



# Whole School Engagement Implementation Guide



## Whole School Engagement is a unique and important component because it:



- ✔ Engages the entire staff and student body in building awareness and understanding of the benefits to all when the assets and contributions of each individual are recognized, honored and supported.
- ✔ Expands ownership of the efforts beyond a passionate few, creating a ripple effect from their actions and advocacy.
- ✔ Recognizes that the engagement and contributions of all abilities, perceptions and attitudes benefits both youth and adults.
- ✔ Nurtures engaging environments where students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members feel connected, safe and successful.
- ✔ Creates schools that are communities of acceptance where students with disabilities feel welcome and valued as meaningful participants in school activities, classroom learning and leadership opportunities.
- ✔ Positively impacts acceptance of all types of differences and teaches students and staff to embrace diversity among all students.

# GOALS OF WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT.

- Students with and without intellectual disabilities will interact socially and develop mutually beneficial friendships.

- Students with and without disabilities will hold more positive attitudes toward, and demonstrate a greater understanding and acceptance of, each other.

- Schools will become communities of acceptance where students with and without intellectual disabilities feel welcome and contribute meaningfully to all school activities, opportunities and functions.

- The school climate will be enhanced by nurturing development, learning and achievement through engaging environments where students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members feel connected, safe and successful.

**An important feature of creating a socially inclusive school climate is engaging the entire school community in the process. Whole School Engagement activities that advance social inclusion knowledge, skills and dispositions in students, teachers, staff, administrators and others positively impact the school climate. An inclusive school climate that fosters understanding and respect for all can influence how students think and act both within and beyond the school.**

School-wide opportunities focused on social inclusion raise awareness and create an educational environment where respect and acceptance are the norm and all students feel included and engaged. This welcoming community cultivates a positive school climate and enhances other school-wide efforts such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Whole school activities also offer a platform to demonstrate the power of young people to positively impact their school community by promoting social inclusion. Using tools such as Spread the Word to End the Word (R-word Campaign); Fans in the Stands; Unified Sports Field Days and the play, It's Our School, Too!, provide opportunities to integrate Unified Sports and inclusive youth leadership efforts into activities that spread social inclusion throughout the school.



## Helpful Resources

Be sure to check out the series of mini-lessons that can be used school-wide within a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework:

- **Tolerance and Acceptance**
- **Understanding Disabilities**

found at

[www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources](http://www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources)

# What is the Principle of Meaningful Involvement in Whole School Engagement?

The principle of meaningful involvement provides an important foundation for students with and without intellectual disabilities to be engaged as valued members of the school community. A socially inclusive school ensures every student is given an opportunity to contribute to the success of his or her school because of the unique skills and qualities they bring to the work.

## Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

- All students have the ability and opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the success and well-being of the school community.
- Students with and without intellectual disabilities are intentionally engaged in whole school activities in formal and informal settings.
- Young people and adults work collaboratively to expect, nurture and support acceptance and respectful behavior in fostering a socially inclusive school climate.

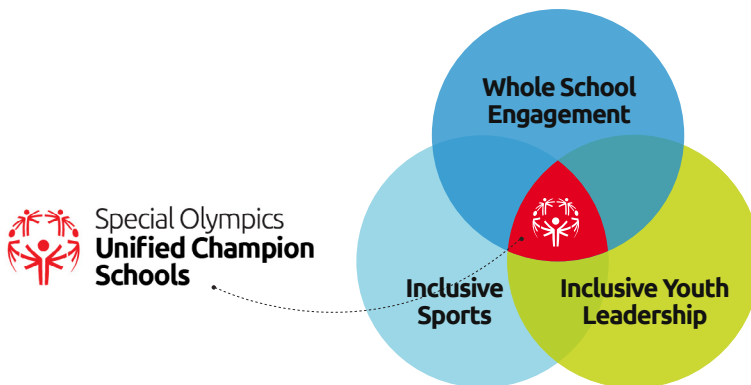
# Implementing Whole School Engagement

The first step to engaging your whole school in advancing social inclusion is typically to have a planning meeting with your school's Unified Leadership Team. As you work to become a Unified Champion School, be sure students are engaged as co-leaders throughout the process. Remember to always be on the lookout for opportunities to hand over decision-making and leadership to young people. The roles that each of you play will vary from school to school. The questions and checklists found below will be answered and completed by youth, youth and adults working together, or adults as appropriate for your particular school environment.

## Topics to discuss with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team

- What types of whole school activities does our school need/want to incorporate?
- Where do we already have formal and informal opportunities for students to understand and begin to incorporate social inclusion?
- What types of whole school activities (e.g., pep rallies, assemblies, speakers, contests) do we already do in our school? Can/do any of these activities already support social inclusion? If not, how can they be revised to support the social inclusion of all students?
- What types of whole school activities are valued by students with and without intellectual disabilities at the school?
- Are there any existing clubs, teams, classes or school groups that might be interested in planning and leading a whole school activity?
- How does the Principle of Meaningful Involvement impact the type of whole school activities that are implemented and how they are presented?
- Who will be the adult advisor/coordinator for various activities?

# Examples of Whole School Engagement Activities in Unified Champion Schools



## Inclusive Sports

- A campaign to engage the whole school as Fans in the Stands is initiated at the start of the Unified Basketball season.
- The Unified PE class hosts a Unified Sports Festival to promote wellness and the importance of physical activity for all students.
- The intramural and interscholastic Unified Sports teams provide demonstrations during half-time of the varsity sports throughout the year.
- Pep rallies are held for all interscholastic sports teams, including Unified Sports and varsity teams.

## Inclusive Youth Leadership

- The National Honor Society, which includes students with and without disabilities, hosts a series of assemblies once a month to increase awareness of social inclusion and foster respect among all students.
- The junior prom committee seeks nominations for diverse students to be on the prom court and engages students with and without intellectual disabilities in planning and decorating for the prom.
- The Unified Club works with the school PBIS leadership committee to incorporate social inclusion as part of the school-wide expectations for student behavior.

## Whole School Engagement

- The required civics class incorporates lessons on social inclusion into the unit on social justice to ensure all students increase their knowledge and skills.
- The Student Council coordinates a Spread the Word to End the Word campaign to raise consciousness of the school and community about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the word, "retard(ed)," and encourage people to pledge to stop using the R-word.
- The Art Department holds a poster contest inviting students to design posters for the school halls, advocating for social inclusion and creating a welcoming school climate.



