



Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools**

Whole School Engagement



Getting Ready



Establishing a Leadership Team



Whole School Engagement



Inclusive Youth Leadership



Unified Sports and Fitness



Special Olympics Resources



Whole School Engagement: Welcoming for All



Whole school engagement opportunities are awareness and educational activities that promote social inclusion and reach the majority of students and school staff members.

What does whole school engagement look like?

- a schoolwide **Respect Campaign**
- **Spread the Word campaign** that encourages people to pledge to stop using hurtful words
- a **poster contest** promoting a welcoming school climate
- **Unified recess** in which students with and without disabilities engage in physical activities together
- a **Fan in the Stands** program to make posters, hold pep rallies, and attend Special Olympics events to clap and cheer
- **mini lessons** related to social inclusion, such as the ones on pages 103–123

Why is it important?

Whole school engagement

- teaches staff and students to embrace diversity.
- recognizes, supports, and honors the contributions of all students.
- expands ownership of the Unified Champion Schools program beyond a passionate few.
- enhances and develops key social and emotional skills.
- creates a climate where students, staff members, and parents feel safe and valued.

Far-reaching influence

Whole school engagement activities not only reach the greatest number of students, but they also have the most direct impact on how students feel about social inclusion. A school climate that promotes respect for everyone can positively impact how students think and act at school, at home, and in the community.

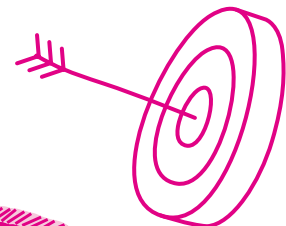
Here's what a recent survey of older students revealed:

- 99% of UCS staff feel the UCS program is **valuable to the school** as a whole.
- 93% of students exposed to Unified Champion Schools and campaigns such as Spread the Word have **improved their behavior and attitudes** toward people with intellectual differences.
- 86% of Unified Champion School staff credit the program with **reducing bullying and teasing** in their school.
- 48% of UCS staff believe there are more opportunities for general and special educators to **work together**.





What Are the Goals of Whole School Engagement?



- **Positive interactions:** Students with and without intellectual disabilities will interact socially and develop mutually beneficial friendships.
- **Respectful attitudes:** All students will have a greater understanding of each other and will hold more positive attitudes toward each other.
- **Engagement:** The school will be a community of acceptance where students with and without intellectual disabilities feel welcome and contribute meaningfully to all school activities.
- **Connections:** The school will be an inviting environment where students, staff members, and community members feel connected. It models inclusion as a community norm.



Principle of meaningful involvement

A socially inclusive school ensures that students with and without intellectual disabilities are active and valued participants in the school community.

Indicators of meaningful involvement

- **Opportunities:** All students have opportunities to use their unique skills and qualities to contribute to the success of the school, and all skills are valued.
- **Intentional involvement:** Students with and without intellectual disabilities are purposefully engaged in whole school activities in formal and informal settings.
- **Intergenerational collaboration:** Students and adults work together to promote a socially inclusive school climate by expecting, nurturing, and supporting acceptance and respect.



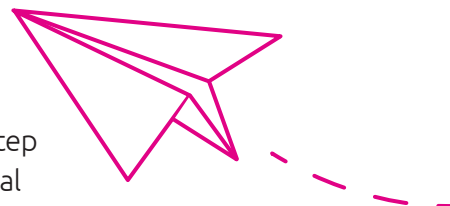
Valued relationships

It's hard for anyone to develop a lasting friendship through just a few interactions. One or two socially inclusive experiences isn't enough. Students with and without intellectual disabilities are more likely to develop authentic friendships when they have **frequent opportunities** to interact.



Get Started with Whole School Engagement

How schools implement whole school engagement varies, but a common first step is to have a planning meeting with your school's Unified Leadership Team. It's an ideal opportunity to discuss topics such as those below. Once you agree on one or more whole-school activities, use the action plan form on page 102 to organize the details.



Topics to discuss

- How do we engage students in determining the whole school activity?
- What types of whole school activities would work well at our school?
- What small activity would be great as a starting point?
- What whole school activities are already planned? How can they be revised to increase social inclusion?
- What types of whole school activities do students with and without intellectual disabilities enjoy?
- Are there any grade-level teams that might be interested in planning and leading a whole school activity?
- Who will be the adult leaders for the activities we choose?

Need ideas? Check out these suggestions.

- Morning announcements (pages 65–69)
- Ideas for promoting social inclusion during various parts of the school schedule (page 70)
- Respect Campaign (pages 71–72)
- Fans in the Stands (page 74)
- Social media posts and school newsletter articles (pages 76–91)
- “Looking for Leaders” Play (pages 92–98)
- Mini lessons that promote social and emotional development (pages 103–123)
- Unified bowling night for students and their families
- Schoolwide service project such as a mitten drive during the winter months

Did you know?

