

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Special Olympics **(State)** to join Special Olympics Unified Champion City Schools® initiative to accelerate urban programming and promote social inclusion

[City, State, Date]: Special Olympics **(State)** and **(City school district)** are partnering in the Special Olympics North America Unified Champion City Schools (UCCS) initiative this fall. UCCS is a focused approach to amplify the essential elements of Unified Champion Schools (UCS) within city school districts. UCS utilizes three interconnected components for social inclusion in schools:

- Special Olympics Unified Sports® (join's people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team)
- Inclusive Youth Leadership (when young people of all abilities are given opportunities to be leaders in their schools and communities)
- Whole-school engagement (creates a school climate that fosters understanding and respect for all and can influence how students think and act within and beyond the school)

There are nearly 8,000 Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® in the United States and Special Olympics North America (SONA) has a goal to reach 10,000 schools by the 2023-2024 academic school year. Currently, 26% of Unified Champion Schools are in urban school districts but only 7% are urban schools of the highest need. Special Olympics **(State)** (SOXX) will be one of 11 U.S. state Programs to implement the UCCS initiative, which will focus on expanding inclusive programming within city school districts.

SO**(State abbreviation)** will be implementing the UCCS initiative in **(#)** schools in the **(City school district)** during the 2021-2022 school year. **(School district)** is the **(school district size)** school district in **(State)** with over **(#)** students enrolled each year.

(Insert: Program goals for UCCS initiative, why your state Program is implementing UCCS initiative in selected city, info to support, specific data, etc.)

Content Examples

OPTIONAL Quote:

"We are thrilled to launch the "Unified Champion City Schools" initiative across the U.S.! This initiative is a reimagined commitment to energizing inclusivity in city schools. The local teams that have signed on to drive this effort will dedicate time, attention and resources in a focused and community-centric way. Youth with and without intellectual disabilities in some of the country's most diverse cities will have access to quality programming that supports social inclusion through leadership, sports and friendships. We're looking forward to seeing this initiative take root and to

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positively reshape attitudes and actions that will amplify the unified generation for all young people.”-Andrea Cahn, Vice President, Unified Champion Schools

(OPTIONAL: Insert quote from Program CEO or school district leader)

This initiative is generously funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education. Through these dedicated funds and with the support of the SONA team, UCCS programming has the capability to empower the youth, inform educators, and support caregivers and community leaders to become the influencers of change in their schools and communities. The time is right for systematic approaches to position city schools as models of what is possible.