## Enhancing Whole School Engagement Experiences



- Include school administration early in the process. Engage administrators in concrete, visible and active ways at both school and district levels.
- Be intentional about incorporating social inclusion into curriculum development, school-wide PBIS efforts, school climate improvement and wellness activities.
- Share the goals of whole school engagement (e.g., raise awareness about inclusion and create a socially inclusive school climate; recruit more participants in Unified Sports or inclusive school clubs).
- Start from where you are and start small. Select and plan an initial activity that is manageable, energizing and appeals to the whole school.
- Build on current activities that are already being offered with an intentional focus on having it become a socially inclusive activity.
- Develop a process for engaging all students in social inclusion efforts, ensuring the development of socially inclusive attitudes, values, knowledge, skills and actions.
- When building awareness, nurturing inclusive relationships and building expectations for inclusive behavior provide opportunities in both structured and unstructured settings.
- Provide consistent opportunities to engage a broad range of stakeholders throughout the school and wider community in developing, implementing and sustaining a wide range of inclusive activities.
- Connect with your state Special Olympics program for support and sharing successes.
- Share photos, videos and stories of social inclusion activities and events using the school's website or social media.



### 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](http://www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources)

# Checklist for Getting Started

There are a plethora of ways the whole school can be engaged in learning about and creating a socially inclusive school. The tips and checklists that follow offer some ideas to get started with a few different activities that can be customized and expanded upon to best address your identified needs and fit into the structure of your school.



## Getting Started Checklist for School Assemblies

School assemblies can be effective for sharing information with the entire student body, creating energy and excitement or orientating the school community to a new opportunity.

\_\_\_ 1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss ways to engage the entire school in activities to increase social inclusion. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the assembly.

\_\_\_ 2. Dedicate a club, class or group meeting to identifying an issue of concern students would like to address during an assembly and brainstorm ideas for the structure for the activity, such as a guest speaker, pep rally, activity day or student presentation.

\_\_\_ 3. Research the issue(s), understand who it affects and what changes are needed.

\_\_\_ 4. Meet with the principal to discuss plans for the activity and ensure administrative support and approval. Make sure the presentation is well thought out and organized.

\_\_\_ 5. Develop a plan.

- Set the date and time for the assembly.
- 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.
- Make sure the date, time and location are all cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.
- Consider joining efforts with another group in the school or community to broaden the group of stakeholders.

\_\_\_ 6. Invite guest speakers, develop a presentation and prepare any necessary materials.

- Make sure the assembly is relevant to your community. Try to personalize parts of the assembly to your local community and/or school.
- Get the audience involved, ensuring the event is fun, memorable and engaging.
- Incorporate a speech, skit or other presentation to inform attendees about the topic.
- Consider using videos, visuals or other multimedia to maintain participants' interest.
- Identify and utilize people who can lead part of the assembly and will educate, motivate and activate participants.

\_\_\_ 7. Communicate with school staff about the date, purpose of the assembly and why this is important to your school. Consider asking staff to assist with communication through announcements, the school website, letters sent home, school newspaper and local news media.

\_\_\_ 8. Publicize the assembly around the school.

\_\_\_ 9. After the assembly, be sure to thank all of those involved with the successful event. Send a special thank you note to any guest speakers.



## Getting Started Checklist for “It’s Our School, Too!” Play

This play is written for a cast of 10-20 students with and without intellectual disabilities. The script addresses a variety of vignettes from real schools designed to raise awareness of the school experience through the eyes of students with intellectual disabilities.

\_\_\_ 1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss performing the play, It’s Our School, Too! in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the performance.

\_\_\_ 2. Access the script for the play in the Educator Resources section found at: [www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources](http://www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources)

\_\_\_ 3. Share the script with students in your drama class, club or other interested group. Discuss student interest in performing the play and identify the areas of concern students have about inclusion in their school.

\_\_\_ 4. Develop a plan.

- Assign roles and schedule rehearsals.
- Set the date, time and location for the performance.
- 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.
- Make sure the date, time and location are all cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.

\_\_\_ 5. Communicate with school staff about the date, purpose of the play, and why it is important to your school. Consider asking staff to assist with communication through announcements, the school website, letters sent home, school newspaper and local news media.

\_\_\_ 6. Publicize the assembly around the school and community.

\_\_\_ 7. Conduct performance(s) for the school and/or community.

\_\_\_ 8. Facilitate a forum after the play to discuss what the audience experienced and identify any relevant issues that exist in the local school and/or community.

\_\_\_ 9. After the performance, be sure to thank all of those involved with the successful event. Send a special thank you note to any donors or sponsors.

\_\_\_ 10. Work with the student council, Unified Club, school advisory committee or other interested group to analyze the issues and develop a plan to implement changes to create a more socially inclusive school.





## Getting Started Checklist for Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign

The Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org) raises the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the word “retard(ed)” and encourage people to pledge to stop using the R-word. 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).

- \_\_\_1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss holding an R-Word Campaign in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the campaign.
- \_\_\_2. Work with students in the Unified Club, class or other group in the school to organize activities to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of using the R-word.
- \_\_\_3. Meet with the principal to discuss plans for the campaign and ensure administrative support and approval.
- \_\_\_4. Decide what activities the campaign will include, such as:
  - Hold a small rally or school assembly. Have students give speeches about the campaign and distribute information to students.
  - Set up a pledge station where all students will sign the pledge to stop using the R-word.
  - Sell t-shirts with a slogan about stopping the use of the R-word.
  - Provide a lesson on the use of respectful words that includes information on stopping the use of the R-word as part of your school’s PBIS lessons on behavior expectations.
  - If school policies allow, encourage students to share information about the campaign via social media or the school website. They might also consider writing a blog, developing a podcast or including information in the school newspaper.
- \_\_\_5. Develop a plan.
  - \* Schedule the campaign 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.
  - Make sure the scheduled activities are all cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.
  - Hold a meeting with everyone who will be working a pledge station and provide them with talking points and discussion topics.
- \_\_\_6. Communicate with school staff about the dates, purpose of the campaign and why this campaign is important to your school. Consider asking staff to assist with communication through announcements, the school website, letters sent home, the school newsletter and local news media.
- \_\_\_7. Check with your state Special Olympics office for R-word stickers, posters, banners and other items to use at the pledge station. Check the resources available here: [www.r-word.org/r-word-resources](http://www.r-word.org/r-word-resources)
- \_\_\_8. Publicize the R-word Campaign around the school and community.
- \_\_\_9. Be sure to track your statistics such as the number of pledges signed, number of people involved and highlights of success stories. Consider asking the local newspaper to share this information with the community.