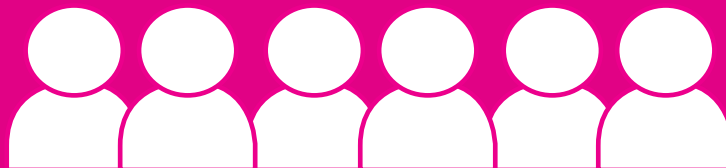
Sesame Street has a Muppet character named Julia who has **autism**. Learn more about Julia, view relevant videos for kids and parents, and find other resources here:

<http://autism.sesamestreet.org/>



Examples of Whole School Engagement Activities

There is no limit to how you can involve the entire school community in socially inclusive awareness activities. Opportunities range from giving morning announcements with anti-bullying messages, to providing Unified Physical Education classes, to promoting respect with a weeklong campaign. Check out the wide variety of ideas that follow to find socially inclusive ideas that are a great fit for your school.





Morning Announcements

Incorporate these weekly messages into morning announcements to regularly promote a socially inclusive school climate. Classroom teachers can follow up by guiding a group discussion about each announcement and having students write or draw a response in their journals.



September: Friendship and Acceptance

Week 1: I'm excited because this month we're going to learn about friendship. Did you know that smiling at someone is a great way to start a friendship? A smile shows that you are friendly, and it can also make someone feel good. Try it this week. Let's make some new friends!

Week 2: Listen carefully to this quote: "The only way to have a friend is to be one." That's from a poet named Ralph Waldo Emerson. This week I'd like you to think about ways you can be a good friend. Try these ideas and pay attention to the results.

Week 3: September 18 is National Respect Day. When you show respect to someone, you act in a way that shows you care about them and accept them for who they are. This week I challenge you to try extra hard to treat others the way you would like to be treated.

Week 4: Did you know that people don't need to be alike to be friends? Students can be in different classes, look different, and act differently. Just think how boring it would be if everyone were alike!



October: Say "No" to Bullying

Week 1: October is National Bullying Prevention Month. A bully is mean to another person. Bullying is never okay. If you see someone being bullied, tell an adult right away.

Week 2: Have you ever felt left out at recess or during lunch? It's not a good feeling. This week I challenge you to reach out and be a friend to someone who is left out. Remember, smiling is an easy way to help someone feel better!

Week 3: This quote makes me think about bullying. Listen carefully and see if you understand why: "Wrong is wrong even if everyone else is doing it. Right is right even if no one is doing it." (St. Augustine)

Week 4: If everyone treated others with kindness, there would be no more bullying. This week, I challenge you to do something kind each day.



Morning Announcements

November: Perseverance



Week 1: Have you ever heard the word *perseverance*? It's a long word that means trying your best to accomplish something even if it is difficult. This week think about times you needed to work extra hard to reach a goal. If you encounter a challenge, use *perseverance* to get through it.

Week 2: Some people need perseverance to solve math problems, or to read, or to write a great story. Some people learn fast and other people need more time. Remember, everyone can learn and succeed!

Week 3: Last week we talked about using perseverance to complete school-work. Did you know that athletes need perseverance, too? Even famous athletes need to work really hard to get better or stronger or faster. Showing perseverance helps in many aspects of your life.

Week 4: The harder you work for something, the greater you'll feel when you achieve it. Think of a time you accomplished something that was difficult. How did you feel? Remember that feeling the next time you're faced with a challenge.



December: Leadership



Week 1: All students can be leaders. Being a leader means setting a good example, helping others, and doing the right thing. This week keep an eye out for students who set good examples. Think about things you could do to be a positive role model.

Week 2: Sometimes leaders help people by doing small things that make a big difference. For example, a student leader might invite a classmate who is all alone to join a game at recess. Look for ways to help others this week.

Week 3: When someone says they look up to a person, that means that they admire him or her. This week think about someone you look up to and why. What's one great trait that they have? Is that a trait you might have, too?

Week 4: Listen to this saying: "Be somebody who makes everybody feel like a somebody." That quote is from the YouTube sensation known as Kid President. Think about a time someone made you feel good about yourself. Wouldn't it be great if you could make someone else feel the same way? Try it this week.





Morning Announcements

January: Individuality



Week 1: There is no one at school, in our city, or even in the world just like you. This week think about what makes you unique, such as the way you dress, your favorite foods, and what you like to do on the weekends. You are unique!

Week 2: Piglet from *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne is quoted as saying, "The things that make me different are the things that make me ME." Think about this quote and what it means to you.

Week 3: Do you like basketball? How about kickball? Reading? Computer games? The activities you enjoy make you who you are. Students' different interests make our school stronger and more diverse!

Week 4: This week, say something positive to someone about a trait that makes them unique. Maybe they're always smiling, they're very helpful, or they're fabulous at jumping rope. Let them know that you value their uniqueness!



February: The Power of Teamwork



Week 1: There's a big football game coming up. (Add information about the Super Bowl teams.) Now's a perfect time to talk about being a fan. Some people show support for their favorite team by wearing team colors, waving a pennant, or cheering for them. Think about ways you can show support for students who participate in sports.

Week 2: Athletes on a team have different roles, but they work together toward the same goal. Think about your favorite sports team. How does teamwork make them stronger?

Week 3: The letters T, E, A, M spell the word *team*, but they also stand for "Together everyone achieves more." Think about how we can apply that saying to our school. What can you do to make our school a true team?

Week 4: Teamwork isn't just for sports; it's for classrooms too. Sometimes students team up to do a project or everyone pitches in to meet a goal. See how many things you can think of that are easier or more fun to do as a team.





