Special Olympics Fitness Guide for Schools

Special Olympics
Unified Champion Schools®

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How to Use this Guide

The Special Olympics Fitness Guide for Schools was developed to support school-based implementation of Special Olympics Fitness programming encouraging students with and without intellectual disabilities to achieve optimal health and performance through adequate physical activity, nutrition, and hydration. A component of the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program and inclusive sports, Special Olympics Fitness can be a catapult for accelerating inclusion efforts and promoting lifelong, healthy habits in schools. For schools not yet participating in the Unified Champion Schools program, this guide may serve as a pathway to participation. For schools already participating or recognized as a Unified Champion School, this guide may provide new, innovative, and exciting ways to reenergize and motivate continued participation and success.

With objectives that align with national health and physical education standards, Special Olympics Fitness programming can aid in achievement of existing school goals. This guide includes an introduction to each fitness model endorsed by Special Olympics, along with resources and tips to enhance implementation. Educators may use Special Olympics Fitness strategies to complement a Unified Physical Education course or infuse the Unified concept into the broader school community. Both strategies will fulfill activities within the three core components that make a school a Unified Champion School, and this resource includes identification of these opportunities.

This guide is one component in a series of Special Olympics resources that can be used to conduct the Unified Champion Schools program. Each may be used individually or in combination with others to promote an inclusive school environment. These resources, referenced and listed at the end of this guide, provide examples of programming that can be modified to meet the needs of each individual classroom, school, or school district.

SECTION 1

Introduction to Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools

Special Olympics
Unified Champion Schools®

Special Olympics Mission

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is an education and sports- or physical activity-based strategy. An engaged youth community helps lead the program to increase athletic and leadership opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities, and creates communities of acceptance for all. The Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston conducts an annual evaluation on the impact of Unified Champion Schools, and has found that the program creates a more socially inclusive school environment and contributes to social emotional learning. Among school liaisons, 94 percent have reported that Unified Champion Schools increases opportunities for students to work together; increases participation of students with intellectual disabilities in school activities; and reduces bullying, teasing, and offensive language *(Center for Social Development and Education, 2018).*

Unified Champion Schools programming includes three main educational components in schools: inclusive sports, inclusive youth leadership, and whole school engagement.

INCLUSIVE SPORTS: A fully inclusive sports or fitness program that combines an approximately equal number of students with and without intellectual disabilities. Inclusive sports can be a gateway for further participation in Special Olympics programs and events, and is generally carried out using one of the following strategies:

- **Special Olympics Fitness:** Defined as the optimal health and performance through adequate physical activity, nutrition, and hydration. Special Olympics Fitness includes three models, and complementary resources for implementation of fitness-focused Unified experiences.
- **Unified Physical Education:** Providing opportunity for students with and without disabilities to come together through ongoing educational and physical activities, while supporting development of leadership skills and the empowerment of all students to foster an inclusive class and school-wide environment.
- **Unified Sports®:** Combining an approximately equal number of people with and without intellectual disabilities for sports training and competition. This program is offered in schools and communities for both youth and adults.

INCLUSIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP: Students with and without intellectual disabilities working together to lead and plan advocacy, awareness, and inclusive activities throughout the school year.

WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT: Awareness and education activities that promote inclusion, and reach the majority of the school population.

SECTION 2

Special Olympics Fitness

Special Olympics
Unified Champion Schools®

Overview & Philosophy

Special Olympics provides quality sports opportunities for both individuals with and without intellectual disabilities. Good health and physical fitness are essential to sports participation, and Special Olympics has been working to integrate both into its sports programming. This is significant, not only for the general population, but especially for people with intellectual disabilities who are in comparatively poorer health. Special Olympics Healthy Athletes data suggest that Special Olympics athletes are twice as likely to be obese compared to the general population. Furthermore, individuals with intellectual disabilities are five times more likely to have diabetes *(Krahn & Fox, 2014)*, and, according to data from a large study in the U.K., die, on average, 16 years prematurely *(Heslop et al., 2013)*.