## Getting Started Check list for Fans in the Stands™

Fans in the Stands commit to ensuring that every student or team has supporting fans who cheer at every game, rain or shine, win or lose. Be a Fan™ is a fully integrated marketing campaign designed to send a powerful message that taps into core values and attributes: unity, acceptance, empowerment, respect, inclusion, dignity, courage, strength, pride, confidence and fun.

- \_\_\_ 1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss getting Fans in the Stands implemented in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the activities.
- \_\_\_ 2. Organize groups of students who may be interested in being fans in the stands. This effort may be organized by the Unified Club, Pep Club, Cheerleading Squad or other group at the school.
- \_\_\_ 3. Develop a calendar of all interscholastic, Special Olympics and Unified Sports events that will take place during each semester.
- \_\_\_ 4. 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 the school newsletter.
- \_\_\_ 5. Identify students who will take responsibility for ensuring cheering fans are present at each event.
- \_\_\_ 6. Prior to each event, create items such as posters and t-shirts to encourage the team



# Getting Started Checklist for Unified Sports Day or Unified Sports Festival

Host a Unified Sports Day or Unified Sports Festival at the school with students organizing a day of inclusive sports activities for the student body.

\_\_\_1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss hosting a Unified Sports Day at your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the activity.

\_\_\_2. Meet with the principal to get approval and administrative support. Share the goals and possible activities. Be sure to stress the positive impact it can have on creating a socially inclusive school climate.

\_\_\_3. Consider collaborating with the physical education department or Unified Sports coach/team members to organize activities and make accommodations to ensure all activities are accessible to all students.

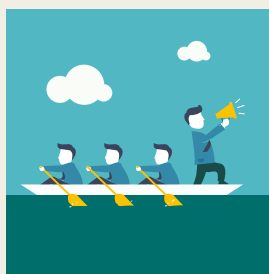
\_\_\_4. Develop a plan.

- Set the date and time for the day's activities.
- Decide on the activities to be included, whether the day will have a theme or focus on a specific sport, and identify how all students will have equitable opportunities to participate.
- 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.
- Make sure the date, time and location are all cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.

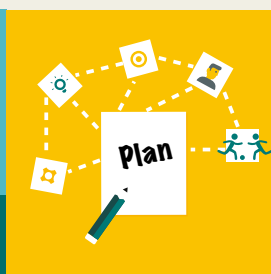
\_\_\_5. Communicate with school staff about the dates, purpose of the event and why this is important to your school.

\_\_\_6. Publicize the Unified Sports Day to your school and community. Reach out to the local newspaper and radio station. Include information about the event on the local access television station.

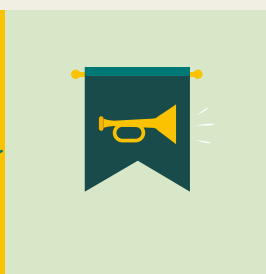
\_\_\_7. After the event, be sure to thank all of those involved with making it successful. Send a special thank you note to any sponsors or donors.



**Meet with the Team**



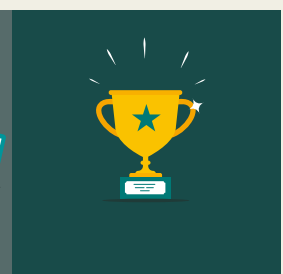
**Develop a plan  
Set date & time**



**Publicize the event**



**Amplify the event  
through social media**



**Thank everyone  
involved after the  
success**

# Whole School Engagement Action Plan

STRATEGY / ACTIVITY	TASKS	When will each task be completed?	Who will facilitate the completion of this goal?	Who Else can help?
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.		1.	1.	
		2.	2.	
		3.	3.	
		4.	4.	
		5.	5.	
		6.	6.	
		7.	7.	
		8.	8.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Youth Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Unified Sports		1.	1.	
2.		2.		
3.		3.		
4.		4.		
5.		5.		
6.		6.		
7.		7.		
8.		8.		
This strategy/activity also connects with: <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Youth Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Unified Sports		1.	1.	
2.		2.		
3.		3.		
4.		4.		
5.		5.		
6.		6.		
7.		7.		
8.		8.		



# Inclusive Youth Leadership Implementation Guide



## Inclusive Youth Leadership is a unique and important component because it:



✔ Encourages co-leadership opportunities that promote deeper understanding of the strengths, gifts and skills all students possess and can use to contribute meaningfully to the school community

✔ Brings together students with and without intellectual disabilities as leaders in their school, creating a socially inclusive environment in which lasting friendships can form.

✔ Provides students with and without intellectual disabilities the knowledge, skills and dispositions to take on leadership roles in their school.

✔ Offers opportunities for all students to become leaders, developing an understanding that students of all abilities can lead and expanding student investment in creating a socially inclusive school.



**Opportunities to nurture youth leadership abound in any high school. Ensuring that various leadership roles are inclusive and accessible to all students with a variety of skills, abilities and perspectives will greatly enhance efforts to create and sustain change. Possibilities might include a student-led effort to form a Unified Sports team, initiating a Unified Club comprised of students with and without intellectual disabilities, working to intentionally include a diverse group of students within existing clubs, or engaging non-traditional leaders in school and classroom decision-making**

Inclusive youth leadership offers opportunities for young people of all abilities to be leaders in their schools and communities by promoting equity and acceptance. These leadership activities help students find their voices by teaching them to become change agents, striving for respect and inclusion. Social inclusion is best fostered when activities for classrooms, for the whole school, and within extracurricular and community contexts are designed and implemented by a diverse group of students within a school.



