

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED SPORTS® IN SCHOOLS: **REVEALING THE CHAMPION IN ALL OF US**



### What?

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is a fully inclusive program that combines approximately equal numbers of students with intellectual disabilities and students without intellectual disabilities on sports teams for training and competition. A variety of Special Olympics Unified Sports® are offered in each state. Some examples may include: tennis, track & field, soccer, basketball and bowling. Unified Sports® teams in schools are typically implemented like other athletic programs such as extracurricular sports teams, intramurals or during a physical education class.

### Who?

Special Olympics Unified Sports® provides opportunities for all students to participate in their school's athletic program. Students with other types of disabilities (i.e., physical disability, learning disability) are welcomed to play as long as there are no undue safety risks, all students can be meaningfully involved, and there is a proportionate number of students without disabilities on the team. Unified Sports® assists school systems in addressing the Office of Civil Rights 504 Guidance on the inclusion of students with disabilities in school activities.

### Why?

With the support of the United States Department of Education, Special Olympics has found that Unified Sports® in combination with inclusive leadership and whole-school activities delivers social emotional learning opportunities. Barriers are broken down between teammates and new friendships are formed. This inclusive strategy provides the tools and structure for educators and youth to co-lead a school community where differences are embraced, all students feel accepted and everyone gets the chance to achieve their personal best. In connection with college and community-based Special Olympics programs, students can continue their involvement to further develop skills and friendships throughout their lifetime.

### How?

Each state has an accredited Special Olympics Program and staff in place to support you. The first step to starting a Unified Sports® program in your school is getting in touch with your State Special Olympics Program. You can find this contact information here:



#### **Program locator:**

[http://www.specialolympics.org/program\\_locator.aspx](http://www.specialolympics.org/program_locator.aspx)

Special Olympics provides an outstanding platform to empower young people to take a leadership role in their school community. A Student's Guide to Unified Sports® is available to download at no cost along with many other resources:



#### **Special Olympics Unified Sports:**

<http://www.specialolympics.org/unified-sports.aspx>



#### **Unified Champion Schools(education resources):**

<http://resources.specialolympics.org/unifiedschools>

Special Olympics has teamed up with the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) to offer an online "Coaching Unified Sports®" Course at no cost. This course is appropriate for coaches who will be working with teammates of all ages.



<http://www.nfhslern.com>