

How To Create and Sustain a Special Olympics Unified Club

Created by: The National Youth Activation Committee - Special Olympics



Special Olympics
Unified Champion
Schools®

What is a Unified Club?

A Unified Club is a club for students with and without intellectual disabilities that comes together for sports, games, community service, school events, and most of all, to have fun!

Steps to Starting and Maintaining a Unified Club:

1. Find out your school's requirements for starting a club and make sure you follow their steps.

- Examples of requirements:
 - Do you have to make a presentation?
 - Are there forms you need to fill out?
 - Do you need to find a teacher advisor?

When completing this first step, be sure to address these things:

- Why it is important to have a Unified Club.
(Improving social inclusion in your school, creating positive attitudes, etc.)
- What types of events you plan to put on once your club is formed.
- Facts and statistics to show why a Unified Club would be beneficial to your school.

2. Talk to the Special Education Teacher(s) in your school.

- They will be able to engage the students in their classrooms.
- Ask if they would like to participate or supervise your Unified Club meetings.
 - They can also refer you to someone to be the advisor.
- Provide them with materials to help spread the word about the club to parents and other Special Olympics athletes they may know.

3. Reach out to your local Special Olympics office. Tell them you are interested in starting a Unified Club.

- This is especially important to do if your school does not have a Special Education department.
- Ask if they would be able to sponsor or support your club.

4. Create a core group of students to serve on your “executive committee”:

- **President:** This person will be in close communication with the Special Education teacher, your club advisor, and the local Special Olympics office.
- **Treasurer:** This person will keep track of the funds you have. They will be in charge of figuring out the cost of putting on each event.
- **Secretary:** This person will be in charge of taking notes at meetings. They will also make sure all club members have up to date information.
- **Athlete Advisor:** This person is responsible for representing the Special Olympics perspective and fellow athletes.

As your group grows, there may be the need for other executive committee members and potentially forming “subcommittee” roles to provide more leadership opportunities.

5. Make decisions as an executive committee before the first meeting:

- **How often will the club meet?**
 - It is important to pick a time that allows for the most students to attend without many conflicts. This could be after school (if your school has a late bus) or during lunch hour.
- **How long will each meeting last?**
 - An hour should be enough time for each meeting. An upcoming event may require an extra meeting or a longer meeting time.
- **Where will your club meet?**
 - In a classroom?
 - Does your school have a space for clubs to meet?
- **How will you fundraise?**
 - Does your school allocate money for each club?
 - Would membership dues be appropriate?
 - Does your local Special Olympics Program have money to give?
 - Are there grants your club can apply for?
- **How will you obtain members?**
 - Coordinate with an art club or class to help make colorful posters. Make sure they include the meeting time and place.
 - Form a Facebook group. This should have a description of a group, a list of upcoming events, and pictures.
- **How will you include students with intellectual disabilities?**
 - Make sure you contact parents of the athletes (if you can get their information) so that way they know that this opportunity is available. Be sure to send weekly emails so they know what the club is doing.
 - Ask them for ideas for activities and events for the club.
- **Does your executive committee have rules?**
 - Make sure everyone understands their roles and expectations.
 - Create a system for making decisions (blind vote, ballot, etc.)

Tip!

If you plan to start Best Buddies or a similar program be sure to know the requirements to obtain charter. Following established protocol is critical.

6. At your first meeting:

- Hand out a printed out version of the agenda or write it on a chalkboard/smartboard.
- Provide a description of the club and its purpose.
- Each executive committee member should introduce themselves and explain their roles.
- Pass out a membership form to get contact information (name, email, phone, etc.) from each student.
- Have a sheet with all upcoming dates ready to pass out.
- Include an icebreaker or a fun activity so all members can get to know each other.
- Brainstorm ideas for future activities.
- Leave time for questions from students.
- President should give closing remarks including a reminder of the next meeting/event.

Other Ideas for Club Activities:

Spread the Word > Inclusion Campaigns.

Participate in other Special Olympics Events, such as fundraising, local Games, and Polar Plunges @.

Join a Special Olympics Unified Sports @ team where those with and without intellectual disabilities play on a sports team together.

Talk to your local Special Olympics Program for more information about this.

Important Things to Remember:

1. Always stay in contact with the athletes and their families.
2. Make sure the executive committee is in close communication and is involved in the decision making. Be sure to include all members' perspectives when planning events and in big decisions.
3. Remember your purpose: to make friends and HAVE FUN!