## **Helpful Resources**

Guidance and activities for youth to develop inclusive leadership skills can be found in the **Inclusive Youth Leadership Activities** at [www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources](http://www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources)

## GOALS OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP

- Young people representing the diversity of the student body are engaged in leadership positions, and school staff members identify youth leadership as a priority for the school.
- Youth with and without intellectual disabilities become co-leaders in their schools, serving as catalysts for change. This is imperative in moving beyond having some students identified as the “helpers” while students with intellectual disabilities are considered the “helped”. Co-leadership is a strengths-based model where all students have equitable opportunities to contribute to their school community in meaningful ways.
- Administrators and teachers actively support the vision and insight of youth as they step into leadership positions and create inclusive environments in their schools.
- Teachers gain a greater appreciation of the ability of a wide range of students to take leadership roles and for the viability and value of providing opportunities for students with different learning abilities to collaborate on classroom and academic projects.
- Youth with and without disabilities gain the skills, knowledge and dispositions to become advocates for themselves and their peers.
- Policymakers and education leaders develop policies and support quality practices to encourage inclusive school climates that are safe and nurturing learning environments for all students.



# What is the Principle of Meaningful Involvement in Inclusive Youth Leadership?

The principle of meaningful involvement provides an important foundation for students with and without intellectual disabilities to be offered leadership opportunities through Unified Champion School activities. A socially inclusive school ensures every student is given an opportunity to contribute due to the unique skills and qualities they bring to the work.

## Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

- All students have the ability and opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the success and well-being of the school community.
- Students with and without intellectual disabilities are intentionally engaged in inclusive leadership roles in formal and informal settings.
- Youth and adults work collaboratively to enhance the knowledge, skills and dispositions of each individual.

## Meaningful involvement is not achieved when some students:

- Display superior skills and abilities without involving their peers in equitable ways.
- Take control of most decisions and leadership activities.
- Do not participate actively, seek to engage a diverse group of students, or nurture leadership skills in themselves or others.



### Youth Leadership Tip

Watch for both formal and informal opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to take an active leadership role. Sometimes adults take control of decisions simply because it's faster and easier.

Practice the guideline,  
**“Always be looking for times adults can step back and let young people lead.”**

# Examples of Inclusive Youth Leadership Activities in Unified Champion Schools



Special Olympics  
**Unified Champion  
Schools**



## Inclusive Sports

- Students advocate and obtain administrative support for starting a Unified Bocce team. They help organize practices and competitions, as well as manage uniforms.
- Students work with a physical education teacher to design a Unified PE course as an elective.
- Students form a cheerleading squad for the Unified Soccer team.
- The Student Council works with the school board to change the policy on how athletic letters are awarded to include Unified Sports teams

## Inclusive Youth Leadership

- Students and a faculty advisor work together to initiate a Unified Club in their school to work on promoting social inclusion.
- Students in the National Honor Society work with faculty to revise their by-laws to ensure students with and without disabilities have equitable opportunities to be members.
- The school's Student Advisory Committee works with the principal to re-envision the group as an intergenerational leadership committee comprised of students with and without disabilities and adults.

## Whole School Engagement

- A language arts class organizes and conducts an essay contest in partnership with the local Kiwanis Club, asking students to share their vision for a socially inclusive school.
- The Drama Club works with the Creative Writing Club to revise the script for the play, *It's Our School, Too!*, to reflect current issues in their school and put on a performance for the entire school.
- Students start a mentoring program pairing high school students with and without intellectual disabilities with middle or elementary school students.



## Youth Leadership Tip

Make sure all students have opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the work. Refrain from setting up partnerships that put students without intellectual disabilities in the role of "helper" with students with intellectual disabilities being the "helped." Provide accommodations for everyone to be successful such as breaking down tasks into smaller chunks, making adaptations so the task is more accessible (e.g., taping a speech for a student who is anxious about speaking in front of groups), or arranging for extra time to carry out a complicated task. It is always good to remember to only give the help that is needed to allow each person to be as independent as possible.

# Topics to discuss with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team

- What types of inclusive youth leadership opportunities does our school need/want to incorporate?
- Where do we already have formal and informal leadership opportunities for students? Are these inclusive opportunities, involving typical as well as atypical leaders?
- What inclusive youth leadership opportunities are valued by students with and without intellectual disabilities?
- How do we nurture student partnerships to support students with and without intellectual disabilities in serving in co-leadership capacities?
- How does the Principle of Meaningful Involvement impact the type of inclusive youth leadership opportunities offered to students with and without intellectual disabilities?
- How will we structure youth leadership? Will we incorporate it into existing groups or clubs in the school? Start a Unified Club? Create more intergenerational leadership opportunities?
- Who will be the adult advisor/coordinator for various activities?



## Youth Leadership Tip

The first step to getting inclusive youth leadership started in your school is typically to have a planning meeting with your school's Unified Champion School Leadership Team.

As you work through implementation of the program in your school, be sure students are engaged throughout the process.

Remember to always be on the lookout for opportunities to hand over decision-making and leadership to young people. The roles that each of you play will vary from school to school.

Each step in answering the questions and completing the checklists found below will be completed by youth, youth and adults working together, or adults as appropriate for your particular school environment.



## Enhancing the Inclusive Youth Leadership Experience



- Ensure adults are adequately prepared to foster inclusive youth leadership.
- Be intentional about developing the leadership skills of all students.
- Co-create the values, norms and processes that groups will use to guide their work.
- Be explicit about what inclusive youth leadership means, including the commitment to inclusiveness and expectations for all stakeholders (youth and adults).
- Support all students in contributing in meaningful ways. Guard against some students being the “leaders” with other students being the “helpers.”
- Help students learn to model social inclusion throughout their daily interactions at school.
- Be sure to cultivate youth leadership beyond the typical leader, spreading leadership opportunities to a wide range of students.
- Provide ongoing opportunities for students and adults to reflect on and refine their leadership skills.
- Guide students in providing frequent communications with staff, administrators and other students to keep them informed of their progress and activities, while increasing the numbers of people within the school who are committed to the work of social inclusion.
- Share photos, videos and stories of social inclusion activities and events using the school’s website or social media.



## Getting Started Checklist for Unified Clubs

\_\_\_1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss starting a Unified Club in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting and organizing the club.

\_\_\_2. Work with an administrator to help identify a teacher to serve as the advisor to the club.

\_\_\_3. Make personal invitations to students with and without intellectual disabilities who are interested in promoting equality and acceptance. Identify a core group of 3-5 students who can serve as an advisory committee during the initial set-up stages of the club as well as provide leadership after it is established.

