudar a planear actividades o eventos de UCS.					
Cuando tengo una pregunta sobre UCS, me siento cómodo(a) preguntándole a [insert name of UCS coach or teacher] en la escuela.					
[Insert name of UCS coach or teacher] me escucha cuando tengo inquietudes sobre UCS.					
Recibo información sobre las actividades de UCS a tiempo.					
Mi hijo/a recibe el apoyo que necesita para participar en UCS.					
Mi hijo/a se siente incluido/a en las actividades y eventos de UCS.					

¿Qué puede hacer el personal de UCS para ayudarle a usted y a otras familias a involucrarse más en las actividades y eventos de UCS?

Si desea que alguien de la escuela se comunique con usted sobre sus respuestas, por favor anote sus datos de contacto aquí: _____

¡Gracias por completar la encuesta! Sus respuestas nos ayudarán a entender lo que estamos haciendo bien y/o en lo que podemos mejorar. Si tiene algún otro comentario o pregunta, por favor contacte a [insert name, phone email].

Por favor devuelva esta encuesta a [insert name of school staff and/or email address here].

Fillable Invitations to Parents, Family Members, and Caregivers [5 templates included]

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads, Special Olympics liaisons, physical education or Special Olympics coaches.

Time Estimate

Approximately 5-10 minutes to modify the template to match the needs of your school or event.



**Enhance Communication
with Families from
Diverse Communities**

Why would I use this resource?

Family members want to understand what the Unified Champion Schools (UCS) program is, know what is going on with their students, and understand how they can participate if they have time. These five templates:

- provide language for you to use when you reach out to parents and families to provide information about UCS and to encourage them to be more engaged in the UCS program at schools;
- allow you to insert information specific to your school, students, and program activities;
- can be revised to include your words, your program information, and your school logo; and
- are provided in English and Spanish; the sample letter and invitations for parents in Amharic and Navajo are available [here](#).



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You may access **Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families** [here](#). It can help you identify a translation app for communicating with families who may be more comfortable communicating in a language other than English.



When should I use this resource?

These templates help you begin the conversation about UCS with parents and families. They will be most useful at the beginning of the school year or when a student first joins UCS.

How should I use this resource?

You can print and mail these as letters, circulate them at an event as a memo, or email them directly to parents and family contacts. The second template, however, is designed to be used as a phone script.

After creating your version of these templates, you can use your version for future communication with families.

List of Templates (provided in English and Spanish):

1. Sample UCS welcome letter to parents and families
2. Sample Script for phone calls to families inviting student participation in UCS (UCS Student Participation Invitation)
3. Sample Invitation to attend a UCS sporting event **off campus**
4. Sample Invitation to attend a UCS sporting event **on campus**
5. Sample Invitation to parents to get engaged with UCS



SAMPLE UCS WELCOME LETTER TO PARENTS AND FAMILIES

COPY & PASTE



[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

[DATE]

Dear families of Unified Athletes and Partners,

Congratulations to your student for becoming part of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®!

About UCS: UCS is a school program that brings together students with and without disabilities. Students participate in sports and competition, inclusive leadership activities, and whole school engagement activities. Schools decide what UCS activities and events they want to participate in for each school year. This year we are [\[insert UCS activities\]](#).

Would you like to learn more about UCS? Here [\[select one\]](#) is a **video/are videos** that describe(s) in more detail what we do and how UCS impacts the lives of young people with disabilities and their families and community.

[Optional: Select any videos below that you want to share or search for other videos on the SONA website. You can also use images or media created at your school.]

[Discover your Moment](#) [5:53min]

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools provides students with and without intellectual disabilities meaningful experiences and friendships in the classroom and on the field.

[Learn Unified: Whole School Engagement](#) [6:17min]

A Special Olympics Unified Champion School has three components. One component, Whole School Engagement, consists of activities that promote inclusion and reach the entire school population. Examples include Spread the Word, Fans in the Stands, and Polar Plunge.

[Catherine and Claude's Moment](#) [7:45min]

Catherine and Claude emigrated from Cameroon with their children. One of their children, Prince, has autism. When Prince was at Kenmore Middle School, he got involved in Special Olympics Unified Sports®. Because of the power of sport, Catherine and Claude's view of their son's future changed.

[Rashaan's Moment](#) [6:51min]

Rashaan found his passion for basketball in childhood, and he found acceptance of people of ALL abilities in Unified Sports while at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Student participation in UCS: Students in UCS make the school a more welcome place for students of all abilities. We have found that students who join UCS are better at helping others, they stand up for each other, and they share responsibility. They learn to be more patient and they learn how to compromise.

Continued on next page ...



Sports safety: Each sport follows rules regulated by a national governing body for that sport. Special Olympics coaches receive training on assessing students of differing abilities to determine how best to modify activities so they are accessible and safe for each student. Training includes athlete development and preparing athletes for competition. Coaches are prepared to maintain a safe environment, prevent injury, and plan for emergencies.

About me/About our team: I am/We are [name(s), job title(s)] and I/we lead the [responsibility related to UCS]. [Include 1-2 sentence bio in plain language; mention other school staff whom you work with if it is important for families to know so families become familiar with their name(s).]

Keeping you informed: We know that your student's greatest supporter is you! And you are a valued part of the UCS community at [insert name of school].

Upcoming activities: [insert any upcoming activities to generate excitement, if applicable]

You will receive information about the UCS events and activities throughout the year. We provide information using [describe ways in which families will get information – email, newsletters, phone calls, in-person meetings, social media, etc.].

Again, congratulations to your student for joining the UCS program!

Please contact me with any questions, concerns, or suggestions at [include phone number, email address, and other social media, if applicable].

Thank you,
[insert name, title, school name, address, phone and email, website]



SAMPLE UCS WELCOME LETTER TO PARENTS AND FAMILIES

COPY & PASTE



[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

[DATE]

Estimadas familias de Atletas y Colaboradores de Unified,

¡Felicitaciones a su estudiante por formar parte de Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®!

Acerca de UCS: UCS es un programa escolar que reúne a estudiantes con y sin discapacidades. Los estudiantes participan en deportes y competencias, actividades de liderazgo inclusivo y actividades de participación de toda la escuela. Las escuelas deciden en qué actividades y eventos de UCS quieren participar para cada año escolar. Este año estamos participando en [\[insert UCS activities\]](#).

¿Le gustaría saber más sobre UCS? Aquí [\[select one\]](#) **hay un video/hay algunos videos** de nuestra serie “El Momento” que describen con más detalle lo que hacemos y cómo UCS impacta las vidas de los jóvenes con discapacidades, sus familias, y la comunidad.

[\[Optional: Select any videos below that you want to share or search for other videos on the SONA website. You can also use images or media created at your school.\]](#)

[Descubre tu momento](#) [5:53 minutos]

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools brindan a estudiantes con y sin discapacidades i ntelectuales experiencias y amistades significativas dentro y fuera del salón de clase.

[Aprendiendo Unified: Participación de Toda la Comunidad Escolar](#) [6:17 minutos]

Una Special Olympics Unified Champion School tiene tres componentes. Uno de ellos es la Participación de toda la Comunidad Escolar, que consiste en actividades que promueven la inclusion e involucran a toda la población escolar. Ejemplos de estas actividades incluyen: Spread the Word, Fans in the Stands y el Polar Plunge.

[El Momento de Catherine y Claude](#) [7:45 minutos]

Catherine y Claude emigraron de Camerún con sus hijos. Uno de sus hijos, llamado Prince, tiene autismo. Cuando Prince estaba en la escuela secundaria Kenmore Middle School, participó en Special Olympics Unified Sports®. Gracias al poder del deporte, la visión de Catherine y Claude sobre el futuro de su hijo Prince cambió.

[El Momento de Rashaan](#) [6:51 minutos]

Rashaan descubrió su pasión por el baloncesto cuando era niño y encontró la aceptación de personas de TODAS las habilidades en Unified Sports, mientras estudiaba en la Universidad de Louisiana en Lafayette.

Continued on next page ...



Participación de los estudiantes en UCS: Los estudiantes en UCS hacen de la escuela un lugar más acogedor para estudiantes de todas las habilidades. Hemos descubierto que los estudiantes que participan en UCS son mejores ayudando a los demás, se apoyan los unos a los otros y comparten la responsabilidad. Aprenden a ser más pacientes y aprenden como llegar a acuerdos.

Seguridad en el deporte: Cada deporte sigue las reglas establecidas por un organismo rector nacional para ese deporte. Los entrenadores de Special Olympics reciben capacitación para evaluar a los estudiantes con diferentes habilidades para determinar la mejor manera de modificar las actividades para que sean accesibles y seguras para cada estudiante. El entrenamiento incluye el desarrollo de los atletas y la preparación de los atletas para competir. Los entrenadores están preparados para mantener un entorno seguro, prevenir lesiones, y planificar para emergencias.

Acerca de mí/ Acerca de nuestro equipo: Soy/ Nosotros somos [name, job title] y [select one] **yo lidero/ nosotros lideramos** el [responsibility related to UCS]. [Include 1-2 sentence bio in plain language; mention other school staff whom you work with if it is important for families to know so families become familiar with their name(s).]

Manteniéndolo informado: ¡Sabemos que el mayor apoyo de su estudiante es usted! Y usted es una parte valiosa de la comunidad de UCS en [insert name of school].

Próximas actividades: [insert any upcoming activities to generate excitement, if applicable].

Usted recibirá información sobre los eventos y actividades de UCS durante todo el año. Nosotros le proporcionaremos información por medio de [describe ways in which families will get information — email, newsletters, phone calls, in-person meetings, social media, etc].

Nuevamente, ¡felicitaciones a su estudiante formar parte del programa UCS!

Por favor, contácteme si tiene alguna pregunta, inquietud o sugerencia al [include phone #, email address, and other social media, if applicable].

