Establishing your Leadership Team

This section details important steps for establishing your Unified Champion School Leadership Team:

1. Recruit team members.
2. Build the team's capacity.
3. Analyze the landscape.
4. Find your starting point.
5. Establish a plan and take action.
6. Conduct monitoring and continuous improvement.

It All Starts With Your Team

The first step to becoming a Unified Champion School is to bring together a team to lead the work. Evaluation of the Unified Champion Schools program has revealed the positive impact of having a leadership team to guide the implementation:

• Schools that had a leadership team were able to implement more robust programming than those without a leadership team.

• Schools with a leadership team reported more involvement of community members.

• Leadership teams increased opportunities for general and special education teachers to work together.

• Schools with a leadership team tended to be more confident in the sustainability of their program than schools without a leadership team.

The Unified Champion School Leadership Team should be intergenerational in nature, comprised of diverse leaders including students with and without disabilities, parents, teachers, pupil personnel services staff and administrators. The leadership team will be responsible for establishing the vision and overarching goals for the school, guide early stages of implementation, and ensuring fidelity to quality through consistent monitoring and nurturing with an eye toward continuous improvement. Sometimes this process takes a while, and schools are encouraged to spend the time necessary to build a strong foundation.

An Introduction to Intergenerational Work
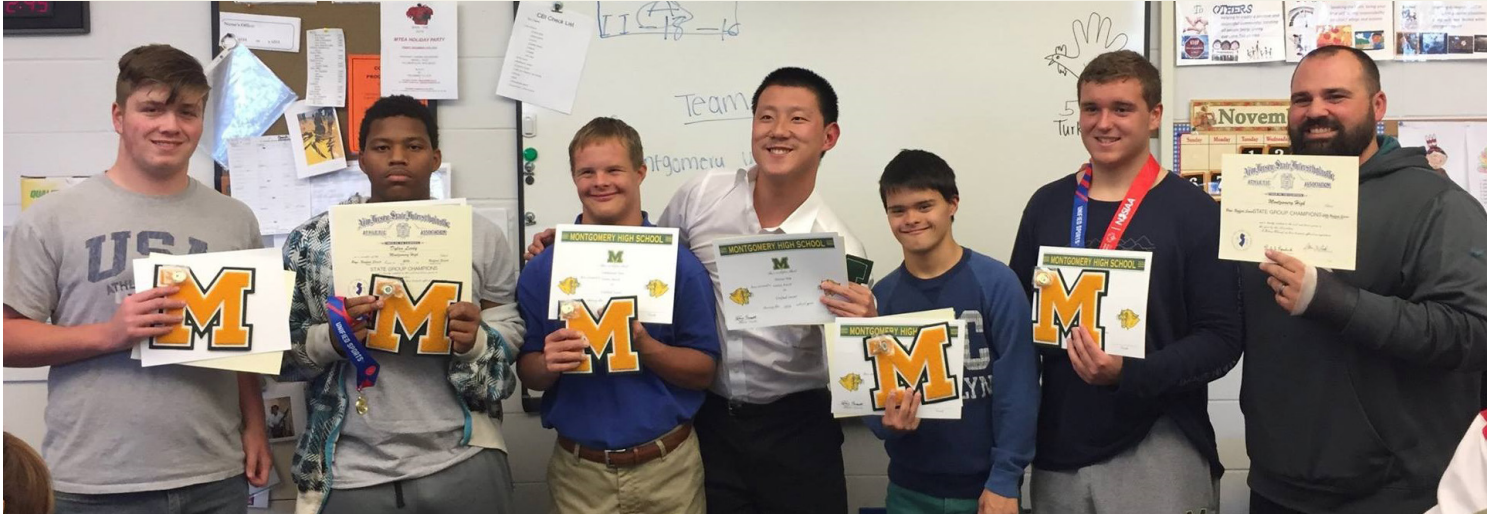
Intergenerational work is neither about young people nor adults, and it is not about the balance between the generations.

Rather, intergenerational work is about the work; it is a change strategy focused on the belief that different generations bring critical perspectives, skills and relationships to the work that the others do not. It is the belief that to achieve common goals we all need to work together.

Keys to Intergenerational Work

• A goal is identified that neither adults nor young people can achieve on their own.

• Nurturing the development of effective, empowered young people is a strategy for achieving goals.

• Effective, empowered adults share decision-making authority, and they support and create space for young people to lead (because it is a good strategy to achieve goals, not because it is a nice thing to do).

• Youth and adults form a team with differing and complementary skills, networks, perspectives and opportunities to lead.