Because of these disparities, Special Olympics is accelerating its attention to health and fitness programming with a focus on youth and schools. With the impactful work of Unified Champion Schools, fitness locates its role as an entry point or enhancement to this three-component model. Through a unique combination of intentionally planned and implemented activities, fitness as a part of the Unified Champion Schools program has the capacity to promote social inclusion, and lifelong healthy behaviors within the student body and broader school community.

FITNESS GOALS

- **Youth & Schools:** Fitness becomes a catalyst for advancing efforts toward inclusion and embracing lifelong healthy habits for youth and schools.
- **Inclusion:** Fitness is an inclusive practice that raises awareness, cultivates mutual respect, and celebrates ability.
- **Youth Leadership:** Fitness is part of the solution for engaging youth with and without intellectual disabilities to be agents of change for acceptance, respect and inclusion.

Using Special Olympics Fitness to Achieve School Goals

Each year, schools are tasked with accomplishing numerous goals that are assigned by their district and state. Special Olympics Fitness not only provides schools with an opportunity to achieve physical activity, health education, and wellness policies, but also provides other unique opportunities. Fitness can allow schools to accomplish many goals outside of the physical activity realm, like reducing bullying, increasing school engagement, and providing a welcoming school environment for all.

When presenting fitness as an option for achieving school goals, the use of standards and guidelines can be an effective strategy for justifying the program. Learn about your school's health and physical activity goals and standards. Aligning all Special Olympics Fitness initiatives with current national and state education standards will allow your school another opportunity to meet those set standards. Utilizing existing physical activity guidelines can also be beneficial for implementing a fitness initiative within your school. SHAPE America and the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans are great places to start.

SHAPE America: Establishes the standard for health and physical education in the U.S., and serves as the foundation for well-designed physical education programs across the country.

NATIONAL PHYSICAL EDUCATION STANDARDS*

- Standard 1: The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
- Standard 2: The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.
- Standard 3: The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.
- Standard 4: The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.
- Standard 5: The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

NATIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARDS**

- Standard 1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
- Standard 2: Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.
- Standard 3: Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information and products and services to enhance health.
- Standard 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
- Standard 5: Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.
- Standard 6: Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.
- Standard 7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.
- Standard 8: Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

** SHAPE America, 2014*
*** Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards, 2007*

State Standards

It is not only important to recognize the national standards, but also have the ability to understand specific state standards and where to find them. These standards will be vital in encouraging your school to implement fitness programming. At the link provided, you can access your state-specific standards and other helpful information regarding physical and health education.
https://www.shapeamerica.org/advocacy/advocacyresources_state.aspx

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans: The second edition of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans provides science-based guidance to help people ages 3 years and older improve their health through participation in regular physical activity *(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).*

Key Guidelines for Preschool-Aged Children

- Preschool-aged children (ages 3 through 5 years) should be physically active throughout the day to enhance growth and development.
- Adult caregivers of preschool-aged children should encourage active play that includes a variety of activity types.

Key Guidelines for Children and Adolescents

- It is important to provide young people opportunities and encouragement to participate in physical activities that are appropriate for their age, that are enjoyable, and that offer variety.
- Children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 years should do 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily:
  - » **Aerobic:** Most of the 60 minutes or more per day should be either moderate or vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity and should include vigorous intensity physical activity on at least 3 days a week.
  - » **Muscle-strengthening:** As part of their 60 minutes or more of daily physical activity, children and adolescents should include muscle-strengthening physical activity on at least 3 days a week.
  - » **Bone-strengthening:** As part of their 60 minutes or more of daily physical activity, children and adolescents should include bone-strengthening physical activity on at least 3 days a week.

Opportunities for Fitness in Schools

There are many places where fitness-related physical activity is already taking place within schools. This list provides a starting point for identifying those opportunities, with the possibility of either enhancing activities where fitness is already occurring, or implementing programming within areas not yet incorporating fitness.