Gracias,

[insert name, title, school name, address, phone and email, website]



UCS STUDENT PARTICIPATION INVITATION SAMPLE SCRIPT ⁹



Hello [name of parent/family member],

I am [insert name, title] and I'm calling to talk with you about the Unified Champion Schools program at [insert name of school]. I want to explain how your child [insert name of student] can join the program and participate. Do you have about 5-10 minutes now to talk about the program?

[NOTE: If they are available, then proceed with the call. If they don't have time now, ask to set a date and time to call them back, or invite them to meet with you at the school if that is convenient for them.]

The Unified Champion Schools program is part of Special Olympics. At our school, we bring together students with disabilities and students without disabilities to play sports, socialize, and participate in leadership activities together. The program also helps the whole school to understand and better support students of all abilities.

I think [insert name of student] would really like to be part of the program because

- students who participate help to make [insert name of school] a more welcome place for students of all abilities;
- students who join the program are better at helping others, they stand up for each other, and they share responsibility; and
- students with and without disabilities learn to be more patient and they learn how to compromise.

We would love to have [student name] join the program, and I can send more information to you. Also, I would be happy to meet with you at the school and talk more about the program.

What else would you like to know about the program and the students who participate?

[answer questions]

Also, if you would like to speak to any other parents or families about their experience with their student in the program, I can introduce you to them. Let me know if you would like me to share your phone number or email address with one of the UCS families.

If you are interested in [student name] participating, then we can give the permission slip and forms that need your signature to her/him/them so they can participate in UCS and/or Unified Sports® this year. Please review the forms, sign them, and send them back to me at the school with your student.

[Or, offer to send with a return envelope to make it easier for parents to respond.]

I can send home information with [student name] and we can talk again about the program if you still have questions after you review the information.

Thanks again for your time. I really appreciate this opportunity to talk with you about the Unified Champion Schools program. I think [student name] will really enjoy and benefit from joining the program.

[share the best way they can contact you via phone, email, or other method]

⁹ Derived from a memo used in SO Tennessee



UCS STUDENT PARTICIPATION INVITATION SAMPLE SCRIPT



Hola [name of parent/family member],

Soy [insert name, title] y le llamo para hablar con usted sobre el programa de Unified Champion Schools en [insert name of school]. Quiero explicarle cómo su hijo [insert name of student] puede unirse al programa y participar. ¿Tiene entre 5 y 10 minutos para hablar sobre el programa?

[NOTE: If they are available, then proceed with the call. If they don't have time now, ask to set a date and time to call them back, or invite them to meet with you at the school if that is convenient for them.]

El programa de Unified Champion Schools es parte de Special Olympics. En nuestra escuela, reunimos a estudiantes con discapacidades y estudiantes sin discapacidades para practicar deportes juntos, socializar y participar juntos en actividades de liderazgo. El programa también ayuda a toda la escuela a comprender y apoyar mejor a los estudiantes de todas las habilidades.

Creo que a [insert name of student] realmente le gustaría ser parte del programa porque

- Los estudiantes que participan ayudan a hacer de [insert name of school] un lugar más acogedor para los estudiantes de todas las capacidades;
- Los estudiantes que se unen al programa son mejores ayudando a los demás, se apoyan los unos a los otros y comparten la responsabilidad; y
- Los estudiantes con y sin discapacidades aprenden a ser más pacientes y aprenden como llegar a acuerdos.

Nos encantaría que [student name] participara en el programa y puedo enviarle más información. Además, yo estaría encantado/a de reunirme con usted en la escuela y hablar más sobre el programa.

¿Qué más le gustaría saber sobre el programa de UCS y los estudiantes que participan?

[answer questions]

Además, si desea hablar con otros padres o familias sobre su experiencia teniendo su estudiante en el programa, yo puedo presentárselos. Hágame saber si desea que comparta su número de teléfono o dirección de correo electrónico con una de las familias de UCS.

Si está interesado en que [student name] participe, entonces le podemos entregar a su hijo/a la hoja de permiso y los formularios que necesitan su firma para que pueda participar en UCS y/o en Unified Sports® este año. Por favor, revise los formularios, fírmelos y envíemelos de vuelta a la escuela con su hijo/a.

[Or, offer to send with a return envelope to make it easier for parents to respond.]

Puedo enviar información a casa con [student name] y podemos hablar nuevamente sobre el programa si aún tiene preguntas después de revisar la información.

Gracias de nuevo por su tiempo. Realmente aprecio esta oportunidad de hablar con usted sobre el programa de Unified Champion Schools. Creo que [student name] realmente disfrutará y se beneficiará participar en el programa.

[share the best way they can contact you via phone, email, or other method]



SAMPLE UCS SPORTING EVENT INVITATION

(Memo, Letter or Email)

COPY & PASTE



Off Campus Event Version

[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

[Date]

Dear families of Unified Athletes and Partners,

We are excited about the upcoming [enter brief name of event]! This is an away game, so we are sharing details about the event below. We hope you will be able to join us!

Here are some details about the [name of event]:

- Event date: [insert date]
- Event time: [insert start time - end time]
- Location: [name of place and address]
- Transportation/Parking: [insert details if applicable]
- Uniform: All students who participate in the UCS program should wear their sports uniform for [name of school].
- Meals: Students should pack a lunch and bring it with them. Students who receive free school meals will receive lunch on the day. Please bring plenty of water to last the duration of the event. Food and drink [select one] **will/will not** be available to purchase at the event and students [select one] **will/will not** be permitted to leave the vent to purchase food and drinks.
- Medication: If your child needs medicine during the day, please make sure they have it with them at all times. You may also wish to bring a hat and sunscreen for your child.
- Program of events: [include details about the event or program of events]
- Other: [include other details such as sign in/sign out procedures and additional logistics details]

We look forward to seeing you at the [name of event] on [date of event]. Please call or email me if needed. You can reach me at [phone number] or [email address].

To learn more about the UCS program at [name of school], please visit our website at [insert URL for school's UCS program, or any other relevant public information].

Thank you!

[insert name, title, name of school, contact info again]



SAMPLE UCS SPORTING EVENT INVITATION (Memo, Letter or Email)

COPY & PASTE



Off Campus Event Version

[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

[Date]

Estimadas familias de Atletas y Colaboradores de Unified,

¡Estamos emocionados por el próximo [enter brief name of event]! Este es un partido fuera de nuestras instalaciones, por lo que compartimos detalles sobre el evento a continuación. ¡Esperamos que pueda acompañarnos!

Aquí hay algunos detalles sobre el [name of event]:

- Fecha del evento: [insert date]
- Hora del evento: [insert start time - end time]
- Lugar del evento: [name of place and address]
- Transporte/estacionamiento: [insert details if applicable]
- Uniforme: Todos los estudiantes que participen en el programa de UCS deben usar su uniforme deportivo de [name of school].
- Comida: Los estudiantes deben llevar un almuerzo y traerlo consigo. Los estudiantes que reciben comidas escolares gratuitas recibirán su almuerzo ese día. Favor de traer suficiente agua para que le dure todo el evento. Comida y bebidas [select one] **estarán/no estarán** disponibles para comprar en el evento y los estudiantes [select one] **podrán/no podrán** salir del evento para comprar comida y bebidas.
- Medicamentos: Si su hijo/a necesita medicamentos durante el día, asegúrese de que los tenga consigo en todo momento. También puede ser útil traer un sombrero o una gorra y protector solar para su hijo/a.
- Programa de eventos: [include details about the event or program of events.]
- Otro: [include other details such as sign in/sign out procedures and additional logistics details]

Esperamos verle en el [name of event] el día [date of event]. Por favor, llámeme o envíeme un correo electrónico si es necesario. Puede comunicarse conmigo al [phone number] o [email address].

Para obtener más información sobre el programa UCS en [name of school], visite nuestro sitio web en [insert URL for school's UCS program, or any other relevant public information].

¡Gracias!

[insert name, title, name of school, contact info again]



SAMPLE UCS SPORTING EVENT INVITATION (Memo, Letter or Email)

COPY & PASTE



On Campus Event Version

[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

[Date]

Dear families of Unified Athletes and Partners,

We are excited about the upcoming [enter brief name of event]! This is a home game and we hope to have a great turnout!

Event Details

- Event date and time: [insert date and time]
- Event location: [insert name of school]
- Transportation/Parking: [insert details if applicable]
- Directions: [insert details of where event will be located on campus]

We hope that you and your family and friends can join us for the [name of event] on [insert date] at [name of your school].

Please call or email me with any questions or suggestions. You can reach me at [phone number] or [email address].

Thank you!

[insert name, title, name of school, contact info again]



SAMPLE UCS SPORTING EVENT INVITATION (Memo, Letter or Email)

COPY & PASTE



On Campus Event Version

[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

[Date]

Estimadas familias de Atletas y Colaboradores de Unified,

¡Estamos emocionados por el próximo [enter brief name of event]! ¡Este es un partido en nuestras instalaciones y esperamos contar con una gran participación!

Detalles del evento

- Fecha y hora del evento: [insert date and time]
- Lugar del evento: [insert name of school]
- Transporte/Estacionamiento: [insert details if applicable]
- Indicaciones para llegar: [insert details of where event will be located on campus]

Esperamos que usted, su familia y amigos puedan acompañarnos para el [name of event] el día [insert date] en [name of your school].

Por favor, llámeme o envíeme un correo electrónico si tiene alguna pregunta o sugerencia. Puede contactarme al [phone number] o [email address].

¡Gracias!

[insert name, title, name of school, contact info again]



SAMPLE PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT INVITATION

COPY & PASTE



[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

Re: Opportunities for Families to be Part of Unified Champion Schools (UCS) [insert school year]

Dear [insert name of parent or family member],

Your child is an important part of the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® program at [insert school name].

We invite you to join us to help with UCS in any way that fits your schedule and your interests. If you have time or would like to contribute in some way, we have provided ways you can help below. You can volunteer to help out once or more frequently, depending on your schedule and interests.