• Both youth and adults share responsibility and accountability for the work and achieving goals.

Helpful Resources

More information on how adults can effectively nurture inclusive youth leadership can be found in the **Inclusive Youth Leadership Guidelines** at www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources
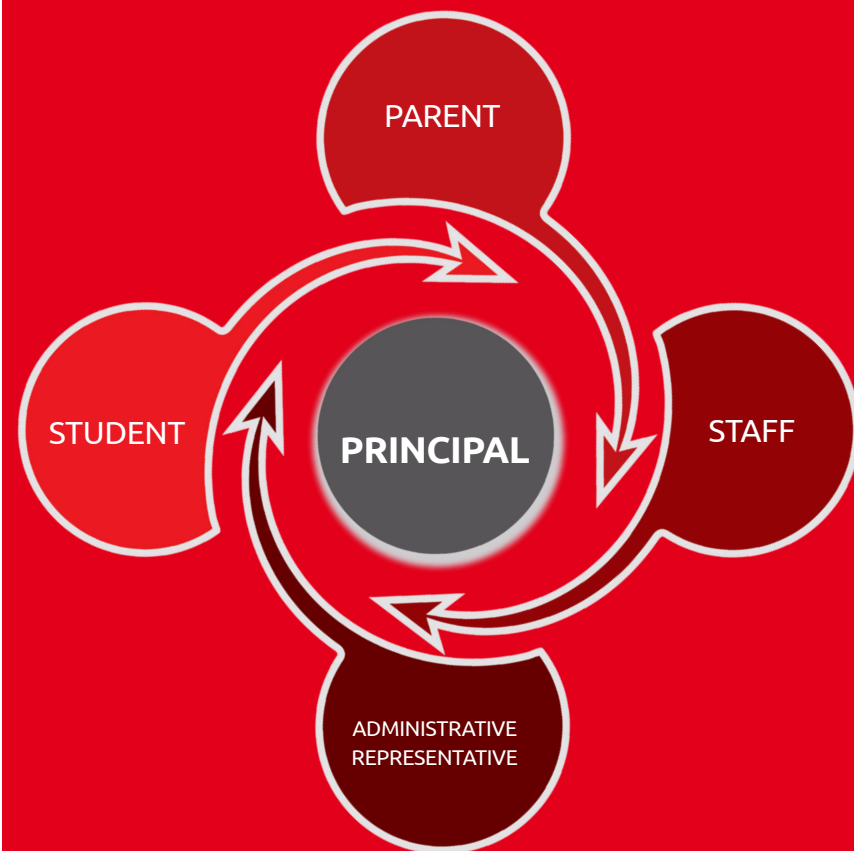
Adult-Driven vs. Intergenerational Leadership

The following are examples of Adult-Driven vs. Intergenerational Leadership.
How might the differences in the two approaches impact the work in the school?
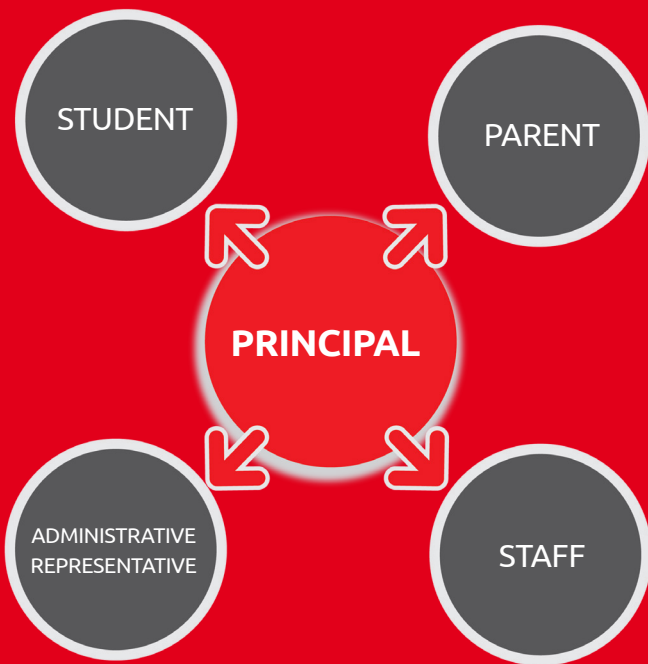
Adult-Driven Leadership Approach

A principal has pulled together a leadership team with student, staff, parent and administrative representation, to develop a plan for implementing the Unified Champion Schools program. At the first meeting, the principal asks staff members to talk about their priorities, describing the changes they want to see in their school. The students and parents are asked if they have any additional needs. The principal determines that, based on everyone's input, the group will focus their initial efforts on increasing dialogue about acceptance in staff meetings and homerooms to raise awareness about social inclusion.