Morning Announcements

March: The Power of Words

Week 1: Did you know that words are powerful? Some words make people feel good. Even short phrases such as “Great job!” and “Way to go!” can make a huge difference to someone. Think about a time someone’s words made you smile.

Week 2: Here’s a great thought for the week: “It’s nice to be important, but it’s more important to be nice.” That quote is from John Templeton, a man who donated money to help others. Look for ways that you can follow this advice.

Week 3: Some words, such as mean nicknames, are extremely harmful. The hurt they cause can last forever. Remind people that teasing isn’t funny, and it isn’t kind. Be sure to use people’s real names unless they tell you a nickname that they like better.

Week 4: This week’s challenge is to use only positive words. Don’t say any put-downs. I’m sure you and the people around you will have a happier week!



April: Encouragement

Week 1: Do you know what *encouragement* means? It means giving someone support or hope. Picture someone running in a race who is so tired that he doesn’t think he can keep running. The people on the sidelines call out, “You can do it!” That’s encouragement. This week look for encouragement in your classroom, in PE, and other places at school.

Week 2: People encourage others in many ways. They might give a thumbs-up, smile, or say, “Keep trying; you’re almost there!” See how many ways you can think of to encourage someone.

Week 3: Here’s a challenge for you: This week demonstrate an encouraging attitude. Keep an eye out for anyone who seems discouraged. Be ready to say or do something that will cheer him or her up and inspire them.

Week 4: This quote makes me think of encouragement. Listen carefully and see if you can tell why. “Never get tired of doing little things for others; sometimes those little things occupy the biggest parts of their hearts.” What does that tell you about encouragement?





Morning Announcements

May: Taking Action



Week 1: This month we're going to talk about making a difference. That means doing something that helps people. Remember this quote from former President John F. Kennedy: "One person can make a difference, and everyone should try."

Week 2: In 1962, a woman named Eunice Kennedy Shriver did something that made a big difference. She held a summer day camp in her backyard for people with special needs. That led to the start of Special Olympics, now a worldwide program!

Week 3: Before athletes participate in Special Olympics, they say this oath: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me brave in the attempt." This week think about why athletes and others should be brave.

Week 4: Eunice Kennedy Shriver is honored each year on July 20. It's a day for people to celebrate the work she did to make a difference for so many people. Remember Mrs. Shriver as you think about ways you can make a difference.





Inclusion Throughout the Day

Social inclusion doesn't happen with just one event; it needs to be a regular part of the school experience. Use these suggestions to promote social inclusion during various parts of the schedule.

Arrival

- **Safety Patrol:** Recruit older students with and without intellectual disabilities for the school safety patrol. Have pairs of students carry out their assigned responsibilities.
- **Welcoming Club:** Station a pair of students at the entryway and have them welcome students, parents, and visitors each morning with smiles and friendly greetings. It's sure to start everyone's day on a positive note!

Lunch

- **Mix-It-Up Day:** Randomly assign every student a table to sit at during lunch. This will provide students with a great opportunity to meet new people and start friendships with students they might not otherwise get to know.
- **Lunch Bunch Book Club:** Every week or two, meet with a group of interested students. As students eat their lunches, read and discuss books with positive messages about topics such as friendship, perseverance, and diversity. See the list on page 71 for a few great books as a starting place.



Recess

- **Unified Recess:** Work with your school to set up Unified Recess in which students with and without intellectual disabilities use their recess time to engage in physical activities together. It's more fun when everyone plays! Your local Special Olympics office and your state's Special Olympics website have information to help you get started.
- **Recess Buddies:** Pair students with and without intellectual disabilities. Provide playground balls, jump ropes, and noncompetitive games to ensure the buddies have ample choices.

Specials

- **Unified Physical Education:** Work with your school to get a Unified PE class in which students with and without intellectual disabilities play and train together. Your local Special Olympics office and your state's Special Olympics website have information to help you get started.
- **Schoolwide Display:** In art class, have all the students in the school contribute to the same hallway display. For example, you might display student-decorated fish cutouts with an inspirational title such as "We are all swimming together toward a great year!"
- **Being a Friend Means:** In art class, invite students to create a poster or a T-shirt design expressing what it means to be a good friend. Students can write a song about the topic in music class.

Dismissal

- **Great Goodbyes:** Give each student a high-five as he or she leaves school for the day. Older students will enjoy coming up with a good-bye signal or a handshake that they can exchange with classmates and friends from other classes when they see them in the hall.
- **Dismissal Buddies:** What better way to end the day than with a friend? Pair students with and without intellectual disabilities who are headed to the same dismissal location in the school.





Respect Campaign

A respect campaign is one of the most popular and effective Unified Champion Schools activities for elementary schools. The campaign is designed to promote acceptance and respect for students of all academic abilities.

Some schools have a weeklong awareness campaign, while others declare one day Respect Day. Activities vary from school to school, but are often planned to coincide with the Spread the Word annual day of awareness (held yearly the first Wednesday in March). Check out the ideas below and use the checklist on page 73 to plan your school's event.