This year we will have [select all that apply] Unified Sports / leadership / whole school engagement activities.

Select any activities that interest you from the list below. [Create a list of opportunities that help you in managing the UCS program; examples are provided below for you to revise.]

[insert name of activity] as a whole school event on [insert date]

- Help with checking in families and parents
- Help setting up (or decorating for) the event (1 hour prior)
- Help with cleaning up after the event (1 hour after)
- Other, please describe: _____

Unified Sports

- Help provide water and snacks to students
- Assist the coach during sports activities
- Be a mentor to an athlete leader
- Other, please describe: _____

Leadership team

- Facilitate a leadership excellence activity
- Other, please describe: _____

Continued on next page ...



Other parent engagement activities

- Participate in the UCS Leadership Team
- Participate in the school-based Family Support Network to assist other families who may want another family's perspective on UCS or need language support or help with filling out UCS forms
- Provide feedback to us through a quick survey or 15-minute conversation
- Share your positive experiences with UCS on our [insert tool/app used to share information]
- Other, please describe: _____

Please share your volunteer responses with me by email at [insert email address] or mail [insert mailing address; attach an envelope for ease of response].

We will contact you to share more information about the activities you are interested in supporting.

Thank you for your ongoing support of UCS activities and events! As always, if you or your family members have any questions about the UCS program, please feel free to contact me at [insert phone number] or [insert email].

Thank you,
[insert name, title, school name, phone number and email address]



SAMPLE PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT INVITATION

COPY & PASTE



[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

Asunto: Oportunidades para que las familias sean parte de Unified Champion Schools (UCS)
[insert school year]

Estimado [insert name of parent or family member],

Su hijo/a es una parte importante del programa de Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® en [insert school name].

Le invitamos a colaborar con UCS en cualquier forma que se ajuste a su horario y sus intereses. Si tiene tiempo o le gustaría contribuir de alguna forma, a continuación le proporcionamos algunas maneras en las que puede ayudar. Puede ofrecerse como voluntario/a para ayudar una vez o con más frecuencia, dependiendo de su disponibilidad e intereses.

Este año tendremos actividades de [select all that apply] Unified Sports / leadership / whole school engagement.

Elija las actividades que le interesen de la lista a continuación. [Create a list of opportunities that help you in managing the UCS program; examples are provided below for you to revise.]

[insert name of activity] evento para todo la escuela en [insert date]

- Ayudar con el registro de familias y padres
- Ayudar con la preparación (o decoración) para el evento (llegar 1 hora antes)
- Ayudar con la limpieza después del evento (quedarse 1 hora después)
- Ayudar con otra actividad, por favor especifique: _____

Unified Sports

- Ayudar a distribuir agua y refrigerios a los estudiantes
- Asistir al entrenador durante las actividades deportivas
- Ser mentor/a de un atleta líder
- Ayudar con otra actividad, por favor especifique: _____

Leadership team/ Comité de liderazgo

- Dirigir una actividad de excelencia en el liderazgo
- Ayudar con otra actividad, por favor especifique: _____

Continued on next page ...



Otras actividades de participación para padres

- Participar en el Comité de Liderazgo de UCS
- Formar parte de la Red de Apoyo Familiar de la escuela para ayudar a otras familias que quieran conocer la perspectiva de otra familia sobre UCS o necesiten ayuda para llenar los formularios de UCS
- Proporcionar su opinión a través de una breve encuesta o una breve conversación de 15 minutos
- Compartir sus experiencias positivas con UCS en nuestro [\[insert tool/app used to share information\]](#)
- Ayudar con otra actividad, por favor especifique: _____

Por favor, comparta sus respuestas de voluntariado conmigo por correo electrónico a [\[insert email address\]](#) o por correo postal a [\[insert mailing address; attach an envelope for ease of response\]](#).

Nos pondremos en contacto con usted para compartir más información sobre las actividades que le interesa apoyar.

¡Gracias por su continuo apoyo a las actividades y eventos de UCS! Como siempre, si usted o su familia tienen alguna pregunta sobre el programa UCS, no dude en contactarme al [\[insert phone number\]](#) o [\[insert email\]](#).

Gracias,

[\[insert name, title, school name, phone number and email address\]](#)

Fillable Templates for Events or Activities: 1) Family Contact and Outreach and 2) Student Information

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Special Olympics liaisons, physical education or Special Olympics coaches, or other staff.

Time Estimate

Ongoing.



Enhance Communication
with Families from
Diverse Communities

Why would I use this tool?

Parent/Caregiver Contact and Outreach: This resource can help you track parent outreach regarding UCS events/activities, including information on UCS, medical forms, transportation, and other considerations. Also, having all the information you may need in one location contributes to more efficient use of your time when completing UCS paperwork.

Student Information: This resource can help you track student specific information you may need for UCS events or activities and/or your UCS paperwork. Having all the information you may need in one location contributes to more efficient use of your time when completing UCS paperwork.

When should I use this tool?

Parent/Caregiver Contact and Outreach: Use this resource 1) to document communication with family members and 2) to track additional information such as the status of information shared with parents (e.g., medical forms) and transportation considerations.

Student Information: Use this resource 1) to track which students with and without disabilities participate in UCS events and 2) to track their health and dietary needs, motivators, and special considerations.



How should I use this tool?

You may access the downloadable **Excel version** [here](#). In the downloadable Excel version, you will type in the needed information in a given cell or use the drop-down options for filling in each cell.

Be sure to review the school or district requirements for safely storing student data.



SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT Communicating with Families about UCS

Riverview School, New York City, New York*

At the beginning of the school year, the athletic director, coaches, and teachers call parents to explain what Unified Champion Schools is and what it has to offer. They explain their role and how the program builds skills and allows students to engage in a group setting or on a team. For sports, coaches help families understand adapted physical education or sports and the likelihood of injury. And how UCS is also about making memories! Family outreach continues throughout the year. In some cases to inform families about events; in other cases to update families or speak with them about how best to redirect or motivate their child during UCS events.

“When you’re planning things that involve parents, you really need to think through how much time it will take to get information out to them and what steps are necessary for that to happen. I’ve got to make sure I include every parent, which includes every language that our parents speak. It’s more work at the end of the day, but it’s necessary.” (District 75, athletic director)

“[The athletic director] is always calling and texting, “this is what we are doing” He’s very engaged compared to the other public school [where] we don’t hear anything.” (parent, Riverview School)

* A special thanks to Billy Davis, Special Olympics Coach, District 75, New York City, for the idea of a comprehensive student information sheet and outreach and information sheet for tracking communications with parents and caregivers.



Parent/Caregiver Contact and Outreach Information for Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® Events or Activities

EXAMPLE ONLY

Directions: Fill out the table to help you track parent outreach regarding UCS activities/events, including information shared with parents about what UCS is, medical form(s), transportation, and other information. Be sure to review the school or district requirements for safely storing student data.

PARENT/CAREGIVER EXAMPLE	
Student Name	Christina Rosa
Student Contact Info	crosa@example.com
Parent(s) / Caregiver Name	Richard Rosa and Gloria Cardona
Parent / Caregiver Preferred Contact Info	mom: xxx.xxx.xxxx; gcardona@example.com
Translator Needed	Sometimes
If translator needed, what language (and when)?	Spanish - needed for anything requiring signature
UCS Event(s) / Activity	basketball
Athlete or Partner	Athlete with IDD
Spoke with Parent / Caregiver	yes, on 3.3.23
Outcome / Status of Conversation(s)	spoke w/ mom about Christina's participation in BB; she is supportive
Shared Paperwork / Medical Forms	shared UCS info only
Outcome / Status of Paperwork / Forms	need to send medical form for participation in basketball
Transportation Notes	basketball is during school hours so no need for transportation
Other Notes	see if family needs Family Support Network volunteer to assist with filling out medical form



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You may access the downloadable Excel version of the **Parent/Caregiver Contact and Outreach** spreadsheet [here](#).

You may access the **Family Support Network** resource [here](#).



Student Information for Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® Events or Activities

EXAMPLE ONLY

Directions: Fill out the relevant student information below to help you track student specific information you may need for UCS events or activities and/or your UCS paperwork. Be sure to review the school or district requirements for safely storing student data.

STUDENT INFORMATION EXAMPLE	
Student Name	Christina Rosa
Age	8 yo
DOB	3.3.2016
Gender	female
Athlete / Partner	athlete (with IDD)
Food Allergies / Requests	No hot Cheetos; allergy to FRESH pineapples – will break out in hives, no EpiPen needed
Special Considerations	Christina needs a safe, quiet space if she has an outburst or seems to be struggling
Motivators	Christina loves high fives; she does not like hugs or when people get too close/in her personal space.
Other Notes	



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You may access the **Student Information** downloadable Excel spreadsheet [here](#).

The STEP Framework: Participation and Inclusion in Unified Sports

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Special Olympics liaisons, physical education or Special Olympics coaches, or other staff.

Time Estimate

Approximately 3-5 minutes to share the resource with parents and family members.



**Enhance Communication
with Families from
Diverse Communities**

Why would I use this tool?

Family members want to know how their children with disabilities can participate in Unified PE and Unified Sports. This tool will explain how the STEP framework supports participation and inclusion of students with disabilities in Unified Sports. . The STEP Framework is provided in English and Spanish.

When should I use this tool?

This tool can help you begin the conversation about UCS with parents and families. It will be most useful at the beginning of the school year or when a student first joins UCS.

How should I use this tool?

You can share the STEP Framework handout the following ways:

- print the STEP framework handout and circulate it at an event, email the STEP framework handout directly to parents and caregivers, and
- enlarge the STEP framework to use as a poster.

GET INVOLVED WITH UNIFIED SPORTS!

SPORTS ACCESSIBILITY & YOUR CHILD

Inclusion is a priority in Special Olympics Unified Sports®.