\_\_\_4. Work with the newly created student advisory committee to accomplish the steps necessary to establish the club with the adult advisor supporting the student leaders in their efforts, while allowing the students to take primary leadership.

- Find out what your school's requirements are for starting a club and make sure you follow the appropriate steps for approval.
- Develop a presentation that includes why it is important to have a socially inclusive student club and what type of events you plan to do. Include facts or statistics and identify the issue(s) the club will address within the school. It is important to explain how this club can impact students and improve your school.
- Work with your principal to have the socially inclusive student club designated as a sanctioned school club, following all rules and policies that are expected of other clubs in the school.
- Set up an infrastructure for the club, including the election of members to fulfill leadership roles (e.g., chair, secretary, treasurer). Whenever possible establish co-leaders, having students with and without intellectual disabilities partnering to serve as club officers or committee chairs.
- Ensure someone is designated to:
  - o Be the liaison with the adult advisor and your state Special Olympics office, as needed.
  - o Keep track of funds and project costs.
  - o Maintain membership records and take meeting notes.

\_\_\_5. Have an introductory meeting with the advisory committee and club advisor to determine key logistics for the club.

- How often with the club meet?
- When will the club meet and for how long? Consider taking advantage of time during the school day to maximize club participation.
- Where will the club meet?
- Is there money for activities? Does your school allocate money for clubs? Does your state Special Olympics office have money to support club activities? Are there grant opportunities (such as State Farm Youth Advisory Board or Youth Service America grants)? What fundraising activities can the club participate in?

\_\_\_6. Make sure the student advisory committee understands their roles and responsibilities.

- Consider issues determined to be important by the members of this club.
- Establish a protocol for making decisions and provide a structure of leadership in fulfilling established goals.

# Next Steps for the Unified Club's Student Advisory Committee

## **Come up with a plan to recruit members and engage them in the club:**

- Extend personal invitations to friends, teammates and other interested students to join the club.
- Advertise the club through posters, announcements, school paper or other communications. You might coordinate with an art club or class to help make colorful posters. Be sure to announce time and place for meetings, and describe the types of activities you will be doing.
- If allowed, use social media to promote the club. Include information about the club, pictures and descriptions of past activities and updates on any upcoming activities. Invite students from your school to stay up-to-date with the club's activities.
- Talk to the special education teacher(s) in your school to help engage students with disabilities. Ask them to share club information with students and assist you with any advice you may need for recruiting students with disabilities.

## **Hold your first meeting. Establish an agenda for the meeting that includes the following:**

- Provide a description of the club and its purpose.
- Include an "icebreaker" or "get to know you" activity at the first meeting to start establishing friendships among club members.
- Have the student advisory committee introduce themselves and explain their roles.
- Distribute a membership form to obtain contact information from each member.
- Establish club routines and protocols for interacting and collaborating which ensure everyone is meaningfully engaged (such as discussion strategies that provide opportunities for each member to participate equitably).
- Brainstorm ideas for future activities.
- Discuss ideas for committees to get everyone involved and provide more opportunities for leadership.
- Share the dates of upcoming meetings and activities.
- Give closing remarks.
- Remind members of the next meeting and encourage them to recruit additional members.

## **Develop a list of activities to build into the initial meetings.**

- Consider including diversity or disabilities awareness training as part of one of your first few meetings to ensure all participants have a better understanding of various disabilities so students can better support each other.
- Discuss the Unified Champion Schools program and how the Unified Club can expand opportunities for social inclusion.

## **Use your regularly scheduled meetings to further enhance the skills of club members while accomplishing goals and planning for activities. Meetings should be led by the student advisory committee, but find opportunities for all students to take a leadership role during the meetings.**

- Always welcome new members or interested students.
- Discuss ideas and strategies with the group. Be certain each individual has the opportunity to share his or her thoughts.
- If you see an individual controlling conversation or leadership of the group, pause and ask others about their opinion on the topic.
- Provide all members with notes of the meeting and action items to be completed through social media or other established forms of communication.



## Getting Started Checklist for Making Existing Clubs Inclusive

**Transform an existing school club into an inclusive club supporting the group to include diverse student representation, including students with and without intellectual disabilities. Engage your inclusive club in the following steps:**

\_\_\_1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss making more clubs at your school inclusive. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the activity.

\_\_\_2. Talk with your principal about social inclusion and why it is important for students with disabilities to be included in school clubs.

\_\_\_3. Speak with club advisors and officers about the value of inclusive youth leadership and how it aligns with and enhances their goals.

\_\_\_4. Connect with the club members to better understand their current work. Ask them the following questions:

- What is the club's mission?
- What type of work are you currently doing?
- Are students with intellectual disabilities members of the club?
- How might the club benefit from including students with disabilities?
- How might the school benefit from having clubs with more diverse student representation?

\_\_\_5. Work with the club members to increase their understanding of social inclusion and gain skills in collaborating with diverse students. Club members might find it helpful to lead activities from the Get Into It curriculum found at <https://getintoit.specialolympics.org/educators>.

\_\_\_6. If there is a selection process for the club, guide members in establishing a selection protocol to increase the diversity of student representation to include students with intellectual disabilities.

\_\_\_7. Engage students by visiting inclusive general education and special education classrooms to identify students who are interested in being part of the club. You might also consider requesting that teachers ask their students if they are interested.

\_\_\_8. Hang posters about the club around school and include messages in the daily announcements to gain interest.

\_\_\_9. Continue to work with members to ensure all students are provided leadership and co-leadership opportunities and increase skills in collaborative decision-making. Utilize activities from the Inclusive Youth Leadership Activities Guidebook to ensure members feel more equipped to lead in equitable situations.

\_\_\_10. Read more information about how to transform existing school clubs to become socially inclusive in the Inclusive Youth Leadership Resources.