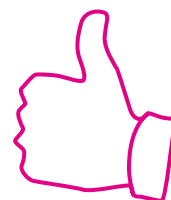
- **We're alike but different days:** Designate a different theme for each day of the school week, just as you might for a spirit week. For example, you might have a "Dare to Be Different Day" and invite students to wear silly accessories or outfits, a "Unity Day" on which students wear their teacher's favorite color, and "Literature Lovers Day" when students dress like a character from one of the books listed below. Each day, point out how students are different but also have traits in common.
- **Lessons from books:** Share books about respecting individuality, such as the ones below. Guide students to discuss what each book teaches them.
 - *It's Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr
 - *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes
 - *Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun* by Maria Dismondy
 - *Spoon* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal
 - "The Sneetches" from *The Sneetches and Other Stories* by Dr. Seuss
- **Special Needs Awareness Day:** Events for the day might include activities such as visiting with therapy dogs and their owners or trainers, learning about sign language and braille, listening to a Special Olympics adult athlete tell about his experiences, and watching kid-friendly videos about living with disabilities. Classroom teachers might also read aloud books about children with special needs such as *My Best Friend Will* by Jamie Lowell and Tara Tuchel, a photo-illustrated book about an 11-year-old girl and her friend who has autism.





Respect Campaign

- **Rally:** Have a schoolwide assembly to generate enthusiasm for promoting a respectful school climate. Consider incorporating elements like these:
 - a motivational speaker such as a Special Olympics athlete.
 - a pledge for staff and students to use respectful words and actions.
 - students performing a song that celebrates individuality.
 - a student performance of the play “Looking for Leaders” on pages 92–98.
- **Banner:** Check with your state’s Special Olympics office to get a campaign banner. Ask all students and staff members to sign the banner and pledge to use words of respect. Display the banner in a prominent school location. Create a smaller version that the “class of the week” can display outside their classroom.
- **Displays:** Ask each class to come up with a way to showcase the idea that we should treat others the way we want to be treated. Students might create a poster, a bulletin board, or a sign for the classroom door, for example. Invite other staff members, such as the kitchen staff and media specialist, to display those, too. The message will be clear—respect is a schoolwide expectation.
- **Kindness rocks:** Start a schoolwide hide-a-rock project. Invite every student to bring in a small rock and paint a kind word or a cheerful picture on it. Have students hide the rocks around the school or in the community. When someone finds the rock, the painting is sure to brighten his or her day. Search online for tips about tagging the rocks and using social media to enhance the project.



Inclusion Matters

Instead of a Respect Campaign, some schools choose to implement a Spread the Word campaign. In 2019, Spread the Word to End the Word became Spread the Word, with a focus not just on the elimination of a word but on the creation of a new reality: inclusion for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The campaign remains committed to empowering leaders to change their communities, schools, and workplaces, now through a call to their peers to take action for inclusion.

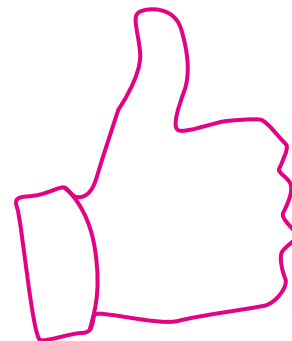
For information and resources on the Spread the Word campaign, go to www.spreadtheword.global



Checklist for a Respect Campaign

Use the ideas on pages 71–72 and the checklist below to make your school's Respect Campaign a success.

- 1. Meet with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss holding a Respect Campaign in your school. Discuss whether to include a Special Needs Awareness Day. Develop a timeline for organizing and planning the event.
- 2. Meet with the principal to discuss plans for the campaign and ensure the administration's support and approval.
- 3. Check with your state Special Olympics office for resources.
- 4. Communicate with school staff about the purpose of the campaign. Seek their input on activities to include. Invite student input, as appropriate.
- 5. Decide what activities the campaign will include. Clear the activities with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.
- 6. Develop a plan.
 - Schedule the campaign activities.
 - Invite members of the parent-teacher organization to help plan or carry out activities.
 - Create a plan for each task that needs to be completed, including deadlines and a list of who is responsible for carrying out each step.
- 7. Share the details of the event with the school staff. Consider asking staff to assist with communication through announcements, the school website, letters sent home, the school newsletter, and local news media.
- 8. After the event, thank everyone involved in making it a success.





Fans in the Stands

Fans in the Stands ensure that every athlete and school team has supporting fans who cheer at every game or competition. If your school doesn't have sports teams, promote service learning by starting a Fans in the Stands club for local Special Olympics competitions or Unified Sports teams. Check out the ideas below for sparking enthusiasm and team spirit among students. Then, use the checklist on page 75 for planning.

Go Team!