Intergenerational Leadership Approach

A principal has pulled together a leadership team, intentionally working to include students with and without disabilities, staff with diverse perspectives and roles in the school, and parents of students with and without disabilities. At the first meeting, the principal facilitates discussions about the purpose for the group, how each member enriches the skills, abilities and perspectives of the others, and what they hope to accomplish together. They also discuss their goals for having young people engaged in the leadership team and how they can work together to nurture the growth and development of both the students and adults. Having formed an initial sense of how they will proceed in their leadership work, they set up a schedule for future meetings to begin developing their strategic plan.

Getting Your Leadership Team Started

1. RECRUIT TEAM MEMBERS
The Unified Champion School Leadership Team should strive to include all of the following:

• Students with and without intellectual disabilities (3-4 students depending on the size of the school).
• Students from different social and academic groups including those who may not typically be selected to be a leader.
• Teachers (both special and general education).
• Parents of students with and without intellectual disabilities, who preferably are not also a teacher.
• At least one administrator or staff member with the ability to commit time and resources to the work.

2. BUILD THE TEAM'S CAPACITY
The first thing this group needs to do is establish the rules guiding how they will interact, ensuring that the team models the kind of inclusion they are promoting throughout the school. Without starting here, others may not follow the team's lead when they are asked to approach their work and relationships in new and potentially challenging ways. So, make a plan and take the time you need to make sure everyone understands why the team has been created, why it is intergenerational, and what each member can contribute.

To create a true collaboration between young people and adults, the following questions need to be answered at the beginning:

WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH THROUGH OUR INTERGENERATIONAL WORK?
• **Why are we a team of youth and adults and not just a team of adults or a team of students?**
• **How does the perspective of young people help us identify and achieve our goals?**
• **How does the perspective of adults help us identify and achieve our goals?**
• **What goals do we have for all students that we know are integral to our larger vision of the work?**

WHAT ARE WE READY TO SUPPORT?
• What are adults already investing to support youth and adults working together, and what are the adults in the school willing to invest (time and effort) to work effectively with young people?
• What is the level of buy-in from staff and students?
• What are we willing to change? What aren't we willing to change?

• What resources need to be shifted?
• Who is willing to change and who isn't?
• How do adults integrate and support youth across the full range of work rather than in isolated programs or committee settings?

3. ANALYZE THE LANDSCAPE
A great way to start thinking about your work together is to think about the context in which you are working and with whom. As a team, it can be helpful to brainstorm the support that already exists for this work. Who is already a supporter? Who is on the fence? Who doesn't know anything about your work? Who may be opposed? Additionally, it's a good idea to brainstorm what resources are available that could support your work. How will you get the supplies you might need? Where will you meet? Consider even small details such as whether you will have snacks for meetings. There are all sorts of resources you will use as you work together, and this sort of brainstorming will help you keep them front and center while also identifying additional potential partners in the work.

4. FIND YOUR STARTING POINT
Before you can begin planning and preparing for implementation of the Unified Champion School program in your school, it is important for the Leadership Team to take time to consider how socially inclusive the school is now. This will not only help the team prioritize goals and first steps, but also will serve as a baseline for measuring progress.

A good way for the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to better understand the current state of social inclusion in the school is to conduct a self-assessment. While this is an optional step, it is helpful to have baseline data that helps establish a starting point and to assess progress. Just as it's important to assess student progress in their learning, gathering relevant data is important for any new initiative in school, business or personal improvement.

This playbook offers two ways to gather baseline data:
• Leadership Team completes the Characteristics of Socially Inclusive School assessment.
and/or
• Survey the school community using the Social Inclusion Scale.

Reaching the Atypical Leader

Intentionally recruit students who may not immediately come to mind as leaders, such as students with disabilities or a disengaged learner. This is a critical step in assembling an effective leadership team that understands the school experience from multiple perspectives. It can sometimes be difficult to reach the atypical leader because all teachers don't "see" them.

Youth and adults working together to use a combination of strategies is often most effective. For example:

• Strive to include a range of perspectives on the team.

• Give a short presentation about social inclusion to each grade level to spark interest.

• Ask teachers to recommend students for the team.

• Invite students to nominate themselves or others.

• Ask someone who already has a relationship with the individual to extend a personal invitation.