- Physical Education & Health
- Unified Physical Education
- Sports (pre-season and in season)
- Before or After School Activities
- Within School-sponsored Clubs
- Intramural Leagues
- In the Classroom
- Recess

SECTION 3

Special Olympics Fitness Models and Resources

Special Olympics
Unified Champion Schools®

FIT FAMILIES
SPECIAL OLYMPICS

UNIFIED
FITNESS CLUB
SPECIAL OLYMPICS

SOfit
SPECIAL OLYMPICS

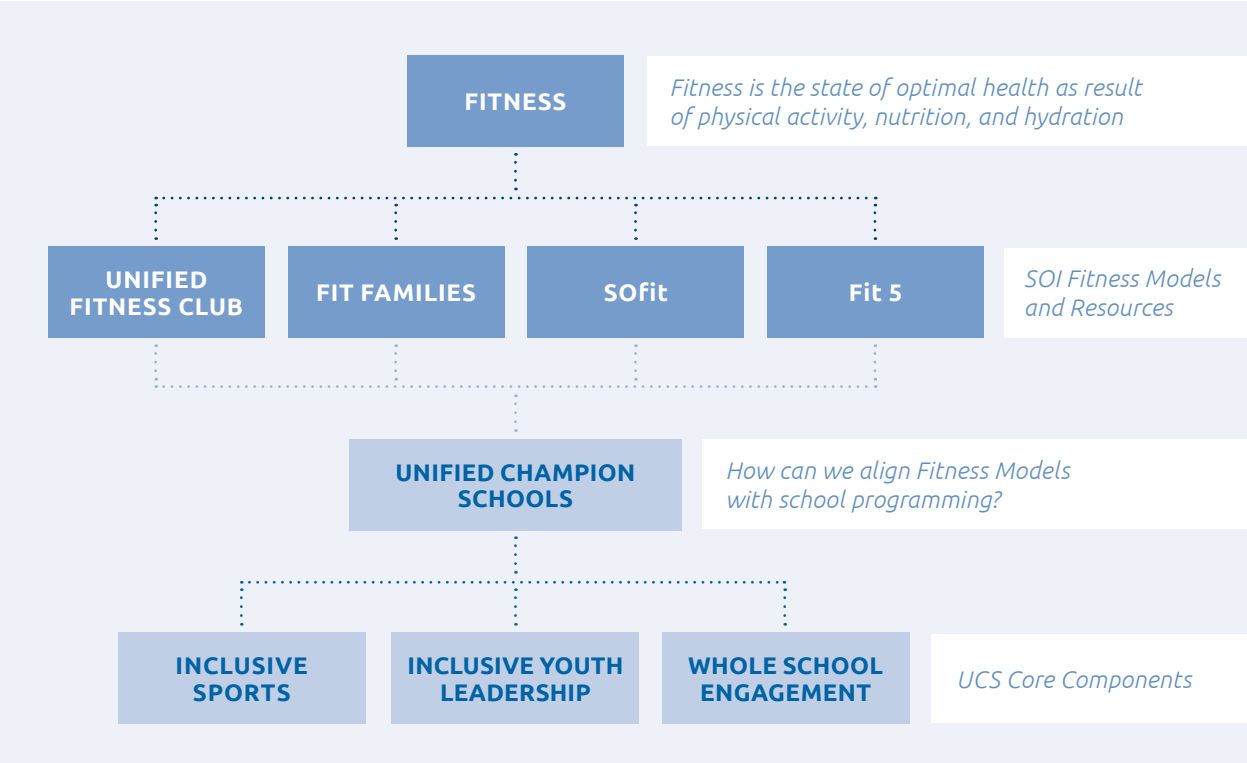
FIT5
SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Models & Resources Overview

Special Olympics has endorsed three fitness models with guidelines for implementation, providing structure, yet allowing for flexibility so that schools may tailor the program according to individual goals, the needs of the school, and available resources. Each of the models—Unified Fitness Club, Fit Families and SOfit— may be implemented as a stand-alone program, or in conjunction with Special Olympics Fitness resources— Fit 5 and its complementary fitness videos and cards.