- **Get students ready:** Many young students do not understand that a sports fan can have a powerful and positive impact on a team. Discuss different ways that fans encourage a team and how words of encouragement influence an athlete's performance. Then, invite students to brainstorm what fans could say in scenarios such as the ones below:
 - A runner slows down and looks like he is ready to give up.
 - A basketball team wins a game.
 - A bocce team loses a game.
 - A soccer player is crying and says that he never wants to play soccer again.
- **Brighten the stands!** Have students make a variety of posters, pennants, and banners. Encourage students to personalize them with the team name or athletes' names. (If athletes' names are included, be sure all athletes you're cheering for are recognized equally.) Keep fans' interest high by providing different poster-making materials from event to event.
- **Give a grand send-off:** If your school has a Special Olympics team, give them a memorable send-off when they depart for a competition. Encourage students to make posters and banners. Line the halls or the school sidewalk and have students cheer for the athletes as they leave the school. Continue the celebration after the event by congratulating participants and commending students for their sportsmanship and school spirit.
- **Make some noise:** Help students come up with a few simple cheers. Cheering together is a fabulous way to build unity, and the athletes love to hear their fans.
- **Dress the part:** Use fabric paint and markers to decorate T-shirts prior to the event or have every fan wear the same color. It's a surefire way for the athletes to notice their fans in the stands.
- **Include family and friends:** At sports events, set out a table with pom-poms, noise-makers, and sign-making materials for family and friends to use in cheering on the athletes.





Checklist for Fans in the Stands

Fans in the Stands is a campaign designed to tap into core values and powerful attributes, such as unity, acceptance, empowerment, respect, inclusion, dignity, courage, strength, pride, and confidence. It's also fun! Use the ideas on page 74 and the checklist below to get started.

- 1. Meet with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss implementing Fans in the Stands in your school. Develop a timeline for organizing and planning the event.
- 2. Meet with the principal to discuss plans for Fans in the Stands and to ensure the administration's support and approval.
- 3. Organize individual students, classes, or clubs who are interested in becoming Fans in the Stands. Use the ideas on page 74 or brainstorm your own to teach students about the influence of sports fans and how to be a fan.
- 4. Develop a calendar of all school sporting events, Special Olympic competitions, and Unified Sports events that will take place each semester. Share the calendar with the school parent-teacher organization and invite their support.
- 5. Publicize Fans in the Stands. Communicate with school staff about the dates of events. Ask staff to attend, if possible, and to assist with communication through announcements, the school website and social media, letters sent home, the school newsletter, and local news media.
- 6. Prior to each event, create items such as posters and banners. Determine who will take them to the event and distribute them.





Social Media Posts

Whether your school uses Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, these suggested social media posts provide an easy way to keep your school community aware of, and involved in, Unified Champion School activities. We've included images sized to use on Facebook; however if you have images of students from your school, be sure to use them.





September: Friendship and Acceptance



Week 1: This month we're focusing on friendship. Share a story with your child about the different ways you've made friends over the years. There's not just one way to do it!



"The only way to have a friend is to be one."
It's from the poet Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Week 2: Share this quote with your child. Has your child heard those words before? What do they mean?



Week 3: September 18 is National Respect Day. Discuss the meaning of the word "respect" with your child.



Week 4: Show your child this image. Is it good for our friends to be all alike? What's the benefit of having friends who are different from us?

Suggested social media images. Images are available at
<https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



October: Say “No” to Bullying



Week 1: October is National Bullying Prevention Month. Remind your child that if he or she witnesses bullying, it’s important to tell an adult right away.



Week 2: No one wants to feel lonely or left out. Challenge your child to be a friend to someone who needs a friend.



Week 3: Share this quote with your child: “Wrong is wrong even if everyone else is doing it. Right is right even if no one is doing it.” (St. Augustine)



Week 4: Ask your child what act of kindness he or she has done today.

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



November: Perseverance



Week 1: This month we're focusing on perseverance. Share with your child goals that you have for yourself. How will you need to use perseverance to achieve them?



Week 2: Some people need perseverance to solve math problems, read, or write a great story. Remind your child that everyone can learn and succeed!



Week 3: Even famous athletes need to work really hard to get better or stronger or faster. Encourage your child to use perseverance to meet a goal this week.



Week 4: Describe for your child a time you accomplished something that was difficult. How did you feel?

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



December: Leadership



Week 1: Anyone can be a leader. Being a leader means setting a good example, helping others, and doing the right thing. This week challenge your child to be a leader.



Week 2: Sometimes leaders help people by doing small things that make a big difference. Compliment your child when he or she helps others this week.



Week 3: Who is someone you admire? Tell your child about him or her.



Week 4: Talk with your child about what this quote means.

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



January: Individuality



Week 1: Share this with your child: There is no one at school, in our city, or even in the world just like him or her. Celebrate what makes each member of your family unique!



Week 2: Check out this quote from Piglet in *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne. Discuss with your child what it means to you.



Week 3: Do you like dancing? How about basketball? Doing puzzles? The activities you enjoy are part of what makes you who you are. This month we're talking about how students' different interests make our school stronger and more diverse!



Week 4: This week, demonstrate for your child how to say something positive to someone about a trait that makes them unique. Be sure to let your child know that you value his or her uniqueness, too!

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



February: The Power of Teamwork



Week 1: Who are you cheering for in the Super Bowl? Now's a perfect time to talk with your child about being a good fan. Some people show support for their favorite team by wearing team colors, waving a pennant, or cheering for them. Think about ways you can show support for students who participate in sports.



Week 2: Athletes on a team have different roles, but they work together toward the same goal. Talk about a time you were a member of a team. How did teamwork make the group stronger?



Week 3: The letters T, E, A, M spell the word "team," but they also stand for "Together everyone achieves more." Talk with your child about how that saying applies to school.