Characteristics of Socially Inclusive Schools (CSIS) Assessment: Leadership Team

You might begin by having each member of the leadership team individually complete the Characteristics of Socially Inclusive Schools (CSIS) Assessment, which is found on page 39. Then as a group discuss each item and work to come to consensus about the current status of that item in the school before moving onto the next item.

If significant differences exist between the perspectives of various members of the team, take time to capture each perspective before moving on. It is very important to honor and seriously discuss different perspectives because they can provide important insights into areas that may need to be addressed. If you cannot come to agreement, it is possible to record more than one answer in the initial self-assessment, making note of significant variations in perspective. This will provide additional information about how cohesive social inclusion efforts are perceived or implemented among all contexts and individuals in the school. For example, if students indicate their peers don't have inclusive friendships, but teachers perceive that students develop inclusive peer relationships, it may be that classrooms have nurtured social inclusion in that setting, but it hasn't carried over into the hallways and informal settings in the school.

Youth Leadership Tip

It is important to remember to adequately prepare youth for an active role on the Leadership Team.

Be sure to intentionally develop their leadership skills through:
• Ensuring they understand each task the team encounters.
• Meaningfully engaging them in ongoing discussions.
• Providing them with opportunities to take leadership in carrying out appropriate tasks.
• Nurturing progress within each student

SOCIAL INCLUSION SCALE

The Leadership Team may not be the only group you'll want to include in the data collection process. It is also helpful to gather information from a diverse representation of the wider student body, parents, teachers, pupil personnel services, staff and administrators. The team may decide to use the Social Inclusion Scale found on **page 51** for that purpose.

There are several ways to collect survey data: send it out electronically or by mail; have students take it home; or survey attendees at an open house, during parent conferences or other school events. However you decide to conduct the survey, be careful to include a broad cross-section of the school community to capture as many perspectives as possible representing different stakeholder groups (e.g., parents of students with or without intellectual disabilities, students with or without intellectual disabilities or from different grade levels, special or regular education teachers).You do not have to gather data from every member of the school community, but it is essential to gather a random sample of those stakeholders to ensure the "picture" you obtain is truly reflective of your school.

Once the Leadership Team has compiled all of the data from the surveys returned, take time to cross-check the perceptions of the team members with those of the wider school community.

5. ESTABLISH A PLAN AND TAKE ACTION

Based on what you discover in your analysis of the landscape and baseline assessment, work as a team to complete a strategic plan. This plan will help identify priorities, strategies and outcomes that will guide the Leadership Team toward achieving the vision you create for this work. Map out your goals and make sure they align with and support each other. Develop action steps that will lead toward your intended outcomes and be sure to make your goals achievable to help generate success, which will feed further efforts. Early team goals are often about broadening the base of support and raising the profile of the issues. A framework for creating the Unified Champion School Strategic Plan can be found on **page 33**.

Characteristics of Success

The following characteristics form an effective framework, which assists Unified Champion Schools in successfully achieving high-quality social inclusion:

1. Social Inclusion is a purposeful process and is woven into the fabric of the school.

2. Efforts are student-centered.

3. Social inclusion is valued, nurtured and supported across formal and informal settings.

4. Consistent opportunities are provided to engage students in developing, implementing and sustaining a wide range of inclusive activities.

5. Shared leadership is embraced and includes a broad range of stakeholders.

6. Leaders are intentionally cultivated beyond a passionate few.

7. There is a vision and purpose to social inclusion that is understood and shared by the school community as work that is core to the school/district's mission.

8. Social inclusion is about all students being supported in contributing in meaningful ways, not some being the "helped" and others being the "helpers."

9. Students, teachers and administrators value and engage in ongoing reflection to guide continuous improvement.

10. Administrative support is concrete, visible and active at both school and district levels.

Resources to Guide Your Work

- Baseline Assessments: Characteristics of Successful School Assessment **(p. 38-50)** Social Inclusion Scale **(p. 51-54)**
- Planning: Unified Champion School Youth Strategic Plan **(p. 33 - 36)**
- Progress Monitoring: Social Inclusion Rubric **(p. 55-62)**

Characteristics of Socially Inclusive Schools (CSIS) Assessment: Leadership Team *continued*

There are a number of elements the team should discuss during the process of establishing the Strategic Plan for your school:

• Develop a vision and goals in alignment with the school's priorities to establish the foundation for social inclusion efforts.

• Find your starting point by identifying who you are as a school. Conduct a SWOT analysis to get a picture of where your school is now; where you want to be; and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that exist which will impact your work.

