



Special Olympics  
**Unified Champion  
Schools®**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:**

(Insert Name)

(Insert Phone Number)

(Insert Email Address)

## **(Insert School Name) to receive national recognition from Special Olympics for achievements with inclusion**

**City, State, Date** – Special Olympics (insert state) has announced that (insert school name), a Special Olympics Unified Champion School, is receiving *national banner recognition* for its efforts to provide inclusive sports and activities for students with and without disabilities. (insert school name) is receiving this honor as a result of meeting national standards of excellence in the areas of inclusion, advocacy and respect. An award presentation will take place at the school on (insert date).

(Insert school name) will be amongst a select number of schools to receive this distinction. They will be presented with a banner to hang in their school and be included on a list of other schools around the country who have achieved this distinguished status.

**(OPTIONAL: Insert quote from CEO or School District Leader)**

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® is a strategy for schools Pre-K through university that intentionally promotes meaningful social inclusion by bringing together students with and without intellectual disabilities to create accepting school environments, utilizing three interconnected components: Special Olympics Unified Sports®, inclusive youth leadership, and whole school engagement.

More than (insert figure) schools are currently participating in Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools programming in (insert state), as part of more than 7,500 schools across the country engaged in the program. Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools aims to expand to 10,000 schools by the end of the 2023-2024 school year.

The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools model is supported by the Office of Special Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. This model has been proven, through research, to be an effective and replicable means to providing students with and without disabilities the opportunity to form positive social relationships and promote a socially inclusive school climate\*. Key data points include:

- 94% of teachers/school staff say the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program increases opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to work together.
- 98% of involved teachers believe participation in the program has increased the confidence of students with disabilities.
- 92% credit the program with reducing bullying, teasing, and offensive language.



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A Special Olympics Unified Champion School has an inclusive school climate and exudes a sense of collaboration, engagement, and respect for all members of the student body and staff. A Unified Champion School receiving *national banner recognition* is one that has demonstrated commitment to inclusion by meeting 10 national standards of excellence. These standards were developed by a national panel of leaders from Special Olympics and the education community.

The primary activities within these standards include: Special Olympics Unified Sports® (where students with and without disabilities train and compete as teammates), inclusive youth leadership and whole-school engagement. *National banner schools* should also be able to demonstrate they are self-sustainable or have a plan in place to sustain these activities into the future.

*\*Evaluation conducted by the Center for Social Development and Education (CSDE) at the University of Massachusetts Boston*

**About (insert school name)**

(Add school-specific boilerplate language, i.e.; mission, enrolment, contact info, address, website, years involvement with SO)

**About Special Olympics (insert state)**

(Add state-specific boilerplate language)