# Inclusive Youth Leadership Action Plan

STRATEGY / ACTIVITY	TASKS		When will each task be completed?	Who will facilitate the completion of this goal?	Who Else can help?
1.	1.		1.	1.	
2.	2.		2.	2.	
3.	3.		3.	3.	
4.	4.		4.	4.	
5.	5.		5.	5.	
6.	6.		6.	6.	
7.	7.		7.	7.	
8.	8.		8.	8.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: <input type="checkbox"/> Whole School Engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Unified Sports	1.		1.	1.	
2.	2.		2.	2.	
3.	3.		3.	3.	
4.	4.		4.	4.	
5.	5.		5.	5.	
6.	6.		6.	6.	
7.	7.		7.	7.	
8.	8.		8.	8.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: <input type="checkbox"/> Whole School Engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Unified Sports	1.		1.	1.	





# Unified Sports Implementation Guide





**Special Olympics Unified Sports® is a component of the Unified Schools strategy that engages students with and without intellectual disabilities on the same sports team. Unified Sports provides valuable social inclusion opportunities for all teammates to build friendships, on and off the playing field. Through modeling genuine inclusion for the entire school community, all teammates are challenged to improve their sports skills and fitness. In the process, young people with and without disabilities increase their positive attitudes and perceptions toward their peers, establishing friendships.**

There are three basic models of Special Olympics Unified Sports. It is up to each school to choose which model or combination of models will be most beneficial for their students. These models provide a framework for guiding implementation within each school in offering a variety of Unified Sports options for students:

- **Competitive**
- **Player Development**
- **Recreation**



## What distinguishes each of the Unified Sports Models from each other?



### Competitive

- Students with and without intellectual disabilities train and compete on the same team.
- All teammates should be of similar age and ability levels.
- Teams adhere to training, competition and team composition requirements.
- School-based teams often compete within an interscholastic athletic league, an intramural setting, or through Special Olympics tournaments.

### Player Development

- Students of higher abilities serve as mentors, assisting teammates of lower abilities in developing sport-specific skills and tactics.
- All teammates should be of similar age.
- There is a non-competitive, cooperative team environment.

### Recreation

- This is the most flexible model because it does not follow any prescribed training or team composition requirements.
- Recreational sports opportunities are offered within a non-competitive realm.
- Recreation typically takes place solely on school property and does not advance into competitions.
- Examples of Unified Recreation activities in schools include Unified PE, Unified Field Day, or a Unified Walking Club.

# GOALS OF UNIFIED SPORTS

## • **Friendship and socialization**

Participation in Unified Sports provides a forum for positive social interaction between teammates and often leads to long-lasting friendships.

## • **Meaningful inclusion**

All teammates play important, meaningful and valued roles on the team.

## • **Sport skills development**

Students develop sports skills to enable them to compete with greater proficiency and develop physical fitness.

## • **Competition experience**

Students with and without intellectual disabilities benefit from physical and mental challenges by participating in a variety of competitive and non-competitive environments.

## **What is the Principle of Meaningful Involvement?**

**The principle of meaningful involvement is the most important foundational philosophy when developing inclusive school sports and activities. Students are provided a sports environment that ensures every player is given multiple opportunities throughout the school year to develop their unique skills and qualities.**

### **Indicators of Meaningful Involvement**

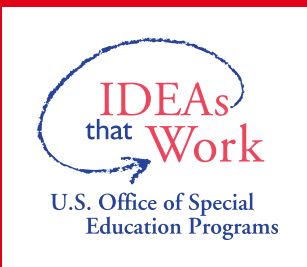
- Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the performance of the team/activity.
- Teammates participate according to the rules of competition.
- Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.

### **Meaningful involvement is not achieved when some team members:**

- Display superior sports skills without involving their teammates.
- Control most aspects of the game, especially during the most critical periods.
- Do not train or practice regularly and only show up on the day of competition.

# WHY DO SCHOOLS NEED UNIFIED SPORTS?

In January 2013, “...Office for Civil Rights issues guidance detailing school districts’ legal obligations to provide students with disabilities equal access to athletics activities. The guidance letter clarifies existing law and encourages school districts to improve and expand upon athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities have the right, under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, to equal opportunity to participate in their schools’ extracurricular activities....”





Track & Field



Basketball



Bocce



Skiing



Bowling

## Examples of Unified Sports Opportunities

Check with your State Special Olympics Program to see which sports are supported in your state if your school wants to include a Unified Sports Team under the competitive model.



Softball



Flag Football



Soccer



Floor Hockey



Handball



Golf

# Examples of Unified Sports Activities in Unified Champion Schools

## Inclusive Sports

- The Unified Bocce team hosts a series of instructional sessions during lunch to offer students an opportunity to learn how to play.
- After the intramural flag football season ends, the Unified Sports teams join together to host a celebration and awards banquet to honor everyone who supported the teams.

## Inclusive Youth Leadership

- Students with and without intellectual disabilities on the Unified Sports intramural ski team organize and speak at an assembly about student collaboration to enhance each other's skills.
- High school students lead a week long sports camp for elementary students to develop soccer skills in students with and without intellectual disabilities.

## Whole School Engagement

- The Student Council organizes Fans in the Stands to engage the whole student body in supporting the Unified Sports teams.
- The Physical Education Department works with each of their classes to host a Unified Sports Day focused on one of the sports they've studied each semester.

## Implementing Unified Sports

To initiate a Unified Sports opportunity in your school, you'll typically want to start with a planning meeting with your school's Unified Champion School Leadership Team and / or your Unified Club. You may also want to invite a Special Olympics staff member to the meeting. As you work through the implementation of Unified Sports in your school, be sure students are engaged as co-leaders throughout the process. Remember to always be on the lookout for opportunities to hand over decision-making and leadership to young people. Each step in answering the questions and completing the checklists found below will be completed by youth, youth and adults working together, or adults as appropriate for your particular school environment.

# Topics to discuss with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team:

- Which Unified Sports Model (Competitive, Player Development or Recreation) is most appropriate for the students in our school? Connect with your state Special Olympics Program to learn about what opportunities exist for interscholastic or team-based competition.
  - Which sports are of greatest interest to the students with and without intellectual disabilities?
  - Which Unified Sports does your State Special Olympics Program offer for schools?
- Which sport(s) will allow for the most meaningful participation opportunities for students? Are there any existing clubs, teams, classes or school groups that might be interested in planning and leading a Unified Sports opportunity? The sport(s) you select will determine which students can participate and how many. This is a very important decision.
- What types of Unified Sports activities does our school need/want to incorporate?
- How will we work together/collaborate/be involved with the state Special Olympics Program?
- Where do we already have formal and informal opportunities for students to understand and begin to incorporate social inclusion?
- How will our coaches be trained?
- How does the Principle of Meaningful Involvement impact the type of sports activities that are implemented and how they are presented?
- Who will be the adult advisor/coordinator for various activities?
- Other things to consider:
  - Which sports facilities will you be able to use and when?
  - What paperwork is required for participants?
  - How will transportation be arranged, if needed?