We can adapt sports to the needs of **all** children. Our goal is to ensure your child's **accessibility** and their sense of belonging.



Why the STEP framework?

Special Olympics Unified coaches can use the STEP framework to support participation and inclusion. It is widely used in adapted physical education. The four main activity components of the STEP framework — space, task, equipment, and people — can be modified to meet the needs of each individual.

How are coaches trained?

Each sport follows rules regulated by a national governing body for that sport. Special Olympics coaches receive training on assessing students of differing abilities to determine how best to modify activities so they are accessible and safe for each student. Training includes athlete development and preparing athletes for competition. Coaches are prepared to maintain a safe environment, prevent injury, and plan for emergencies.

Talk to your school's Unified Special Olympics liaison or coach to learn what strategies the school uses.

What does STEP stand for?



SPACE Coaches may change the space where the sport is taking place.



TASK Coaches can increase participation by changing the demands, changing the rules, or number of times the child is able to repeat a task.



EQUIPMENT Coaches can modify equipment by changing the size of the target or the height of equipment to increase success and development of skills.



PEOPLE Coaches can change the number of children in a sport or have children in different roles so they can work in a small group.

¡PARTICIPE EN UNIFIED SPORTS!

LA ACCESIBILIDAD DEPORTIVA Y SU HIJO/A

La inclusión es una prioridad en Special Olympics Unified Sports®. Podemos adaptar los deportes a las necesidades de todos los niños. Nuestro propósito es asegurar la accesibilidad de su hijo/a y su sentido de pertenencia.

¿Por qué el marco STEP?

Los entrenadores de Special Olympics Unified pueden usar el marco STEP para apoyar la participación y la inclusión. Este enfoque se usa mucho en la educación física adaptada. Los cuatro componentes principales del marco STEP son- espacio, tarea, equipo y personas - y pueden modificarse para satisfacer las necesidades de cada persona.

¿Cómo se entran los entrenadores?

Cada deporte sigue las reglas establecidas por un organismo rector nacional para ese deporte. Los entrenadores de Special Olympics reciben capacitación para evaluar a los estudiantes con diferentes habilidades para determinar la mejor manera de modificar las actividades para que sean accesibles y seguras para cada estudiante. El entrenamiento incluye el desarrollo de los atletas y la preparación de los atletas para competir. Los entrenadores están preparados para mantener un entorno seguro, prevenir lesiones, y planificar para emergencias.

Hable con el coordinador/la coordinadora o entrenador/a de Unified Special Olympics de su escuela para conocer las estrategias que utiliza la escuela.

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA STEP?



ESPACIO Los entrenadores pueden cambiar el lugar donde se lleva a cabo el deporte.



TAREA Los entrenadores pueden fomentar la participación cambiando las exigencias y las reglas del deporte o el número de veces que el niño/a puede repetir una tarea.



EQUIPO Los entrenadores pueden modificar el equipo deportivo, cambiando el tamaño del objetivo o la altura del equipo, para mejorar el éxito y fomentar el desarrollo de habilidades.



PERSONAS Los entrenadores pueden cambiar el número de niños en un deporte o hacer que los niños desempeñen diferentes roles para que trabajen en un grupo pequeño

Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads, Special Olympics liaisons, and other school staff.

Time Estimate

Up to 30 minutes to identify tools, review websites, and select preferred tool(s).



**Enhance Communication
with Families from
Diverse Communities**

Why would I use this resource?

This resource will help you identify and select language translation tools to support your communication with families who speak languages other than English. Also included in this resource is information on the video relay services (VRS) in each state for communicating with families who use American Sign Language (ASL).

Many of you are using district approved apps like Remind, Talking Points, or Class Dojo to help communicate with families. Some of the tools you use may already offer translation options. This resource can help you discover additional translation tools that may better meet the language needs of your school, the students, and their families. This resource can also help you gauge whether an existing tool is still the best one for you to use.

When should I use this resource?

You may use this resource when you are trying to determine which translation tool would best meet your needs when you are engaging with UCS families, particularly families from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. For example, you may need a tool to help translate during in-person conversations, online meetings, or conferences. Alternatively, you may also need a tool to translate documents, create transcripts, or translate images into text. Many tools have costs associated with their use; in some cases you may need to contact a salesperson or customer service representative to obtain cost information.



How should I use this resource?

This resource offers 8 different translation tools that may be used for live translation or document translation. An additional reference is included for American Sign Language interpretation through your state's video relay services.

The resource provides the following information at-a-glance:

- Website URL
- How to use the app or tool with families
- Major features of the app or tool
- Use ratio
- Technical support provided, if any
- Interoperability (e.g., web-based, app, other)
- Security features
- Costs (Note that some companies require you to contact a salesperson before they will provide a price quote.)

DISCLAIMER: Special Olympics does not promote the use of any specific translation tool and has not tested or validated these tools in any context. All users should check with their districts to determine what is allowable in their schools and districts and whether the purchase of additional software or tools are supported by the school or district.



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You may access the downloadable **Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families** spreadsheet [here](#).



Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families

BYRDHOUSE-AI DEEPL GOOGLE TRANSLATE ITRANSLATE PROPRIO REVERSO TALKAO TRANSLATE WORDLY VIDEO RELAY SERVICES (VRS)

	BYRDHOUSE - AI	DEEPL	GOOGLE TRANSLATE
Website URL	https://byrdhouseapp.com/	https://www.deepl.com/translator	https://translate.google.com/
How to use this tool with families	Real-time meeting translation with multiple participants for meetings, calls, and chats	Translate text and documents into up to 32 languages; translate text into English. Voice text translation available.	Website and app can be used with families for real-time translation or written translation. Google Translate offers 133 languages including English.
Languages	Includes more than 125 languages English-Spanish translation in all accents Multi-language translation up to 15 languages at once	Translate text into 32 languages	Translates text into 133 languages
Modality options	Translates images into languages	Translate from PDF, PowerPoint, Word documents and audio files (speech to text) Use AI to write text	Text translation Voice translation Camera translation (use your phone camera to point and translate the image into text) Offline translation Keyboard extension
Other major features	n/a	n/a	n/a
Use ratio	1:1, 1:many, many:many	1:1 and 1:many	1:1 or 1:many
Tech support provided	Instructions provided on website; requires some orientation. Online tutorial provided. FAQ online.	"Dedicated support" noted on website with no further details	Help option provided via website and app (general help with online tips, not tech support)
Interoperability	Web-based tool	Web-based tool and in app	Available on Apple and Google products and computers
Security features	No information provided	Data is encrypted; data security adherence to all general data protection regulation (GDPR) per EU regulations; requirements and is also ISO 27001 certified (i.e., meets the international standard for information security).	Some information is shared with Google "to improve Google's products and services"; privacy policy is provided.
Costs	Free trial and pay-as-you-go option; Pro offers 10 hours per month and up to 100 attendees per meeting; Enterprise offers unlimited attendees and hours. Prices are not listed on website.	Free trial version allows for up to 1,500 words translated, 3 documents, and 10 glossary items. Pro version (paid) offers unlimited text translation, file translation, and data security. Pricing plan is monthly or annually.	No cost; open source licences with different entities



Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families

BYRDHOUSE-AI DEEPL GOOGLE TRANSLATE **iTRANSLATE** **PROPRIO** **REVERSO** TALKAO TRANSLATE WORDLY VIDEO RELAY SERVICES (VRS)

	iTRANSLATE	PROPRIO	REVERSO
Website URL	https://itranslate.com/	https://proprio-ls.com/	https://www.reverso.net/text-translation
How to use this tool with families	Website and app can be used with families for real-time translation or written translation. iTranslate offers "more than 100" languages including English.	Real-time interpreters and translation; document translation offered	Document translation (not voice)
Languages	Includes more than 100 languages	Includes 350 languages Offers American Sign Language interpreters If language is not certain, they offer a "point to your language" option	Translation for 27 languages including English
Modality options	Text translation Voice translation Camera translation (use your phone camera to point and translate) Offline translation Keyboard extension	(Document translation is noted on the website, no further details)	Translate forms from Word, PowerPoint, Excel, PDF, and 10 more file formats
Other major features	Dictionary of words and translations	Recording of calls with files held for up to 60 days Available 24/7/365	File size limitations based on free, paid premium, paid Pro, and credits purchased Can search for context words/phrases, grammar, synonyms, conjugations, vocabulary, and dictionary
Use ratio	1:1 or 1:many	1:1 and 1:many	1:1 use
Tech support provided	Email help option offered	Not stated	Substantive FAQ section on website provides guidance
Interoperability	Available on Apple and Google products and computers	Available onsite, over the phone, and virtually	Available on Apple and Google products and computers
Security features	100% Private, does not store translations; privacy policy is provided	Recordings are kept on an encrypted server for up to 60 days; users cannot request the file due to HIPAA regulations	Translations are not tracked; users can save and find in search history with paid accounts; on a private cloud and not accessible by 3rd parties; documents are sent via encrypted servers.
Costs	Free trial for 1 week; cost is \$5.99 per month and billed monthly or \$49.99 per year billed annually	Contact Proprio for pricing for your organization.	Free option available for limited amount of text translation; offer Premium subscription, Pro subscription, and option to purchase credits (pay as you go). Premium is 4.21 Euro/month for annual subscription, or 6.49 Euro per month for monthly subscription; students and teachers get a 75% discount on premium for annual subscriptions.



Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families

BYRDHOUSE-AI DEEPL GOOGLE TRANSLATE ITRANSLATE PROPRIO REVERSO TALKAO TRANSLATE WORDLY VIDEO RELAY SERVICES (VRS)

	TALKAO TRANSLATE	WORDLY	VIDEO RELAY SERVICES (VRS)
Website URL	https://talkao.com	https://www.wordly.ai/	Each state has its own service
How to use this tool with families	Translation apps can be used for augmented reality translations, voice translation, text translation, video translation, camera translation (use your phone camera to point and translate), and new language learning.	Real-time translation into audio, captions, and transcripts In-person and virtual meetings, events and webinars, 50+ languages	American Sign Language translation service
Languages	Includes more than 125 languages English-Spanish translation in all accents Multi-language translation up to 15 languages at once	Includes 50+ languages Simultaneous translation, multilingual translation	American Sign Language
Modality options	Translates images into languages	Video translation AI transcription	n/a
Other major features	n/a	Automated glossaries to include names and terms Available 24/7/365	n/a
Use ratio	1:1 use	1:1 and 1:many	1:1 and 1:many
Tech support provided		Customers can get support through onboarding, online guides FAQ online	N/A
Interoperability	Available on Google Play, Apple App Store, and AppGallery	Web-based tool	Available for use with video phone tool (user) and phone or virtual meeting tools (non-users)
Security features	Files and data are deleted within 48-72 hours; do not share information with third parties	SOC 2 compliance (voluntary compliance standards used by service organizations), data encryption	All calls are confidential per Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules
Costs	Free app with in-app purchases available	Multiple pricing packages available based on # of hours, configuration needs, and optional glossaries and transcript translation	VRS is a no-cost, subscriber-based service for Deaf people with a qualifying hearing loss who use ASL and have videophones, smart phones, tablets, or computers that are set up for video communication. VRS started when videophones were first available to users in 2003.



UCS Family Engagement Toolkit
Resources



**Grow and Sustain
the UCS Program**

How to Create District and School Profiles

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons.

Time Estimate

30 - 60 minutes.



Grow and Sustain
the UCS Program

Why would I use this tool?

This tool will guide you in the process of developing district and school profiles to better understand the local context of a school and its school district and what co-curricular and extra-curricular activities already exist at a school.

When should I use this tool?

Program leads can use this tool when considering districts and schools as candidates for UCS, when onboarding schools, or in combination with other family engagement resources such as Designing and Facilitating Inclusive UCS Leadership Team Meetings or Community Asset Mapping.

SO liaisons can use this tool as part of their strategic planning process at the start of the school year to help determine what UCS activities to focus on or in combination with other family engagement resources such as Designing and Facilitating Inclusive UCS Leadership Team Meetings or Community Asset Mapping.



How should I use this tool?

You can use this tool:

- to recruit a district or school for UCS based on its mission/values, number of students with disabilities, existing sports or clubs, etc.;
- to help the school-level SO liaison better understand the diversity of their school and district;
- to determine eligibility for funding;
- to help determine the kind of support or guidance a school may need with its UCS programming for family outreach and engagement;
- to help determine how your UCS Leadership Team can represent the different perspectives in the school community; and
- to support completion of a community asset map and help brainstorm school and community resources for UCS activities that may benefit the school's families.



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You may access **Designing and Facilitating Inclusive UCS Leadership Team Meetings** [here](#).

You may access **Community Asset Mapping** [here](#).

You may access **Communication Strategies for Family Engagement in UCS** [here](#).



How to Create District and School Profiles in 4-Steps

Combining school and district enrollment, demographic, and other information for school profiles will allow you to see both the context of the school and the broader context of the district it is situated in. This comprehensive view will aid strategic planning for UCS activities, schoolwide and community outreach and engagement, and partnered collaborations.

Step 1: Gather School Contact Information

- Record the school name, address, phone, and website URL.
- List names, phone numbers, and email addresses of the principal and either the UCS point of contact or potential point of contact.
- Link to the district and/or school calendar and include any notable breaks such as when the school year begins and finishes.

Step 2: Gather Data and Describe **District** Information

- Review data on the district and record the socioeconomic and demographic diversity of the community. This includes the number and percentage of students who participate in Title I and free or reduced lunch, and the number and percentage of students with disabilities.
- Include other features of interest such as geographic area, history, mission, and core values.



HOW DO I DO THAT?

District-level information can be obtained from 1) the school district's website, 2) the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and/or 3) the state's report card (for public schools):

1. Go to the 'About' section of the district's website to pull up information on students, languages, etc.
2. Go to the 'Public School Districts' page at [NCES](#), type in the name of the school district, go to the 'district demographics' section and select 'school district demographic dashboard.'
3. Go to the state report card by typing '(state name) state report card' into any browser. You should be directed to that state's department of education (DOE) website. Each state DOE page will be organized differently. Look for a district search function and pull up the district.

Step 3: Gather Data and Describe **School** Information

- Review data on the school and record a description that includes the socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic diversity of the community, including the percentage of students who participate in Title I and free or reduced lunch, and the number of students with disabilities.
- Include other features of interest such as geographic area, average distance that students live from the school and its history, mission, and core values.



Optional: Include a breakdown of students with disabilities by classroom setting (e.g., how many resource settings and how many self-contained settings). This information can help determine if the school already has an inclusive educational setting. You will likely need to obtain this information from school-level staff.



HOW DO I DO THAT?

School-level information can be obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the school district's website, the school's website, and/or the state's report card (for public schools):

1. Click [here](#) for NCES. This allows you to search for public schools.
 - Type in the name of the school and the city and state. Select 'search'.
 - Click on the hyperlink of the school you are looking for.
 - Scroll down the page to 'Enrollment Characteristics' and on the school's profile card, record the necessary details.
2. For information not available via NCES, go to the district's website and pull up the name of the school; this may take you directly to the school's website and/or provide a school profile.
3. Go to the school's website. Typically, information about the school is in the 'About' section of the website.
4. You can also go to the state report card by typing '(state name) state report card' into any browser. You should be directed to that state's department of education (DOE) website. Each state DOE page will be organized differently. Look for a school search function and pull up the school.

Step 4: List Co- or Extra-curricular Activities

- List the sports the school offers. If possible:
 - include contact information for each sport or the primary sports of interest, and
 - identify how many students with and without disabilities participate.
- List the clubs and other organizations the school supports. If possible:
 - include contact information for each club or the primary clubs of interest, and
 - identify how many students with and without disabilities participate.



SAMPLE SCHOOL PROFILE ¹⁰ [2022-2023]

School Name	North High School
School Address	2960 North Speer Blvd, Denver, CO 80211
School Main Line	720-423-2700
School Website	https://north.dpsk12.org/
School Principal	German Echevarría
UCS School Point of Contact	Joe Smith, Special Education Teacher
Contact Information	jsmith@example.edu; XXX-XXX-XXXX (cell); XXX-XXX-XXXX (school)

Notable Dates

- Tuesday is an early release day for students (1:00pm) for professional learning for teachers
- School year ends June 5th; click [here](#) for district calendar

School District Information (for 2022-2023)

Superintendent: Dr. Alex Marrero (since 2021)

Denver School District (DPS) is an urban school district and serves the educational needs of 89,213 students. Currently, the district consists of 207 traditional, innovation, and charter schools that follow a PK–5, 6–8, 9–12 grade-level configuration.¹¹

The student body is culturally diverse. DPS students and families speak over 150 languages, including Spanish, Arabic, Amharic, Vietnamese, Somali, French, Nepali, Eastern Farsi, Tigrigna, and Russian.¹² Over 40% of students speak a language other than English at home.¹³

Demographic Data¹⁴

GRADES PK-12							
Enrollment by Race/ Ethnicity	American Indian / Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
	.6%	3%	14%	52%	.6%	25%	5%

¹⁰ Sample is based on an actual school district and school.

¹¹ Source: https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/4086/DPS/3501355/DPS-Strategic-Roadmap-Final_Web.pdf

¹² Source: <https://www.dpsk12.org/page/mission-and-vision>

¹³ Source: https://issuu.com/dpscommunications/docs/2023_roadmap_report_final_web

¹⁴ Source: Ibid



Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible Students	63%
Gifted and Talented	8%
Students with Disabilities	13%

DPS Mission

“Educational equity is our collective responsibility. We prepare students for career, college and life. We create conditions and partnerships where students, families and team members belong and thrive.”

DPS Values

Students First, Integrity, Equity, Collaboration, Accountability, Fun

School Information (for 2022-2023)

North High School opened in 1883. It is an urban, comprehensive, traditional neighborhood high school located in Northwest Denver and committed to ensuring all students are college and career ready. In 2022-23, it enrolled 1,637 students in grades 9-12.¹⁵

Demographic Data¹⁶

ENROLLMENT BY GRADE				
	9th	10th	11th	12 th
No of Students	487	383	361	406

ENROLLMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY							
	American Indian / Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
No of Students	18	21	92	1,089	7	353	57

ENROLLMENT BY GENDER		
	Male	Female
No of Students	848	789

¹⁵ Source: https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/school_detail.asp?Search=1&InstName=north+high+school&City=denver&State=08&SchoolType=1&SchoolType=2&SchoolType=3&SchoolType=4&SpecificSchlTypes=all&IncGrade=-1&LoGrade=-1&HiGrade=-1&ID=080336000389

¹⁶ Source: Ibid



FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH		
	Free lunch eligible	Reduced-price lunch eligible
No of Students	944	110

Co- or Extra-curricular Opportunities (for 2022-2023)¹⁷

- 93% of students participate in at least one club, activity, or sport.
- Nearly half of all students participate in at least one sport.
- North High School offered 24 competitive athletic teams and two club sports in 2022-23.

¹⁷ Source: <https://www.dpsk12.org/o/north/page/faqs>



SCHOOL PROFILE TEMPLATE [insert academic year]

School Name:

School Address:

School Phone No:

School Website:

School Principal:

UCS School Point of Contact: [insert name and position]
 Contact Information: [insert phone and email]

Notable Dates:

District and/or School Calendar: [insert link]

School District Information

Superintendent:

[District name] School District is **a/an** [urban, suburban, rural] school district and serves the educational needs of [# of students] students. Currently, the district consists of [total # of schools] schools — [# of high schools] high schools, [# of middle/junior high schools] middle schools and [# of elementary schools] elementary schools — utilizing a [insert grade-level configuration] grade-level configuration.