Fitness models and resources can be easily aligned not only with existing school programming but also with Unified Champion Schools core components. Examples of opportunities for doing so are provided on the following pages. In general, Special Olympics Fitness models and resources can serve as the following:

- A pathway for enhancing and expanding any of the three Unified Champion Schools components currently offered in a school
- An entry point for activating any of the three Unified Champion Schools components
- An entry point for activating a Unified Champion Schools program



Introduction to Fit Families and Friends

Fit Families and Friends, created by Special Olympics Arkansas, is a six-week fitness and wellness challenge designed to promote physical activity and nutrition by encouraging athletes and their supporters to set fitness goals, and track their progress in these areas. Participants collect incentives for their progress toward a healthier lifestyle.

The complete Fit Families and Friends resource can be accessed at:
https://resources.specialolympics.org/program-models

GOAL

Fit Families and Friends challenges athletes, families and friends to get healthy and active while having fun.

MODEL

- The challenge is six weeks long, and teams can repeat the challenge as many times as they would like.
- The challenge is for any team of up to four people, but must include at least one person with an intellectual disability. The team could include family members, classmates, friends, coaches and Special Olympics athletes, for example. Although Fit Families and Friends is typically conducted in groups of four, you can get creative to meet the needs of the students and engage the entire student body.
- Each team selects a group leader who manages and completes the paperwork for the challenge, such as enrollment forms and waivers.
- Teams engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity five days per week for six weeks to complete the challenge.
- Each team member will select a physical activity and nutrition goal for the challenge. Goals will be tracked through physical activity logs, nutrition logs, and journals.
  - » Weekly journal entries allow team members to elaborate on their experience with reaching their physical activity and nutrition goals.
- Teams may be provided with incentives for completing the six-week challenge.

FIT FAMILIES AND FRIENDS EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES	Whole School Engagement	Inclusive Youth Leadership	Inclusive Sports
The Unified Physical Education teacher works with his or her students to organize a Fit Friends Challenge within their class to promote lifetime fitness involvement, beyond sport-specific motor skills		✓	✓
Captains of a Unified Sports team organize a Fit Friends Challenge during their off-season to promote year-round engagement in healthy behaviors		✓	✓
Student members of a school Unified Leadershop Club work with administrators and teachers to plan a Fit Friends week or month-long challenge for whole-school participation	✓	✓	✓
The planning commitee of a Unified Sports Field Day includes a Fit Friends Challenge that either leads up to the event or is integrated within activities of the event	✓	✓	✓

Introduction to Unified Fitness Club

Unified Fitness Club, created by Special Olympics Connecticut, is a year-round physical-activity-based program that utilizes activity trackers and incentives to engage participants of all abilities and activity levels in healthy lifestyles while also inspiring friendships.

The complete Unified Fitness Club resource can be accessed at:
https://resources.specialolympics.org/program-models

GOAL

Unified Fitness Club provides a fun, social environment that encourages year-round physical activity.

MODEL

- Clubs follow the year-round Unified Sports® Recreation Model, meeting at least once per week.
- Walking is often the main activity of choice because it is appropriate for all levels of fitness. Other fitness activities could include hiking, stretching/yoga, Zumba, cycling, and strength training.
- Steps are tracked through pedometers or other activity trackers.
- Clubs and participants earn incentives for reaching various numbers of steps.
- Club leaders make sure all participants fill out Special Olympics forms for their roles in the club, help compile step data for the group, distribute incentives, plan weekly walks or physical activity sessions, and implement all areas of fitness: physical activity, nutrition, hydration.
- Unified Fitness Club is typically conducted in after-school programming, but you can get creative to meet the needs of the students and engage the entire student body.

UNIFIED FITNESS CLUB EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES	Whole School Engagement	Inclusive Youth Leadership	Inclusive Sports
Students with and without intellectual disabilities start a fitness-based after-school club, choosing physical activity that unites all Unified Fitness Club members or choosing to introduce a new physical activity during each club meeting		✓	✓
Coaches of Unified Sports team work with their team captains to create a pre-season Unified Sports Club that encourages fitness training leading up to the sports season		✓	✓
Parents work with school adminstrators to organize safe walking routes to and from school, with planned pick-up and drop-off points, for groups of students with and without intellectual disabilities	✓		✓
Students with and without intellectual disabilities enjoy physical activity before school by meeting as a Unified Fitness Club to follow planned walking routes around the school campus			✓

Introduction to SOfit

SOfit, created by Special Olympics Minnesota, is an eight-week Unified class that combines physical activity, nutrition, and both emotional and social wellness, all through a holistic approach, empowering participants to challenge the way they view health and lifestyle choices.