Week 4: Teamwork isn't just for sports; it's for classrooms, too. Sometimes students team up to do a project or everyone pitches in to meet a goal. Talk with your child about what it's like to work on a project as a team.

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



March: The Power of Words



Week 1: Words are powerful. Ask your child about a time when someone's words made him or her smile.



Week 2: Here's a great thought for the week. How can you and your family follow this advice?



Week 3: Students are learning how powerful words can be. Challenge yourself to watch the words you use, being sure not to use nicknames or terms that could be hurtful.



Week 4: Today's challenge is to use only positive words. You can do it!

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



April: Encouragement



Week 1: Who encourages your child? This week take a moment to thank those important people in your child's life.



Week 2: Challenge your child to think of different ways to encourage others. Can you think of five different ways? Ten?



Week 3: This week demonstrate an encouraging attitude. Make it your goal to try to cheer up anyone who seems discouraged.



Week 4: What does this quote tell you about encouragement? Share these words with your child.

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



May: Taking Action



Week 1: This month we're talking about making a difference. Share these words with your child.



Week 2: In 1962, a woman named Eunice Kennedy Shriver did something that made a big difference. She held a summer day camp in her backyard for people with special needs. That led to the start of Special Olympics, now a worldwide program!



Week 3: Before athletes participate in Special Olympics, they say this oath: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me brave in the attempt." This week think about why athletes and others should be brave.



Week 4: Eunice Kennedy Shriver is honored each year on July 20. It's a day for people to celebrate the work she did to make a difference for so many people. Remember Mrs. Shriver as you think about ways you can make a difference.

Suggested social media images. Images are available at <https://resources.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools-resources/>.



News to Use

Another way to keep your school community aware of, and involved in, Unified Champion School activities is through brief articles on your school website or in your school newsletter. Use these articles as is or modify them to include specifics from your school; be sure to add important dates about upcoming events as well. Whenever you can, include photos of students participating in activities.





September: Friendship and Acceptance

As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we work to make sure all students have the opportunity to work, play, learn, and grow together. This year during morning announcements, we are sharing weekly messages to reinforce that goal.

This month's theme is friendship. Here are a few ways to start a discussion with your child about what it means to be a friend:

- Share this quote from poet Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The only way to have a friend is to be one." Talk about what that means.
- Share a story with your child about the different ways you've made friends over the years.
- What are the benefits of having friends who have things in common with us? What are the benefits of having friends who are different from us?

Did you know? September 18 is National Respect Day.

October: Say "No" to Bullying

October is National Bullying Prevention Month. As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we'll be sharing messages during morning announcements to talk about how bullying hurts us all.

Here are some questions you can ask your child to start a conversation about how we should treat others:

- What act of kindness have you done today? (Share your own examples too!)
- Can you think of someone you know who needs a friend? What could you do to help?
- What do you think this quote means? "Wrong is wrong even if everyone else is doing it. Right is right even if no one is doing it." (St. Augustine)

And finally, remind your child that if he or she witnesses bullying, it's important to tell an adult right away.





November: Perseverance

This month we're focusing on perseverance. The ability to keep going when things get difficult is a life skill that will serve your child well.

As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we want each student to understand that something that is easy for him or her might be difficult for someone else, and visa versa. Through perseverance members of our school community can support one another as we all learn and grow.

Here are a few conversation starters you can use when talking about perseverance with your child:

- Share with your child a story about a time you worked extra hard to reach a goal.
- Ask your child what's easy for him or her. What's more difficult?
- Who helps your child when things are difficult? In turn, who does your child help?
- Does your child have a goal that he or she wants to meet? How could perseverance help?

December: Leadership

Being a leader doesn't mean your child has to go on to be class president or valedictorian (though he or she might!). As we work to build a socially inclusive school climate, we want students to realize that being a leader means setting a good example, helping others, and doing the right thing. That's what being a Special Olympics Unified Champion School is all about.

Try these thought starters to talk about leadership with your child:

- Sometimes leaders help people by doing small things that make a big difference. Watch for examples of this and point out to your child what you noticed.
- Who is someone you admire? Tell your child about him or her.
- Talk with your child about this quote: "Be somebody who makes everybody feel like a somebody."





January: Individuality

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools celebrate each child's individuality and strive for a socially inclusive school climate. We want all children to know they are valued.

To support this goal at home, here are some conversation starters you can use to talk about individuality:

- What makes you unique? What makes me unique? What about other members of our family? Is being unique a good thing? What would our family be like if we were all the same?
- Share these wise words: "The things that make me different are the things that make me ME." That's a quote from Piglet in *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne. What does this mean?
- What activities do you enjoy? In what are you interested? That's part of what makes you who you are.
- Demonstrate for your child how to say something positive to someone about a trait that makes them unique. For example, what might your child say to someone who is full of smiles? Good at making foul shots in basketball? Good at playing the piano?

February: The Power of Teamwork

Are you planning to watch the Super Bowl? No doubt we'll see lots of examples of excited fans and stories about how the players must work together to win the game.

As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we work together and cheer for one another. Take a few minutes this month to talk with your child about teamwork:

- Talk with your child about a time you were a member of a team. How did teamwork make the group stronger? Has your child been on a team? What was the experience like?
- The letters in "team" just happen to stand for "Together everyone achieves more." Talk with your child about how that saying applies to school.
- Have you heard about Fans in the Stands? This program encourages students and families to attend a local Special Olympics event. Does this sound like something our family could do together to have fun and make a difference?