• Create a plan for how progress will be measured, monitored and used to support continuous improvement.

• Completing the "Inputs, Outcomes and Impacts" chart may help you advance this work with intentionality. This chart pulls together the overall plan by asking the team to identify the priorities and current status; inputs (who will be engaged in the effort); outputs (activities and intended audience); the short, medium, and long term impacts of those actions; and any assumptions or external factors that may affect the work.

• Create a plan that clearly outlines the actions that will be taken to foster a socially inclusive school. For each goal, the team should identify the major tasks that will need to be completed to achieve that goal, who will facilitate those actions, when each step will be completed, and who else might be engaged in the process.

Taking action toward creating a socially inclusive school is the core work of the Leadership Team. Identify what your school needs to become socially inclusive, engage others to implement the strategies that will create a positive impact, and monitor your progress to continue learning and growing. It's important to remember some actions can be big, but smaller more frequent actions are equally important because they are invaluable in helping to build toward your school's ultimate success. Don't forget to celebrate big and small successes along the way.

6. CONDUCT PROGRESS MONITORING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

As the Leadership Team engages others and facilitates implementation of the three components (Inclusive Sports, Youth Leadership, Whole School Engagement), great things are sure to begin happening in your school. It can be helpful to continue to collect data to measure progress and identify areas for continuous improvement to inform and enhance your efforts. The Social Inclusion Rubric found on **page 51** can help you in these efforts.

The rubric will provide a picture of the school's level of social inclusiveness as efforts are made to become a Unified Champion School (UCS) or to expand and enhance the implementation of the three components in an existing designated school. This information can then be used to monitor progress, inform revisions to the strategic plan, discover new and exciting strategies to develop and provide a picture of next steps.

The advantage of using this type of rubric is that it provides "snapshots" of what social inclusion looks like across the school. These pictures can be very helpful in identifying the status, conditions and impacts of implementation. As your team evaluates the descriptors for each of the levels, you might find that your school has made more progress in one area than another. This can help you target your strategic plan while providing highlights of what to strive for along the continuum of implementation.

Special Olympics
Unified Champion School Strategic Plan

Leadership Team Members

School(s) to be involved:

School(s) to be involved:

What do we hope social inclusion will achieve? As a team, ask yourselves what you would like success to look like in concrete, measurable terms. What will people in our school do that demonstrates we are a socially inclusive school? Which set of goals will help us progress on the social inclusion rubric? Identify 3-5 SMART goals. SMART goals are:

S - Specific
M - Measurable
A - Action-oriented
R - Realistic
T - Time-bound

How will social inclusion help meet our school's broader goals?

Have our goals been prioritized, and which ones are most critical to the success of this effort?

Finding Our Starting Point

Effective planning starts with an assessment of the current situation. It begins with asking
1) Who are we? and 2) Analyzing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
Who are we?

1. Who are we as a school?

2. What are the common interests of our school community and how can we best represent them?

3. What are our values?

SWOT ANALYSIS
(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)

*What are our **strengths** relative to social inclusion in our school?*

*What are our **weaknesses?***

*What **opportunities** are made available by implementing the Unified Champion Schools program to support social inclusion?*

*If we do not address social inclusion, what are the **threats?***

5. What are the primary obstacles to social inclusion and how might we overcome them?

6. Are there previous initiatives that failed due to lack of support or other obstacles? What were they, and why did they fail?

7. What assistance do we need with this work?

MONITORING
1. Who has oversight and review authority for the plan content? Who is responsible for measuring progress?

2. What measures of progress will we use?

3. How often will we review progress?

4. How will we use progress monitoring to ensure our efforts continuously improve?

INPUTS

OUTPUTS

OUTCOMES - IMPACT

Activities	Participation	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
What we will do	What we will reach	Short Term Results	Medium Term Results	Long Term Results

Who will we engage? What resources do we have?

CURRENT STATUS

Where are we now?

PRIORITIES

What goals will we address first

Assumptions about Social Inclusion in our School

External Factors That May Influence Outcomes

GOAL	MAJOR TASK	When will each task be completed?	Who will facilitate the completion of this goal?	Who Else can help?
What we will do	1.	1.	**What we will do**	**What we will do**
	2.	2.		
	3.	3.		
	4.	4.		
	5.	5.		
What we will do	1.	1.	**What we will do**	**What we will do**
	2.	2.		
	3.	3.		
	4.	4.		
	5.	5.		
What we will do	1.	1.	**What we will do**	**What we will do**
	2.	2.		
	3.	3.		
	4.	4.		
	5.	5.		