## Enhancing Unified Sports®:

**Social inclusion efforts like Unified Sports will have a greater impact and be more sustainable when they are connected to other initiatives and goals of the school. For example, the school may decide to include indicators of social inclusion from the Social Inclusion Rubric (found in the Establishing Your Team section of the Playbook) when assessing progress on the school improvement plan. Other strategies for enhancing the impact of the Unified Sports experience and increasing positive impacts throughout the school include:**

- Recognize Unified Sports teams (both intramural and interscholastic) in the same ways as other teams in the school (e.g., pep rallies, morning announcements, varsity lettering, yearbook pictures, athletics banquet).
- Encourage Unified Sports teammates to wear their jerseys, warm up jackets or other team attire before or after a competition so they can be seen and acknowledged by all classmates during the school day.
- Hold inclusive post-game parties and celebrations to build team cohesion and deeper social connections.
- Hold a fun, inclusive sport activity such as a kickball game, yoga or inclusive walking as part of Unified Sports Recreation opportunities for other members of the school to experience Unified Sports.
- Consider some type of culminating competition, celebration or recognition within each season.





## Unified Sports® Sustainability Tips

- Integrate Unified Sports into the physical education curriculum.
- Ensure Unified Sports is recognized as an official school sport, activity and club on campus.
- Reduce costs by using the same uniforms across sports and grade levels, where appropriate. Purchase a single set of uniforms that can be used for multiple sports year after year, and share school equipment for Unified Sports teams when possible.
- Work with the Unified Youth Club and/or Athletics Boosters to raise funds for the Unified Sports program.
- Get key Unified Sports expenses, such as transportation or coach stipends, included within the annual school budget.
- Involve younger students in leadership roles to help ensure the program will continue after older students graduate.
- Start “Fans in the Stands” to share the excitement of Unified Sports with the entire school and local community.



### Helpful Resources

Unified Sports Coaches Training & Sport-Specific Courses: [www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports](http://www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports)

Special Olympics Unified Sports® Resources: [www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports](http://www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports)

Special Olympics Coaching Guides for each sport: [www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports](http://www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports)

Seven Criteria for Unified Sports Success: [www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports](http://www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports)

Student Guide: [www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources](http://www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources)



There are distinctive differences between the three Unified Sports models, and implementation will vary depending on the particular sport, school structure and model selected. The checklists which follow serve as a good starting point for creating Unified Sports opportunities. Whether your school is rural, urban or somewhere in between, the following activities provide ideas that can be adjusted to suit the needs and interests of your students. While not included here in checklist form, schools interested in starting Unified PE as an elective course can find curriculum and resources for getting started at [LINK](#)



### Inclusion Tip

Certain Unified Sports (e.g., Track and Field, Bocce, Bowling) do not require ability matching, which allows students of any ability level to participate. Schools should note, however, that data has shown individual sports provide less inclusive personal relationship building than team sports.



## Unified Sports Competitive & Player Development Models Getting Started Checklist

- \_\_\_ 1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss getting a Unified Sports team started in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the season.
- \_\_\_ 2. Make contact with your state Special Olympics office to begin the process of forming a Unified Sports team at your school.
- \_\_\_ 3. Choose the sport you will implement and when/where it will take place.
- \_\_\_ 4. Recruit an adult head coach and identify others who can support the team in different ways.
- \_\_\_ 5. Complete training requirements for coaches. A free on-line course is available at [www.NFHSLearn.com](http://www.NFHSLearn.com).
- \_\_\_ 6. Recruit teammates with and without intellectual disabilities. Ensure there will be a meaningful role for each student who is interested in participating (e.g. teammate, assistant coach, club member, fan, manager).
  - 6a. **Competitive:** Use a “targeted approach” to focus recruitment on students without disabilities who will be of similar ability as students with disabilities and will be committed to the team.
  - 6b. **Player Development:** Focus recruitment on students without disabilities who will be of similar age as students with disabilities and be committed to the team.
- \_\_\_ 7. Ask interested teammates/parents to complete and submit required participation forms.
- \_\_\_ 8. Secure logistics and set a team schedule:
  - Work with Athletic Director or Administration to identify the team practice schedule, transportation, equipment, uniforms and facility needs.
  - Develop a competition schedule for intramural or interscholastic teams.
- \_\_\_ 9. Conduct team orientation meeting (this could include parents).
- \_\_\_ 10. Hold regular practices and competitions.
- \_\_\_ 11. Ensure the Unified Sports teams receive the same kind of support as other teams in the school, including cheerleaders, pep rallies, recognition banquets, sports achievement awards and letters.



## Unified Sports Recreation Model Getting Started Checklist

- \_\_\_1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss getting Unified Sports started in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the activity.
- \_\_\_2. Make contact with your state Special Olympics office to begin the process of initiating a Unified Sports activity at your school.
- \_\_\_3. Choose the sport/activity you will implement and when/where it will take place.
- \_\_\_4. Recruit an adult and identify others who can support the activity in different ways.
- \_\_\_5. Complete training requirements for coaches. A free on-line course is available at [www.NFHSLearn.com](http://www.NFHSLearn.com).
- \_\_\_6. Recruit participants with and without intellectual disabilities. Ensure there will be a meaningful role for each student who is interested in participating.
- \_\_\_7. Ask interested students/parents to complete and submit required participation forms.
- \_\_\_8. Secure logistics and set a schedule:
  - Work with Athletic Director or Administration to identify the schedule, transportation, equipment, uniforms and facility needs.
- \_\_\_9. Conduct an orientation meeting (this could include parents).
- \_\_\_10. Get together on a regular basis with a schedule.



### Unified Sports Coach Guidelines

- Have the necessary knowledge.
- Complete Unified Sports coach's training.
- Select the team members at the appropriate age and ability level to ensure full participation.
- Be a non-playing head coach.
- Commit to regular practice sessions.
- Coach everyone using individualized approaches.
- Nurture and expect teamwork from all players.