The complete SOfit resource can be accessed at: https://resources.specialolympics.org/program-models

GOAL

SOfit educates and encourages athletes and Unified partners to maintain healthy lifestyles through increased physical activity, improved nutrition, and a focus on social and emotional wellness.

MODEL

- SOfit is an eight-week holistic wellness program for people with and without intellectual disabilities.
- SOfit offers opportunities to learn, discuss and practice sustained wellness through physical activity, nutrition and wellness education.
- Students with and without intellectual disabilities set goals to stay motivated to improve the way they look at nutrition, exercise, and other lifestyle choices.
- Each team or group has at least one SOfit trained coach/leader.
- Each wellness class is split between a physical and educational component. Classes vary in length, but it is recommended that sessions are at least 45 minutes long to ensure time for check-ins, teaching, physical activity and breaks.
- Physical Activity: Coaches collaborate with their team to plan one physical activity each week.
- Wellness Education: Coaches collaborate with their team to choose relevant topics from one of the four pillars of wellness: social, emotional, physical, nutritional.
- SOfit teachers may utilize the Special Olympics SOfit curriculum to guide the lessons.
- Even though SOfit programming is typically eight weeks long, and classes are 45 minutes split into the two components, you can get creative to meet the needs of the students and engage the entire student body.

SOfit EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES	Whole School Engagement	Inclusive Youth Leadership	Inclusive Sports
Unified Physical Education teachers integrate the SOfit wellness curriculum into their regular class unit plans to increase understanding and practice of year-round fitness			✓
Students inspired by their Unified Physical Education course want to share their knowledge with the school; they plan a whole-school wellness week, using the SOfit wellness curriculum to share fitness tips during the morning announcements	✓	✓	✓
School administrators trying to align with the school district wellness policies create a Unified Wellness elective modeled after SOfit			✓
Coaches of a Unified Sports team want their athletes to perform at their best on a daily basis; coaches implement SOfit within practices and training			✓

Introduction to Fit 5

Fit 5, created by Special Olympics International, is a resource based on achieving fitness and personal bests through the three simple goals of engaging in five days of exercise per week, eating five total servings of fruits and vegetables per day, and drinking five bottles of water per day.

The Fit 5 resource is supported by a series of fitness cards and videos providing a series of exercises in strength, endurance, and flexibility ranging in level of difficulty. All activities can be done in any setting with none to very little equipment. The cards have simple instructions and easy-to-follow pictures, while the videos encourage participants to learn by doing.

The complete Fit 5 resource can be accessed at: https://resources.specialolympics.org/health/fitness/fit-5

GOAL

Fit 5 and fitness cards and videos are resources that empower individuals to make healthy choices related to physical activity, nutrition, and hydration.

THE RESOURCE

- There are many ways to be physically active, and Fit 5 provides examples of exercises for endurance, strength, flexibility and balance.
- Eating right is important, and Fit 5 provides examples of healthy food options, portion sizes, and building a healthy plate.
- Drinking the right amount of water is important, and Fit 5 provides hydration tips, healthy drink choices, and signs of dehydration.
- The Fit 5 guide comes with weekly and yearly trackers to keep up with exercise, nutrition and hydration goals.

IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS FOR FIT 5 IN A SCHOOL SETTING

Fit 5 can be used separately or in conjunction with one of the previously discussed fitness models and incorporated into the following:

- Unified Sports
- Physical Education or Unified Physical Education classes
- Educational Classroom Setting: a school could utilize the Fit 5 cards and videos as a classroom activity break to get students moving and energized

FIT 5 EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES	Whole School Engagement	Inclusive Youth Leadership	Inclusive Sports
Coaches of Unified Sports teams work with their team captains to create a pre-season/off-season Unified Sports Club, utilizing Fit 5 resources, that encourages fitness training all year round		✓	✓
Unified Physical Education teachers integrate the Fit 5 resources into their regular class unit plans to increase understanding and pracitice of year-round fitness			✓
Students inspired by their Unified Physical Education course want to share their knowldge with the school; they plan a whole-school wellness week/wellness challenge using the Fit 5 resources	✓	✓	✓
Student leaders implement Fit 5 resources into their Unified Fitness Club, SOfit, or Fit Familes initiatives to encourage year-round fitness		✓	✓

SECTION 4

Getting Started

Special Olympics
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Build a Leadership Team

Unified Champion Schools research has determined that schools with inclusive leadership teams are more likely to actively implement programming. The greatest successes have resulted when efforts are thoughtfully planned, guided by shared goals, and collaboratively monitored and nurtured for continuous improvement. Establishing an inclusive leadership team for fitness will be just as valuable for implementation of high-performing, robust programming. The fitness team can be a branch of your school's existing Unified Champion Schools team and include new and existing members to broaden reach while remaining true to the vision and goals of the school.

If your school is not yet participating in the Unified Champion Schools program and does not have a leadership team in place, strive to build a team that includes students with and without disabilities representing a range of social and academic groups; parents; teachers; and at least one school administrator or staff member.

Reaching the Atypical Youth Leader

Intentionally recruit students who may not immediately come to mind as leaders, such as students with disabilities, or disengaged learners. This is a critical step in assembling an effective leadership team that understands the school experience from multiple perspectives.

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

- Strive to include a range of perspectives on the team, including those new to and experienced with fitness.
- Give a short presentation about social inclusion and fitness 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 a student to extend a personal invitation.
- Make leaders; see the potential in those who are hidden or isolated and not already on the frontline.

TIPS

Adequately prepare youth for an active role on the Leadership Team. Be sure to intentionally develop leadership skills by:

- Ensuring team members understand each task encountered.
- Engaging team members meaningfully through ongoing discussions.
- Providing team members with opportunities to take on leadership in carrying out appropriate tasks.
- Nurturing progress within each team member.

Additional tips on building an effective leadership team can be found in the Unified Champion Schools Playbooks (see Additional Resources at the end of this guide).

Assess your School Wellness Environment

Take time to understand the picture of your school's level of wellness engagement. This will help you to identify a starting point for fitness implementation and align with broader education goals.

EXAMPLES OF WELLNESS ASSESSMENTS

- **School Health Index (SHI)** is an online self-assessment and planning tool that schools can use to identify strengths and weakness of their health and safety policies and programs. SHI is based on the Centers for Disease Control's research-based guidelines for school health programs, and in 2017 was updated to align with the Whole School, Whole Community, and Whole Child (WSCC) model. Also, the Healthy Schools Program by Alliance for a Healthier Generation adopted the SHI to help schools assess their progress in their program, identifying those best practices from the model that are core to a healthy school.
- **The School Wellness Investigation** is a tool developed by Fuel Up to Play 60 to collect information about a school's current physical activity and nutrition environment.
- **WellSAT,** created by the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, is a tool for assessing a school d istrict's wellness policy. Currently WellSAT measures the quality of written policies; however, there is a working draft of the WellSAT that aims to measure implementation.

Assess Student Wellness

Just as important as understanding the school fitness environment, is becoming familiar with the individual. Teachers should get to know their students individually. Students should get to know themselves; they should confront their strengths and weaknesses. It is important to understand one's own fitness starting point in order to set goals and make changes in healthy behaviors. This can be accomplished through assessments, which can be based around the school's existing wellness initiatives and policies.

Measurement & Evaluation

Data on program outcomes gathered through quality assessments is important for demonstrating the value of the program, progression toward school standards and goals, and achievement of healthy lifestyles for students. In turn, this can translate to greater support from school and district administrators for future programming.

Consider assessments for the whole school and for individual students regarding physical activity, nutrition, and overall health. Health and fitness metrics are important, but collecting health and fitness metrics data is not always easy, so partner with the right people. For example, school nurses, fitness professionals, or health professionals most likely have the equipment or knowledge needed to help measure health and fitness metrics. Providing incentives to the students can also be effective in motivating data collection and follow-through. Outside of collecting the standard health and fitness metrics suggested by Special Olympics, teachers can also incorporate additional fitness assessments like FitnessGram or the Brockport Physical Fitness Test to support their program efforts.