[add additional relevant information]

Demographic Data [add source as footnote or link]

GRADES [INSERT GRADE-LEVELS]							
Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	American Indian / Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races

Free/Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible Students	
Gifted and Talented	
Students with Disabilities	



Mission [insert mission if relevant]

Core Values [insert core values if relevant]

School Information

The school opened in [insert date]. [School name] is a [insert type of school] school, enrolling [# of students enrolled] students in grades [insert grades served]. [add source as footnote or link]

Demographic Data [add source as footnote or link]

ENROLLMENT BY GRADE						
No of Students						

ENROLLMENT BY RACE/ETHNICITY							
	American Indian / Alaska Native	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
No of Students							

ENROLLMENT BY GENDER		
	Male	Female
No of Students		



FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH		
	Free lunch eligible	Reduced-price lunch eligible
No of Students		

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM SERVICE TYPE		
	Gifted and Talented	Special Education
No of Students		

Mission [insert mission if relevant]

Core Values [insert core values if relevant]

Co- or Extra-curricular Opportunities [insert co- or extra-curricular activities]

NOTES

Empathy Interviews: A Guide for UCS Programs

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons.

Time Estimate

2-3 hours to plan and prepare for interviews; time to conduct and analyze interviews will depend on the number of interviews.



Grow and Sustain
the UCS Program

Why would I use this tool?

This tool offers a guided process for gathering feelings and stories around specific experiences. You can use this data collection technique to better design and develop equitable family engagement in UCS programming by:

- building trust and **empathy**;
- gathering feedback and ideas; and
- identifying issues and generating potential solutions.

“**Empathy** means trying to understand deeply the experiences and feelings of other people. It is both a mindset to embrace and a skill to practice.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Nelsestuen, and Smith (2020). Empathy interviews, p. 59. The Learning Professional.
<https://learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/tool-empathy-interviews.pdf>



When should I use this tool?

You can use empathy interviews for multiple purposes. You can use this process when you want to:

- build trust and connections with families;
- understand better the needs, concerns, or behaviors of diverse families; and
- to fill a gap in programming.

How should I use this tool?

To use this tool, you can:

- watch the short video on empathy interview norms;
- review the 6-step process to plan, conduct, and process information;
- use the checklist and template plan;
- conduct interviews; and
- analyze interviews, share findings with others, and determine how or if findings inform program improvement.



Empathy Interviews: A Guide for UCS Programs

Empathy interviews are a technique both to connect with families and to gather information that can be used to support program improvement activities. With empathy interviews, you are gathering information on a family's lived experience by listening to them share their experience with UCS.

What you learn from conversations with diverse families can help you better value and understand them. What you learn can also help you identify gaps or needs in UCS programming and work toward family engagement approaches that are inclusive, accessible, and successful.

Empathy Interviews Overview and Norms

Empathy interviews are:

- designed to build empathy with students and families toward an equitable family engagement approach.
- a strategy to understand unacknowledged student and family needs.
- usually brief one-on-one conversations.
- conducted with humility and respect.

Empathy interviews are not:

- intended to be used as a research method.
- representative of all families in your community.
- typically group interviews.
- a lengthy interview or process.

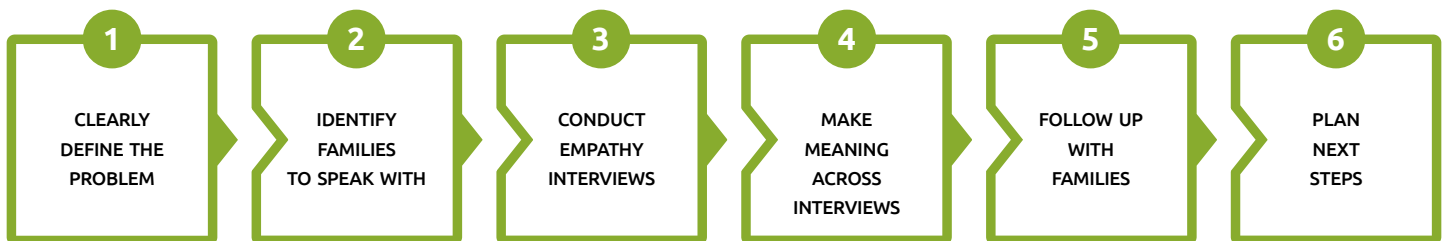


Empathy Interview Norms Video [4:08min]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71UuDC39kHQ>

The 6-step approach illustrated in **Figure 5** provides guidance on the empathy interview process. Each description below includes tips and considerations for meeting the needs of different contexts.

Figure 5. 6-Step Approach to Empathy Interviews





1

CLEARLY
DEFINE THE
PROBLEM

Step 1. What do you want to learn and why?

Decide on your purpose for an empathy interview and what sort of information would be useful to you. Are you looking for ways to improve or change family engagement? Do you want to understand the root cause of challenges to family engagement? Do you want to explore a particular issue? Or, something else?

Create 1-3 open-ended questions that allow families to express diverse experiences with the topic. Empathy interviews are focused and typically have no more than 3 questions.

Questions may include probes—or follow-up questions—to make sure you get a full understanding of families' lived experience with the topic. Sample question stems and prompts could be:¹⁹

- **Can you tell me about** your experience with getting medical clearance for your daughter so she could participate in [insert sport/activity]?

Probe(s):

- Tell me more about ...
- How did you feel about that?

- **Can you describe the circumstances around** a UCS event or activity you really wanted to attend.

Probe(s):

- Why was that?

- **Tell me about a time** you couldn't make it to a UCS event or activity.

Probe(s):

- What happened?
- What were you feeling?

- **What are the best / more difficult parts of** [fill in with a UCS event or other relevant event/activity]?

Probe(s):

- What were you thinking at that point?

- **What are your best/worst experiences with ...**

Probe(s):

- Tell me more ...

¹⁹ Adapted from Hasso Plattner, Institute of Design at Stanford, Empathy Fieldguide



Step 2. Who do you need to hear from?

Decide on whose voice you need to hear and what criteria you will use to identify families. This could be based on families from diverse communities, families of students with and/or without disabilities, current or previous UCS families, etc.

The goal is also to select families who represent a variety of perspectives. Ideally, you would include families who have very different interactions with UCS. For example:

- If your focus is UCS paperwork—a family who always submits UCS paperwork on time and a family that rarely or never submits UCS paperwork.
- If your focus is UCS participation—a family who frequently comes to UCS events and a family who rarely or never comes to UCS events.
- If your focus is volunteering for UCS—a family who always volunteers and a family who rarely or never volunteers.

Other questions to consider before selecting families for empathy interviews include:

- How many people do I need or want to interview?
- Consider the size of the UCS program and school and revisit your goals — what do you want to learn and why?
- How do I recruit the families to interview?
- Consider if it is best to try to schedule time with families or to approach them at UCS or school events or activities.
- Do I need a translator?
- Consider the need for a technology tool to ease communication between you and the families that speak different languages.
- Who will conduct the interview?
- Consider someone who speaks the same language and has an established relationship with the person they are interviewing.
- Where and when will I/we conduct the interviews?
- This should be a neutral, safe space where you can hear and focus on the family member.

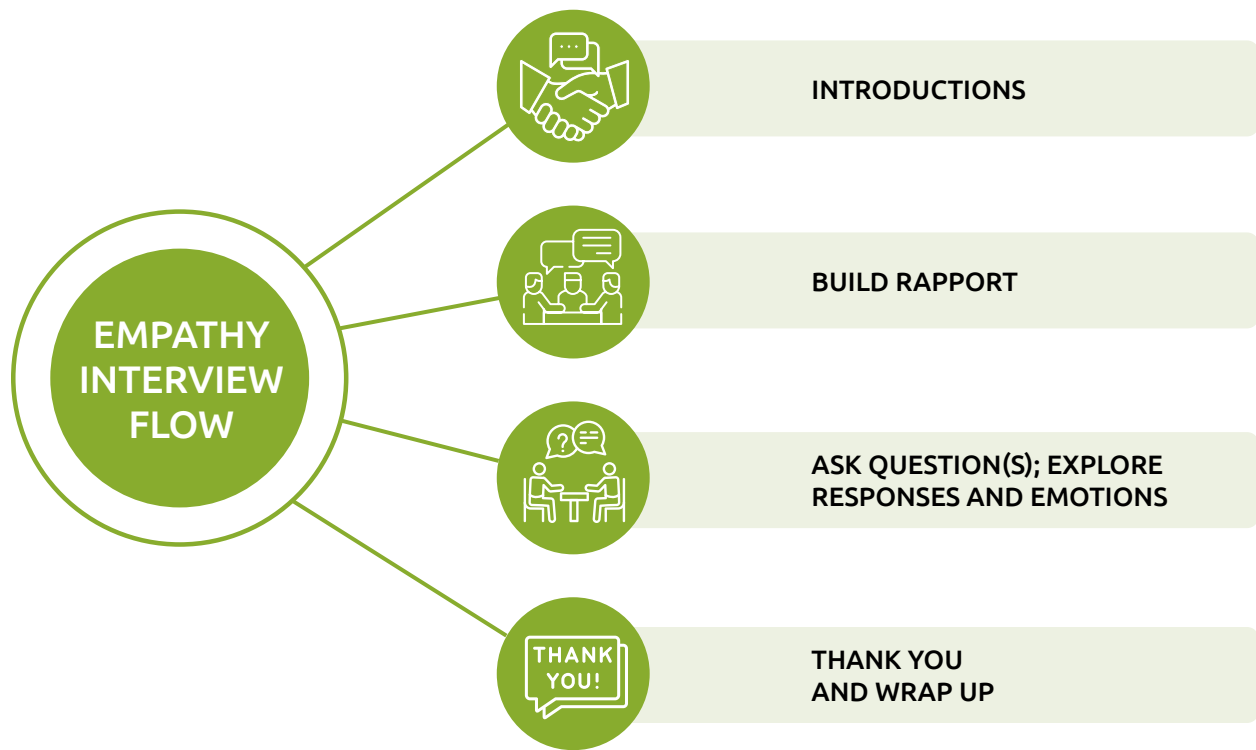


Step 3. How will you conduct the empathy interview?