# Getting Started Checklist for Unified Sports Day or Unified Sports Festival

Host a Unified Sports Day or Unified Sports Festival for the school, with students organizing a day of inclusive sports activities for the student body. This is an example of Unified Recreation, which provides an opportunity for the entire school to be involved.

\_\_\_1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss hosting a Unified Sports Day at your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the activity.

\_\_\_2. Meet with the principal to get approval and administrative support. Share the goals and possible activities. Be sure to stress the positive impact it can have on creating a socially inclusive school climate.

\_\_\_3. Consider collaborating with the physical education department to organize activities and make accommodations to ensure all activities are accessible to all students.

\_\_\_4. Develop a plan.

- Set the date and time for the day's activities.
- Decide on the activities to be included, whether the day will have a theme or focus on a specific sport, and identify how all students will have equitable opportunities to participate.
- 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.
- Make sure the date, time and location are all cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.

\_\_\_5. Be sure to communicate with staff about the date, purpose of the Unified Sports Day and why this is important to your school.

\_\_\_6. Publicize the Unified Sports Day to your school. Reach out to the local newspaper and radio station. Include information about the event on the local access television station.

\_\_\_7. After the event, be sure to thank all of those involved with making it successful. Send a special thank you note to any sponsors or donors.

# Unified Sports Action Plan

STRATEGY / ACTIVITY	TASKS	When will each task be completed?	Who will facilitate the completion of this goal?	Who Else can help?
1.  2.  3.  4.  5.  6.  7.  8.		1.	1.	
		2.	2.	
		3.	3.	
		4.	4.	
		5.	5.	
		6.	6.	
		7.	7.	
		8.	8.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: <input type="checkbox"/> Whole School Engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Youth Leadership		1.	1.	
		2.	2.	
		3.	3.	
		4.	4.	
		5.	5.	
		6.	6.	
		7.	7.	
		8.	8.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: <input type="checkbox"/> Whole School Engagement <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Youth Leadership		1.	1.	
		2.	2.	
		3.	3.	
		4.	4.	
		5.	5.	
		6.	6.	
		7.	7.	
		8.	8.	

# Glossary

## **Co-leaders/co-leadership**

Two or more people who communicate and work together to achieve a shared goal. In Special Olympics, coo-leadership can take many forms. One example is when two people decide to start a Unified Club together. While the two people may have different responsibilities within the club, they both work towards the same goal of leading a successful club.

## **Fans in the Stands**

A formal way of encouraging students to support and cheer on students with and without intellectual disabilities at Unified Sports or Special Olympics events.

## **Get Into It® Educational resources**

A number of lessons, activities, and resources that teach students of all ages about respect and acceptance of differences while providing them with the tools to serve as active agents for change in not only their school, but the community as well.

## **Inclusive sports**

A fully inclusive sports or fitness program that combines an approximately equal number of students with and without intellectual disabilities. Examples include such things as: Interscholastic Unified Sports, Unified PE or Unified Intramurals. Special Olympics Unified Sports and Special Olympics Young Athletes are examples of inclusive sports.

## **Inclusive Youth Leadership**

Students with and without intellectual disabilities working together to lead and plan advocacy, awareness, and other Special Olympics and related inclusive activities throughout the school year. Examples include such things as: Unified Clubs or a similar type of inclusive student group. The clubs are supported by an adult liaison and offer leadership opportunities and/or training for students with and without disabilities.

## **Intergenerational leadership**

Youth and adults work together to implement the Unified Champion Schools program through shared goals that are owned collectively.

## **Special Olympics Unified Schools**

Special Olympics Unified Schools refers to the larger global schools strategy to engage youth. It is the strategy for promoting social inclusion among youth with and without intellectual disabilities (ID,) reaching out to youth where they spend the majority of their time – schools.

## **Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools**

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is a comprehensive program of the Unified Schools strategy that combines Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership and Whole School Engagement to create the greatest impact. This model is implemented in the United States. After first reference, it can be referred to as Unified Champion Schools.

## **Special Olympics Unified Sports®**

A fully-inclusive sports or fitness program that combines an approximately equal number of students with and without intellectual disabilities. Examples include such things as Interscholastic Unified Sports, Unified PE or Unified Intramurals. These activities occur throughout the school year with the support of an adult coach and include opportunities for competition.

## **Spread the Word to End the Word/R-Word Campaign**

A set of resources and tools to help students eradicate the hurtful and harmful use of language that demeans and diminishes others.

## **Unified Champion School Leadership Team**

Takes responsibility to design, implement and sustain socially inclusive strategies in the school. It is generally composed of at least one special education student and one general education student; at least one special education teacher and one general education teacher; at least one school staff member/counselor/social worker; and the principal, assistant principal or other school-level administrator.

**Unified Sports Experience**

These are exhibition games that team people with and without intellectual disabilities on the field of play. These games often involve celebrities. Unified Sports Experience events create an opportunity to spotlight the importance of friendship, sportsmanship and inclusion.

**Whole-School Engagement**

Awareness and education activities that promote inclusion and reach the majority of the school population. Examples include such things as Spread the Word to End the Word (R-Word) Campaigns, Pep Rallies or “Fans in the Stands” for Unified Sports teams, Respect Campaigns or student fundraising. Ideally students with and without disabilities are involved with planning and leading awareness events with the support of an adult in the school.

**Young Athletes**

Athletes is plural. The Young Athletes program was created to reach out to children with and without intellectual disabilities ages 2 to 7 and introduce them to the world of sport, with the goal of preparing them for Special Olympics training and competition. It is conducted as an inclusive program, and is often part of a Unified Champion School at the elementary or preschool level.

**Youth Activation Committee**

A Youth Activation Committee is made up of young people who work together to promote school communities where all young people are agents of change. The Youth Activation Committee can be district-based, state-based, national or regional.



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U.S. Office of Special  
Education Programs

The contents of this "Special Olympics Unified Champion School High School Playbook" were developed under generous funding from the US Department of Education, #H380W150001 and #H380W160001. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and one should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.



Special Olympics  
**Unified Champion  
Schools**

[www.SpecialOlympics.org/UnifiedSchools](http://www.SpecialOlympics.org/UnifiedSchools)