Program Capacity Reflection

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® has identified seven key elements (or characteristics) of socially inclusive learning environments. Each characteristic has equal importance to the success of efforts to promote social inclusion but is insufficient on its own. The seven characteristics are categorized into broad functions as Core Processes and Operational Processes. Although identified for use in schools, the characteristics offer a way to consider Program capacity as well.

The *Program Capacity Reflection* tool applies the *Framework for Social Inclusion and Characteristics of Socially Inclusive Schools* to the Program itself in a way which allows Programs to reflect on their capacity or 'readiness' to initiate new implementation efforts particularly at the school district level. This reflection should be part of any state Special Olympics Program's preparation prior to beginning a district level growth effort or other significant expansion and will help identify strengths and challenges as it moves forward.

To be clear, this is for reflection and planning only and should not be used to evaluate the Program itself. Nor is it necessary to be at "level 3" in all characteristics for a Program to move forward.

Framework for Social Inclusion and Characteristics of Socially Inclusive Schools			
	Characteristic	School/District context	Program context
Core Processes	1. Inclusive Youth Leadership	Establish a vibrant role for youth leadership.	Establish a vibrant role for youth leadership.
	2. Creating and Sustaining Relationships	Create and sustain positive relationships for students with and without intellectual disabilities.	Create and sustain positive Program and district relationships to foster UCS implementation and social inclusion in schools
	3. Unifying Programming	Design unified programs that eliminate boundaries of separation in favor of shared events, activities, goals and leadership.	Implement and provide support for a variety of programming for all grade levels and across all three components
	4. School/ Community Partnerships	Create school, family and community partnerships that promote safe, nurturing and inclusive environments.	Create school district, government, community agency and other partnerships that promote socially inclusive communities
Operational Processes	5. Communication	Ensure program effectiveness and stakeholder understanding through clear, concise, accessible communications	Ensure program effectiveness and stakeholder understanding through clear, concise, accessible communications
	6. Professional Development	Provide a variety of opportunities for stakeholders, community organizations, and leaders to acquire and enhance knowledge and skills to effectively implement and sustain inclusive schools.	Develop staff and volunteer skills, knowledge and dispositions to support sustainable UCS implementation across unique school, district and Program contexts.
	7. Continuous Improvement	Establish structures and processes to ensure the development and ongoing support of an inclusive school climate and effective learning environment for all students.	Establish structures and processes to ensure the development and ongoing support of UCS implementation at the school, district and Program levels.

Characteristic 1: Inclusive Youth Leadership

The Program values inclusive youth leadership as a priority, and youth representing the diversity of the youth across the Program area, including students with intellectual disabilities, are engaged in leadership opportunities and/or positions within the Program.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Youth of all abilities are represented or selected to be on Program committees with limited decision making. Inclusive youth leadership is referenced as a value of the Program, but it is not reinforced through policies, goals or objectives. Program policies and practices ensure that *some* youth with and without intellectual disabilities have limited opportunities to impact changes in policies and practices. Schools, districts and/or communities are encouraged to engage students with and without disabilities in leadership opportunities. Program has a plan to engage Youth Ambassadors. Team does not yet incorporate SO Unified Youth Leaders (Youth Leaders) in planning for and executing activities at and for UCS campuses.	Inclusive youth leadership is a specific goal or objective of the Program and is integrated specifically into a related goal such as district level implementation. Program policies and practices ensure that youth, with and without intellectual disabilities, have opportunities to impact policies and practices in their local Programs, classrooms, schools and the community. Program policies and practices ensure youth with and without intellectual disabilities are provided training in leadership skills, knowledge and dispositions within inclusive settings such as Youth Advisory Councils and Youth Summits. The Program encourages and provides support to schools for inclusive youth leadership through formal and informal opportunities. The Program models inclusive youth leadership in formal and informal opportunities. Program has a plan to engage Youth Ambassadors which includes engaging in scheduled standard training.	A wide range of youth leadership positions are held within the Program by youth with and without intellectual disabilities. Program policies and practices ensure youth with and without disabilities are engaged in opportunities to lead meaningful change in their classrooms, schools and the community. The Program celebrates diverse student leadership in schools and at the district level. Program consistently engages Youth Ambassadors, receives training and deploys Youth Ambassadors as part of the outreach to new UCS sites.

Characteristic 2: Creating and Sustaining Relationships

A commitment exists to create and sustain positive Program and school district relationships to foster implementation of the Unified Champion Schools strategy and social inclusion.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Program staff has approached city district leaders and discussed a contractual agreement. Tentative plans for/or verbal agreement in place. There is a burgeoning	Program staff has identified a "champion of influence" or city district liaison and an agreement (Letter of Intent, Letter of Support, City MOU, Mayoral MOU or MOU) is in place. There is an established working	Program staff and district (or city) leader have a fully executed, time- bound MOU in place. MOU defines the program expansion and growth for at least the next year. There is an established, active,