March: The Power of Words

Sometimes a single phrase can make all the difference in whether someone feels like they're part of the group or an outsider. As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we work to use the power of words to create a positive, socially inclusive school climate.

Talk about the power of words with your child. Here are some ways to get started:

- Ask your child about a time when someone's words made him or her smile.
- Share these wise words: "It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice." Challenge your child to point out examples he or she sees and hears.
- Challenge your child to use only positive words today. Take the challenge yourself, too.

April: Encouragement

We all benefit from encouragement. Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools teach students to appreciate and support one another from an early age.

Let your child know that our school is focusing on encouragement this month. Launch a discussion with questions like these:

- Who encourages you?
- How do you encourage others?
- Can you think of five more ways to encourage others?
- Have you ever cheered up someone who seemed discouraged?
- How do small gestures of encouragement add up?





May: Taking Action

As a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, we're making a difference every day. Let's wrap up the year on a positive note and take a few minutes to think about just how powerful that mission is.

Talk about the power of words with your child. Here are some ways to get started:

- Share these words from President John F. Kennedy, whose sister, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, founded Special Olympics: "One person can make a difference, and everyone should try."
- Eunice Kennedy Shriver held a summer day camp in her backyard for people with special needs, and that led to the start of Special Olympics. Why was this a good idea?
- Before athletes participate in Special Olympics, they say this oath: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me brave in the attempt." What does that mean? Why might athletes and others need to be brave?

Did you know? Eunice Kennedy Shriver is honored each year on July 20.





Looking for Leaders

An elementary school play
inspired by “It’s Our School, Too!” by Suzy Messerole and Aamera Siddiqui

About this play

“Looking for Leaders” is a play designed to promote respect and empathy among all students. It works well as a kickoff event for a Respect Campaign (see pages 71–72). It can also be presented on its own any time of year.

Here are a few things to know:

- The play has six short scenes. The parts are brief, making it ideal for elementary students with and without disabilities to perform.
- Students may perform all parts, or adults may take the narrator and teacher roles.
- The play includes 30 parts, allowing for all students in a class or another large group to participate. As an alternative, a smaller group may present the play, with students performing in more than one scene.
- Consider having older students present the play to younger students or to parents as part of a school meeting or at an assembly.
- The only props that are needed are chairs and a table, but students may create additional props.



Scene 1: OPENING

All performers enter the stage one by one. Each performer will say,

When you see me, I want you to see... *and then complete the sentence to describe one of their talents, hobbies, or attributes.*

Examples:

When you see me, I want you to see a friend.

When you see me, I want you to see a nice person.

When you see me, I want you to see that we are alike.

When you see me, I want you to see a soccer player.

When you see me, I want you to see that I'm friendly.

When you see me, I want you to see an artist.

When you see me, I want you to see a happy person.

When you see me, I want you to see a person who shows respect.





Scene 3: PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS

Roles:

PE teacher Narrator 1
Students 1–3 Narrator 2

The PE teacher and students enter the stage.

PE teacher: Okay, class. Today we're going to practice kicking. I want you to kick the soccer ball into the goal. Line up behind one another.

Student 3: This is going to be fun!

Students 1–3 line up behind one another in numerical order and face the PE teacher, leaving several feet between them and the teacher. The teacher pantomimes rolling a ball to Student 1. Student 1 runs up and kicks the imaginary ball.

Student 2: Wow! That went right in.

PE teacher: Good job.

Student 1 happily gets the imaginary ball and tosses it to the teacher.

Student 1: *(Cheering on Student 2)* Come on! Smash it!

Student 3: Yeah, smash it!

The teacher rolls the ball and Student 2 runs up and kicks it.

Student 2: *(Does a fist pump.)* Score!

Student 2 gets the ball and tosses it to the teacher. The teacher rolls the ball to Student 3. Student 3 walks up and kicks.

Student 1: You missed it!

Student 2: It wasn't even close!

Students 1 and 2 laugh.

PE teacher: Okay, okay. Settle down.

Narrators 1 and 2 enter the stage.

Narrator 1: Kicking the ball is only one part of being a great soccer player.

Narrator 2: Another part is being a good teammate. A good teammate doesn't tease other players.

Narrator 1: A good teammate encourages all players even if they don't score.





Scene 5: THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA

Roles:

Students 1–3 (Student 1 is male.)

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

Students 1–3 enter the stage. They walk behind one another to an imaginary cafeteria window. Student 1 takes an imaginary tray, walks over to a table with three chairs, and sits down. Students 2 and 3 stand at the window.

Student 1: Yum! Meatloaf and green beans!

Student 1 pantomimes eating his food. Students 2 and 3 start walking toward the table with their lunch trays. They stop when they notice Student 1 sitting there.

Student 2: I don't want to sit by that dummy.

Student 3: He's not a dummy. You shouldn't call people names.

Student 2: I didn't mean it.

Student 3: Well, it still wasn't nice. Did you know that he likes to play basketball?

Student 2: I like basketball too!

Student 3: You might be more alike than you think. There's an easy way to find out.