When conducting an empathy interview, keep it informal and conversational. Your role is that of listener and prompter, with the family member doing most of the talking.

Figure 6 highlights the phases of a typical empathy interview and the approximate length of time spent on each phase, from introducing yourself to thank you and wrap up.

Figure 6. The Flow of an Empathy Interview



Source: Adapted from Hasso Plattner, Institute of Design at Stanford, Empathy Fieldguide²⁰

These informal conversations are short! They should not last more than 10-15 minutes. This short timeline allows you to conduct empathy interviews with families or caregivers during lunch or other breaks, during parent-teacher conferences, during UCS events, or even during school pick-ups and drop-offs.

For empathy interviews, building rapport with the family is crucial. Your tone should be genuine and warm. The conversation should not be rushed — if you don't have 15 minutes, find another time to meet with the family. Focus on who you are speaking with and what they are saying; you are seeking to understand, not to confirm.

Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection: Equitable Family Engagement

Consider how your lived experience affects how and what families share with you.

- How does my lived experience inform my attitude and assumptions about families?
- What do I expect from them? Do they know this? Does it align with what families expect from me/us?



²⁰ <https://hci.stanford.edu/courses/cs147/2022/wi/readings/FIELDGUIDE-Screen-DTBC-March-2015-V2.pdf>



Whether you are conducting an empathy interview in-person or virtually (using a web-based tool with video), pay attention to your body language—keep eye contact, smile, and nod to show your interest in what they are saying.

If you are conducting an empathy interview by phone, use gestures when you are talking — these can often be heard in your voice (e.g., smiling, nodding your head) — and follow up when appropriate with affirmative words or sounds such as ‘ah,’ ‘ok,’ ‘hmm.’

TIPS for Retaining the Conversation

1. Ask the family member if it is okay to audio-record them so you can focus on them and refer to the recording later; be sure to let them know it is only for your notes and not something you will share with anyone else.
2. Immediately after an empathy interview, type or write down the notes, especially quotes from families.



Step 4. How do you make meaning across the empathy interviews?

After you gather information from several families, including their thoughts and feelings on the topic, create “headlines.” Headlines, like in newspapers, are the main point or theme. Below are strategies on how to create headlines by identifying the main points or themes:

- Describe what families actually said. Do not interpret what families said — use their language. If you are not clear about something, ask the family to explain it or leave it out. Using the family’s language acknowledges and respects their lived experience.
- Group family member comments (or quotes) that are similar. This will help you to create themes of those common ideas and experiences.

Example of Grouping Excerpts Together Around a Common Theme:

Because I know they like the attention. They deserve it. Here they are doing an activity just like anyone else. It has changed my Ray, and I wish other parents could see how their kid is able to participate. And how amazing these kids are with one another.

... My kids attended Special Olympics meets, and it was such an eye opener for me. It just gave me a boost of, "Oh my gosh, my kids are going to be ok in life."

... My father, he's 80 ... I took him to one of the meets and he's like, "So, you're telling me everybody here has a disability?" I'm like, "yes." He didn't show it, but I know internally he was in awe. So you want to talk about touching culture ... I brought my 80-year-old father. He's always worried; then he sees this and it's encouraging.

... The students with parents who do not have special needs children, I think it's important for them to be part of it. So they can realize ... then they can explain it to their children.

- Create your headlines using one theme per headline.
 - **Example of Identifying a Theme/Headline from Common Ideas:**
'Families Seeing Athletes and Partners in Action'
- Summarize what the headlines are telling you about the experiences of diverse family members participating in your classroom, school, UCS activity or event. Include feelings of belonging. What did you hear? What are you learning about the root causes that contribute to an issue?
 - **Example of Summarizing a Theme/Headline:**
It is impactful for families to see athletes and partners play, support, and be a community. We need to consider ways of bringing these moments to families that are unable to attend events. Suggestions include photos, videos, video clips, and live streaming. We also need to communicate that participation is not limited to parents and caregivers; all family members can attend.



Step 5. How do you get feedback on your headlines or themes?

Ideally, you will want to check back with the families you spoke with to be sure that the headlines you created represent what they said. Share the headlines or themes and summaries that reflect what a given family shared. This guarantees that what you think you heard is what the family meant and gives family members a chance to clarify anything that might have been misunderstood.

This follow up can empower and validate families, and it shows your intention to listen, understand, and potentially take action based on their thoughts and feelings. You are also building relationships and trust with the families.

If follow up is not possible, you can also ask colleagues, “This is what I found; does it make sense to you?” and revise your analysis as needed.



Step 6. What do you do with the findings?

After you have analyzed what families shared and followed up with them or others, consider how you might be able to use that information for program improvement. You may want to share your findings with a Unified/PE coach, your administrator, or a colleague to discuss what you would like to address and solutions for doing so. If you have limited information, you can conduct more empathy interviews at a later date and look for trends over a longer period of time.

Example of Planning Next Steps:

1. Look into the feasibility of livestreaming. Reach out to families to see if anyone has any connections.
2. Talk with a photography teacher (at school or another school or a local community college) about recruiting a photography student to take photos and videos of the events and to edit footage to 1-2 minute clips of the athletes.
3. When informing parents of an event, make it clear that all family members are welcome and encouraged to attend.



Empathy Interviews in Action

Click on the link below for a demonstration video on empathy interviews between two students.

Topic: How to create better morning experiences for people [1:50 minutes]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QilzTA0OR60>



Empathy Interview Checklist

The following checklist helps you stay organized and track key elements of the empathy interview process. It is not an exhaustive list, but a guide to support you.

Feel free to include additional items.

CHECK	STEPS
	Step 1: Plan and prepare for the empathy interview
	Identify your purpose for the empathy interview.
	Identify 1-3 open-ended questions
	Step 2: Identify family members to speak with
	Determine how many people you would like to talk to.
	Identify people likely to have different lived experiences
	Identify when and where you will conduct the empathy interviews.
	Step 3: Conduct the empathy interview
	Practice the empathy interview.
	Identify who will conduct the empathy interview and who will record it.
	Step 4: Make meaning across the empathy interview(s)
	Discuss the interviews, if working with a partner.
	Review the empathy interviews.
	Identify themes or main ideas from the empathy interviews.
	Group common ideas.
	Summarize the themes or main ideas.
	Step 5: Follow up with families/ caregivers
	Check back with your families to confirm that what you identified accurately reflects their experience and feelings.
	Step 6. Determine how you will use what you found from the empathy interviews.
	Share your findings with someone.
	Decide on next steps.



UCS Empathy Interview Template

Date / Type

Location

Purpose and Question(s)

Family/Parent

Interviewer

Introductions (1 minute) [instructions and sample questions]

Notes [Enter your questions and notes from the interview below]

Build Rapport (2 minutes) [instructions and sample questions]

Notes [Enter your questions and notes from the interview below]

Ask Main Question and Explore Responses / Emotions (5-10 minutes) [instructions and sample questions]

Notes [Enter your questions and notes from the interview below]

Thank You and Wrap Up (1-2 minutes) [instructions and sample questions]

Notes [Enter your questions and notes from the interview below]



SAMPLE INVITATION FOR PARENTS TO SHARE THEIR UCS EXPERIENCES

(Email, Text, Letter)

COPY & PASTE



[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

Subject: Invitation to share your UCS experiences

Dear [name of parent or family member]:

We really enjoy [student's name] participation in the [name of UCS program/activity/event] and your support of [student name] to be part of the UCS community.

I would greatly appreciate a short 15-minute conversation with you to hear your thoughts and feelings about [the program]?

Please let me know the best days of the week and times of day to reach you. You can reach me by text or email at [insert text number / email address].

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you!

[insert name, title]

[Insert contact information]



SAMPLE INVITATION FOR PARENTS TO SHARE THEIR UCS EXPERIENCES

(Email, Text, Letter)

COPY & PASTE



[INSERT STATE SOUCS AND SCHOOL LOGO HERE]

Asunto: Le invitamos a compartir su experiencia

Estimado/a [name of parent or family member]:

Nos complace mucho la participación de [student's name] en el [name of UCS program/activity/event] y su apoyo para que [student name] sea parte de la comunidad de UCS.

Me gustaría conversar brevemente con usted, por 15 minutos , para conocer sus opiniones y percepciones sobre [the program].

Por favor, indíqueme los mejores días de la semana y horarios en que puedo **contactarlo/a**. Puede comunicarse conmigo por mensaje de texto o por correo electrónico a [insert text number/email address].

¡Gracias, y espero su respuesta!

[insert name, title]

[Insert contact information]

Reflection Tool for Family Engagement in UCS Activities

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Program leads and Special Olympics liaisons, and other school staff.

Time Estimate

10-15 minutes for individual reflection; 30-60 minutes for team reflection/debrief.



**Grow and Sustain
the UCS Program**

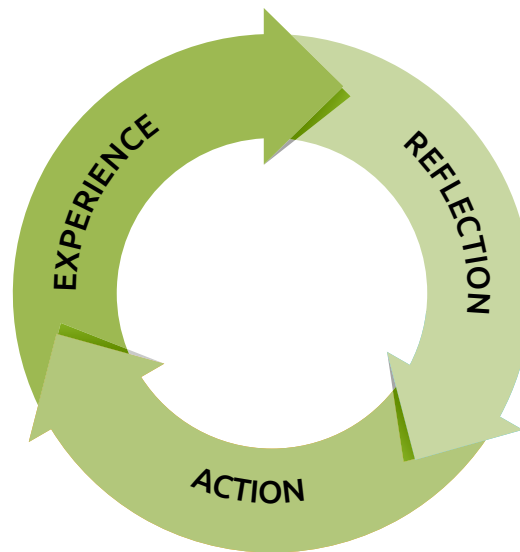
Why would I use this tool?