SUGGESTED MEASUREMENTS & EVALUATIONS

The following measurement and evaluation components are suggestions and can be utilized to show the impact your fitness programming is having on the individual students and the school.

- Demographic Data and Attendance: This information can provide an overview of your fitness programming.
  - » Name
  - » Age
  - » Gender
  - » Athlete or Unified Partner
- Health and Fitness Metrics: These measures can be obtained for each student pre- and post-implementation of the fitness model or program.
  - » Height & Weight
  - » BMI
  - » Blood Pressure
  - » Resting Heart Rate
  - » Grip Strength
  - » Six-Minute Walk Test
- Activity Minutes: Depending on the model selected, activity minutes can be recorded every session throughout implementation.
- Activity Steps: Depending on the model selected, students can take advantage of utilizing fitness trackers to capture their step count.
- Lifestyle Survey: Can be given to each student pre- and post-implementation of the fitness model or program.

Implementation Planning

Selected fitness models and implementation settings will vary based on individual school needs, and the needs and interests of students involved. Paying attention to student interest will ensure selection of a model that is valued and sustainable. The setting for your fitness programming can vary drastically based on available space, time of sessions, and weather. The great thing about fitness is that it can be done almost anywhere. Be creative and utilize any spaces available in and around your school. Any of the models or resources can be implemented by the whole school, physical education or special education classes, sports teams, or clubs.

EXAMPLES

Before- or After-School Clubs:

- Clubs allow you to reach students that may not want to participate in traditional sport opportunities.
- Schools can create a new and unique club that meets the needs of its participants. The club can choose a specific activity that unites everyone in that group, like a hiking club, or the club may choose to vary activities.
- Establish walking, or maybe even biking routes, as a before/after-school program. Utilize parent volunteers to help plan and organize drop-off points and other details. Safe walking routes could also be planned around the school campus if a club meets before or after school to enjoy some physical activity before or after a long day of sitting.

Physical Education and Unified Physical Education:

- A teacher can place students into small teams, and a challenge may be created among the groups. Encourage groups to motivate each other to be active, make healthy eating choices, and stay properly hydrated. Incentives may be provided for teams that exceed or meet their goals.
- A teacher could utilize the Special Olympics Fitness resource and integrate information into a physical education or Unified Physical Education class.

Unified Sports:

- A coach can create a pre-season teammate fitness challenge.
- Keep teammates involved in healthy practices by creating opportunities outside of practice time.
- A coach can organize off-season Unified Fitness Clubs, creating an opportunity for Unified Sports athletes and others to participate in fitness training leading up to their sport season.
- A coach can integrate SOfit lessons into their Unified Sports team practices. It is important to recognize Special Olympics athletes as athletes, which means providing them opportunity to reach their full potential or personal best. SOfit can introduce athletes to holistic wellness and fitness, which will aid them in making healthy choices on a daily basis and living healthy lifestyles outside of a team practice.

Training

The individuals in the school who are chosen to run the Special Olympics Fitness programming should be trained in, or have experience with, basic fitness principles and working with people with intellectual disabilities. Since it can be difficult to find one person with the training and/or experience in both of these areas, look for individuals who could work together and combine their knowledge. For example, a strength and conditioning coach could align with a special education teacher. However, a school may already have someone with both of those qualifications, and it is important to sometimes look beyond physical education teachers, special education teachers, and coaches. Schools are made up of a variety of unique individuals who could be an asset to your program. Those who require training should utilize the local Special Olympics program's established training models, until more in-depth fitness-specific trainings are developed.