Student 2: Let's sit down with him.

Student 3: Maybe we can all be friends.

Students 2 and 3 sit at the table as Narrators 1 and 2 enter the stage.

Narrator 1: Mean words hurt people.

Narrator 2: It's never okay to call people mean names.

Narrators 1 and 2: Treat people as you would like to be treated by them.





Scene 6: CLOSING

All performers enter the stage.

Student 1: We will encourage others. We won't put them down.

All: We will encourage others. We won't put them down.

Student 2: We will make sure that no one is left out.

All: We will make sure that no one is left out.

Student 3: We will use kind words.

All: We will use kind words.

Student 4: We will treat people as we would like to be treated.

All: We will treat people as we would like to be treated.





Checklist for “Looking for Leaders” School Play

The play presents several short vignettes that are designed to increase students’ awareness of respectful behavior and encourage them to be leaders by setting positive examples. You’ll find background information and the script on pages 92–98. Use the checklist below to guide your planning.

- 1. Meet with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss putting on the play at your school. Develop a timeline for planning and rehearsing the performance.
- 2. Meet with the principal to discuss plans for the play and ensure the administration’s support and approval.
- 3. Communicate with the school staff about the purpose of the play. Decide who will present the performance. For example, fifth graders could present the play to younger classes, or interested students from various grades might perform the play for students and parents.
- 4. Develop a plan.
 - Set the date, time, and location for the performance. Make sure these details are cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.
 - Assign roles and schedule rehearsals.
 - Create a plan for each task that needs to be completed, including deadlines, and a list of who is responsible for carrying out each step.
- 5. Ask the school staff members to assist with communication through announcements, the school website, letters sent home, the school newsletter, and local news media.
- 6. Encourage teachers to talk with their classes after the performance to discuss the play’s message of respect and social inclusion. See the discussion questions on page 100.
- 7. After the performance, be sure to thank everyone involved with the event.





Discussion Questions for “Looking for Leaders” School Play

The play provides a natural opportunity to promote class discussions that support social and emotional learning. Use questions such as the ones below to guide students’ reflections.

Grades K–2

- *Social awareness, relationship skills:* What can we learn from the play?
- *Self-awareness, social awareness:* What does it mean to be left out? How does it feel?
- *Social awareness:* What are some things a good teammate might say to a soccer player who scores a goal?
- *Social awareness:* What are some things a good teammate might say to a basketball player who misses a shot?
- *Social awareness:* How can words hurt people?
- *Responsible decision-making:* What can you do if you see a student who has no one to play with during recess?

Grades 3–5

- *Social awareness, relationship skills:* What do you think the play’s main message is?
- *Self-awareness:* Have you ever been left out of an activity? How did it feel?
- *Self-awareness:* Has anyone ever invited you to join them in a game or an activity during recess? How did it feel?
- *Social awareness:* Can you tell everything about a person by looking at him or her? Explain.
- *Social awareness:* How can students be different but alike?
- *Social awareness, relationship skills:* What does it mean to encourage someone?
- *Self-management, responsible decision-making:* A good leader sets a positive example. What does that statement mean to you?
- *Self-management, responsible decision-making:* How can students be leaders?



Unified Champion Schools provide students with experiences that **develop prosocial** skills.

To learn more about social and emotional learning, visit casel.org.



Whole School Engagement: Tips for Success

- **Start small!** Make sure your first activity is manageable and then build on that success.
- **Don't reinvent the wheel:** Build on activities that your school already does with a focus on making them more socially inclusive.
- **Include school administration:** Get the support of administrators early in the process. Invite them to participate in visible ways.
- **Incorporate social inclusion into schoolwide plans:** Be intentional about including social inclusion in curriculum development and school climate improvement activities. The unified strategy complements social emotional learning and can support schoolwide SEL goals already in place.
- **Take advantage of available resources:** Connect with your state Special Olympics program for support. Let them know about your successes, too!
- **Work together:** Share the goals of whole school engagement with staff, parents, and students.
- **Reach out:** Provide opportunities for stakeholders throughout the school and community to be involved.
- **Help students connect:** Encourage inclusive relationships in both structured and unstructured settings.
- **Connect with families:** Organize inclusive family events, such as a family skate night, a family bowling night, or a family movie night. While the school might have offered similar events in the past, you might need to make a deliberate effort to ensure that families of students with intellectual disabilities feel welcome.
- **Share accomplishments:** Use the school's website or social media to post photos, videos, and stories of social inclusion activities.
- **Encourage reflection:** Provide opportunities for students to reflect on whole school engagement activities through discussion or journal writing by asking questions such as, "What did you learn from the experience?" or "How did you feel before the activity, during the activity, and after the activity?"



For additional resources, see **Get Into It**, a web-based, interactive curriculum for students that promotes respect and acceptance for people with intellectual disabilities. This unique program delivers free lessons, activities, videos, athlete stories, and supplemental materials at <https://getintoit.specialolympics.org/>

**Unified Champion
Schools**

**Whole School Engagement
Action Plan Form**

Strategy/Activity	Tasks	Date of Completion	People Responsible
Connects with: <input type="checkbox"/> Unified Sports <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Youth Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Other			
Connects with: <input type="checkbox"/> Unified Sports <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Youth Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Other			