Self-reflection is a powerful tool that gives you a chance to step back from the activity or event and think about what worked, why it worked, what surprised you. You may also reflect on what you might change or do differently and set your intention for what you want to do next. You can use this tool to reflect on a recent SO-related activity, or you can use the tool with your team to “debrief” on an activity together. The value of self-reflection is both personal — how to be more self-aware of your actions, understanding, and feelings — and professional — how to be more successful at your work.

When should I use this tool?

After you have completed an activity or event, review the self-reflection questions. If you are working with other staff, get together as soon as you can after an activity or event, so your memories are still fresh in your minds.

The ERA Cycle of Reflection



How should I use this tool?

This reflection tool includes a self-reflection worksheet and team debrief guide to process a recent activity or event using the **Experience** → **Reflection** → **Action** (ERA) cycle of reflection.²¹

The ERA process of reflection is a simple way to develop an individual and team practice of ongoing reflection in support of increasing family engagement with the Unified Champion Schools (UCS) program.

- Write about the **EXPERIENCE** as soon as possible after the event or activity, note your impressions of the event or activity in a personal notebook or using a shared online document. This may include a description of the event, your feelings about it, your role, and other impressions.
- Create time for **REFLECTION**.
 - If you are working alone, block out time to review your notes and to answer the self-reflection questions.
 - If you are working with a team, find time to meet soon after the event or activity to share group reflections. Alternatively, your team may identify a regular time (e.g., 8-9 am on Fridays; every 4th Monday) to reflect on your experiences engaging families in UCS programs.
 - You do not have to answer ALL the questions for every event or activity. After you have used the tool a few times, you will have a sense of which questions are most useful to you.
- Identify **ACTION** steps. Taking actions based on your reflections will provide a way to continually improve and to understand your progress. Note what you and your team will do differently or what you will continue to do the same for the next event/activity. Also, note any action steps required to get the resources and support you need for the next event/activity.

²¹ Jasper, M., Rosser, M., and Mooney, G. (2013). *Professional development, reflection, and decision-making in nursing and healthcare*. Advanced Healthcare Practice, 2nd ed.

Reflection Tool for Family Engagement in UCS Activities



Instructions for individual self-reflection: Reflect on your own engagement with families during the event/activity. Consider your interactions, level of involvement, and any challenges faced.

Instructions for team debriefs: Reflect on your performance and provide feedback on the team’s collaboration during the UCS activity or event (or situation) involving families. Your honest responses will help to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Step 1. Describe the UCS Activity or Event

Begin by identifying a specific UCS event, activity, or other situation that involved families of the students who participated in UCS activities. Write down the activity name, date, timeframe (if applicable), who was involved (staff and families), and how many people attended.

Name of UCS event or activity	
Date/Timeframe	
Location	
Types and number of participants	
My role before, during, and after event or activity	

Rate your overall engagement of families for this event:

Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

Ask Questions about the Experience

Describe the event or activity. Include how you felt during and after the event. Include comments from family members and others involved.

[Type/write your response here]



Rate Your Perceptions of the Experience

Rate the statements below based on your perceptions of the event or activity.

Perception statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The family engagement goals or outcomes of the event were well-defined.	1	2	3	4	5
We communicated clearly about the event to families.	1	2	3	4	5
We offered opportunities for families to help at the event.	1	2	3	4	5
We had the resources we needed to produce the event.	1	2	3	4	5
We provided opportunities for families to participate virtually (if applicable).	1	2	3	4	5
We provided opportunities for families to provide feedback about the event.	1	2	3	4	5
The event was valuable to participating families.	1	2	3	4	5
Our team worked well together.	1	2	3	4	5

Step 2. Ask Reflection Questions

Consider your responses to the statements above to analyze what happened.

Reflection questions may include:

- What were our goals for this activity?
- How were families engaged during the activity?
- How were we successful in engaging diverse families?
- How could we have been more effective in engaging diverse families?
- What was the most satisfying part of the UCS event?
- What was the most frustrating part of the UCS event?
- How do you know the event was valuable for participating families?

[Type/write your response here]



Step 3. Identify Next Steps and Take Action

Identify what you will do as a result of your reflection on the experience. Keep in mind that building relationships and ongoing communication are important for family engagement.

For self-reflection, share your takeaways with a colleague and/or administrator and discuss next steps. When conducting a team debrief, describe what each member will do based on the takeaways. Share your takeaways and next steps with an administrator.

[Type/write your response here]

Establishing a School-based Family Support Network

UCS Family Engagement Toolkit

Designed For

Special Olympics liaisons.



Time Estimate

Ongoing.

Grow and Sustain
the UCS Program

Why would I use this tool?

If you have consistent challenges with getting complete Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS) paperwork and medical forms from parents, it may be due to difficulties they have with completing forms, reading and writing in English, or fears and uncertainties about their child participating in UCS.

This tool will help you to establish a family support network where current or former UCS family members are available to support new or potential UCS families in the initial stages of joining the program.

The Family Support outreach form to families is provided in English and Spanish.



Family Engagement Toolkit Resources

You may access **Technology Tools for Communicating with Linguistically Diverse Families** [here](#). It can help you identify a translation app for communicating with families who may be more comfortable communicating in a language other than English.



When should I use this tool?

You can use this tool before the school year begins, at the start of the school year, or any time you start planning UCS activities. Family members who are familiar with UCS can help with recruitment and paperwork by offering guidance and insight to families of students with and without disabilities.

How should I use this tool?

Use this tool to help you set up a process and tracking system for a school-based family support network. This resource provides:

- a process document for you to follow;
- a recruitment and sign-up document to share with families; and
- a tracking document you can use from year to year.



Establishing a School-based Family Support Network

A school-based family support network gives current and former Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS) families an opportunity to offer their time and expertise or experience by connecting with, sharing, and helping prospective UCS families.

Family Support Network Roles

A family whose child participates in or has participated in UCS and can ...	A family interested in their child participating in UCS, but ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● provide support to others in how to fill out UCS paperwork; ● provide language support to others in filling out UCS paperwork; or ● be a resource for questions on their child's involvement in UCS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● would like support from another family in filling out UCS paperwork; ● would like language support from another family in filling out UCS paperwork; or ● has questions for another family about their own child's participation in UCS.

Family Support Network Process



I. Identify Families and Support Needs

Offering Support. Before or at the start of a school year, reach out to past or current families who may be able to support another family in completing and submitting UCS paperwork or answering questions about their experience with UCS. Be sure to include bi-lingual or multi-lingual families in case another family would like language assistance.

Let them know that you may need their assistance immediately or later in the school year, but that you will reach out in advance to ask if you can put them in touch with a family that could use support from another family.

Needing Support. Before or at the start of a school year, reach out to new and prospective families to see if they would like to connect with a current or former UCS family to answer questions about their child's experience with UCS, to help fill out the paperwork, or to provide language assistance in filling out the paperwork.



Accessibility and Inclusion Self-Reflection: Equitable Family Engagement

- How do you view families as partners in the education of students and in UCS programs?
- Are you using multiple channels of communication to communicate with families?



II. Match Families

Match families based on the needs or interest and ability identified in the previous stage.

Share contact information with the families so they can connect with one another.

Suggest to the family offering assistance that they make the initial contact for introductions and to schedule a date/time to talk.



III. Support Families

You should check in with the families 1 week after you match them to make sure they were able to connect and that the new or prospective family got the information and help they needed. Be sure to remind them of any deadlines if paperwork is involved.

Check in with your supporting family to learn how the experience was for them, and find out whether they are still available to help other families in the future.

Don't forget to thank both families for their engagement, regardless of the outcome.



Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS) School-based Family Support Network

Join the UCS Family Support Network!

- Do you want to get help and advice from current or former UCS families?
- Do you want to help families who are thinking about UCS?

If yes, let us know how. Please check the boxes below for items you would like help with or items you can offer help with.

	I need help with this (check all that apply)	I can help with this (check all that apply)
filling out UCS paperwork		
language assistance in filling out UCS paperwork If so, in what language?		
questions about child's involvement in UCS If so, in what language?		

Please return this form to **[insert name]** at **[school name]** via **[insert email/text]**.



Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS)

Red Escolar de Apoyo Familiar

¡Únase a la Red de Apoyo Familiar de UCS!

- ¿Desea recibir ayuda y asesoramiento de parte de familias que actualmente participan o han participado anteriormente en UCS?
- ¿Desea ayudar a familias que están considerando participar en UCS?

Si su respuesta es sí, háganos saber como le gustaría recibir o proveer ayuda. Marque las casillas a continuación para indicar las areas con las que le gustaría recibir o proveer ayuda.

	Necesito ayuda con esto (marque todo lo que corresponda)	Puedo ayudar con esto (marque todo lo que corresponda)
Llenar los formularios de UCS		
Asistencia con el idioma para llenar los formularios de UCS ¿En qué idioma?		
Preguntas sobre la participación de su hija/o en UCS ¿En qué idioma?		

Por favor devuelva este formulario a **[insert name]** en **[school name]** por **[insert email/text]**.

Family Support Network Tracking
Family Support Network Pairing



Prospective Family (student)	Family Offering Support (student)	Engagement Checkpoints 1. Initial Contact 2. Paperwork sent to family (welcome letter and forms) 3. Support provided 4. Any paperwork returned to SO liaison 5. UCS follow-up / thank you	NOTES
Gloria Cardona (Christina Rosa)	Eli Jones (Camille Jones)	Initial contact (call) and paperwork sent to family	Paperwork sent May 1st



Special Olympics
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Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®
Family Engagement Toolkit

For questions or comments about the Toolkit, please contact:

ucs@specialolympics.help