Sustainability & Partnerships

Sustaining fitness programming in your school is the goal. While it can be challenging, thinking about and planning around a few key areas will help ensure sustainability. It is important to think about all stakeholders involved, the data that is collected to support your efforts, and the partnerships that can be developed. Data on the effectiveness of your fitness programming can assist in telling your stakeholders a story, creating continued buy-in, and has the potential to generate partnerships for funding. Stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, administrators and students, should all be carefully considered in all fitness programming decisions. Developing buy-in from these key stakeholders will allow a fitness program to continue well past the initial implementation phase. Partnerships should be developed to address the needs of the schools and to fill in any gaps. It is important to think outside the box and use creativity when developing a potential partnership. Special Olympics staff and school representatives can work together to engage local organizations that are invested in promoting fitness and physical activity in schools.

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Department of Health
- Department of Education
- Local SHAPE Affiliate
- Active Schools
- Local Colleges or Universities
  - » Kinesiology, Exercise Science, Physical Education, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and other health-related programs
- Local Healthcare Providers/Organizations

TO DO LIST

- [ ] **1 Find Your Starting Point:**
  Understand the fitness and wellness culture of your school.
- [ ] **2 Establish a Plan and Take Action:**
  Strategize by identifying a vision and goals for fitness.
- [ ] **3 Recruit Team Members:**
  Be interdisciplinary, intergenerational and inclusive.
- [ ] **4 Build the Team's Capacity:**
  Reinforce a team culture of inclusion and collaboration through fitness.
- [ ] **5 Develop Partnerships:**
  Engage with local partners to enhance programming and boost capacity.
- [ ] **6 Conduct Monitoring for Continuous Improvement:**
  Evaluate and measure progress throughout programming.

CALL TO ACTION

Fitness through physical activity, nutrition, and hydration is critical for the health of all students. For anyone to be fit, pursuit of healthful living must be a year-round, lifelong endeavor. Utilizing the platform of Unified Champion Schools as a catapult, Special Olympics invites schools to empower students with and without disabilities to take charge of their own health by embracing a Unified strategy for increasing fitness opportunities and social inclusion in school communities.

SECTION 5

Additional Resources and References

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Additional Resources:

Alliance for a Healthier Generation
https://www.healthiergeneration.org/our-work/schools

Brockport Physical Fitness Test
https://www.topendsports.com/testing/brockport.htm

Fit 5 Resources
https://resources.specialolympics.org/health/fitness/fit-5

Fitness Gram
https://www.cooperinstitute.org/fitnessgram

Fuel Up to Play 60
https://www.fueluptoplay60.com/tools#tab_school-wellness-investigation

National Health Education Standards - CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans
https://health.gov/paguidelines/
https://health.gov/paguidelines/second-edition/

School Health Index
https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/shi/

SHAPE America
https://www.shapeamerica.org/
https://www.shapeamerica.org/standards/default.aspx
https://www.shapeamerica.org/standards/pe/
https://www.shapeamerica.org/standards/health/
https://www.shapeamerica.org/advocacy/advocacyresources_state.aspx

Special Olympics Fitness Models
https://resources.specialolympics.org/program-models

Special Olympics Lifestyle Survey
https://resources.specialolympics.org/health/fitness/fitness-tracking-tools

Special Olympics Playbooks
https://resources.specialolympics.org/playbook-series/#section2

WellSAT
http://www.wellsat.org

Unified Physical Education Resources
http://media.specialolympics.org/resources/community-building/youth-and-school/unified-champion-schools/Unified-Physcial-Education-Resources.pdf

References:

Center for Social Development and Education: University of Massachusetts Boston. (2018). *The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools Program: Year 10 Evaluation Report 2017-2018.* Boston, MA. Retrieved from UMass Boston https://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/UCS_-_Y10-_Evaluation_Report_Submitted.pdf.

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Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards. (2007). National Health Education Standards, Second Edition: Achieving Excellence. Washington, D.C.: The American Cancer Society.

Krahn, G.L. & Fox, M.H. (2014). Health disparities of adults with intellectual disabilities: What do we know? What do we do? *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 27*(5), 431-446.

SHAPE America – Society of Health and Physical Educators. (2014). *National Standards & Grade-Level Outcomes for K-12 Physical Education.* Reston, VA. 20191, www.shapeamerica.org. All rights reserved.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2018). *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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IDEAs that Work
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