relationship with city/district Superintendent/ Chancellor/School Chief. Team's UCS staff member/s tracks level of operating of the 3 components; internally communicates progress statistics. Program receives liaison surveys from fewer than 50% of UCS school staffs. Program policies and practices encourage school-based strategies to meet the diverse needs of specific schools, school districts and communities.	relationship with city/district Superintendent/Chancellor/ School Chief. UCS staff member/s and supporting members of the Team engage in dialogue (minimum quarterly) about operation of the 3 components in city schools. Program submits completed liaison surveys from more than 60% of UCS school staffs. Program policies and practices express and reflect the diverse knowledge, skills, abilities and perspectives of schools, school districts and communities	positive working relationship with Superintendent/Chancellor AND other key district leader. Team has worked collaboratively with each school on goals under each of the 3 components and has scheduled check ins to discuss progress. Program consistently submits completed liaison surveys from more than 75% of UCS school staffs. Program policies and practices celebrate implementation options and component strategies that engage students of all abilities and acknowledge the diverse attributes of each student. Program policies and practices ensure programming schedules reflect inclusive values, and schools and school districts are engaged, safe and included in all Program sponsored Unified Champion Schools opportunities.

Characteristic 3: Unifying Programming

A commitment exists to implement and provide support for a variety of programming for all grade levels and across all three components.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
UCS programming has been in operation for 2-4 years. UCS is operating the 3 components in 20% of the schools that the city/Program has identified as a district. Program policies and practices provide inconsistent or limited support for each component. Community Transition Program is in development.	UCS Programming has been in operation for 4-8 years. UCS is operating the 3 components in 35% of the schools which that city/Program has identified as a district. Program ensures schools and school districts are connected to each other and to resources for classroom and whole school activities. Program policies and practices encourage and support implementation of each component. Community Transition Program Plan is drafted.	UCS Programming has been in operation for more than 10 years. UCS is operating the 3 components in 50% (or more) of the schools which that city/Program has identified as a district. Program policies and practices model supportive relationships and create a caring, respectful and compassionate community for all students with and without intellectual disabilities. Program policies and practices encourage, support and celebrate a variety of implementation strategies for each component.

		There is an established Community Transition Program Plan that is accessed by age-appropriate athletes

Characteristic 4: School - Community Collaborations

Create school district, government, community agency and other partnerships that promote socially inclusive communities and fulfill the Special Olympics Mission

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Team has reviewed and sought support to utilize Community Asset Mapping tools. Program can identify multiple potential partnerships with organizations that are professional/amateur sports, colleges/universities, or community- based.	Team has developed a plan for outreach through use of Community Asset Mapping Tools. Staff is deployed to monitor the plan and adapt as community assets are activated. Team has used Community Asset Mapping tool to support convening an engaged cohort of community stakeholders. Team has followed steps in the mapping process, sought technical assistance and generated action items/process tasks to solidify relationships with leaders in target city district schools, non-profits and community organizations. Program has at least one current partnership and can identify other potential partnerships with organizations that are professional/amateur sports, colleges/universities, or community- based. Current partnerships have minimum commitment and do not include funding or in-kind services. Program actively pursues meaningful, diverse partnerships with the community to develop common goals and implement district level projects.	Team employs Asset mapping tools regularly, as measured by consistency of approach to new schools or city districts, attendance at community events and successful recruitment of program allies. Team revisits and revises community outreach planning based on attendance at events, and levels of success in recruitment efforts. Program has multiple current partnerships with organizations that are professional/amateur sports, colleges/universities, or community- based. Partnerships are robust and offer the Program multiple benefits, including funding or in-kind services.

Characteristic 5: Communications

Ensure program effectiveness and stakeholder understanding through clear, concise, accessible communications.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3

Team has conceptualized marketing plan for target schools and responsibility for implementation of plan is assigned. Youth Leaders voice is used in promoting and marketing UCS and the 3 components. State Program Team (Team) has not yet determined how to incorporate a diversity of student athlete images and voices in UCS marketing materials.	Team has a marketing plan, identified city schools to target and assigned responsibility for the development of a marketing campaign to a member of the Team. Youth Leaders are consulted to determine marketing approach. Program communications (e.g., website, presentations, speeches, announcements) highlight diverse activities, results and contributions in ways which demonstrate the value placed on UCS implementation in a variety of contexts There is a diversity of images – representing Unified Youth Leaders from the target city/school communities – in marketing and communication materials.	Team is applying marketing plans and actively targeting schools, programs, non-profits, and community organizations, as measured by frequency of posts to social media, news stories and updates to Program websites. Youth Leaders are consulted and engaged as communicators of/for UCS, as marketing plans are adjusted, and modifications are made to outreach and media campaigns Mechanisms and systems are in place to regularly inform stakeholders and the general public about the positive impacts of inclusiveness on youth across the Program. Program policies and practices ensure UCS participants regularly speak to school, district and community groups about the benefits of implementation

Characteristic 6: Professional Development

Develop staff and volunteer skills, knowledge and dispositions to support sustainable UCS implementation across unique school, district and Program contexts.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
State Program Team (Team) has dedicated a small percentage (35% or less) of total staff time to UCS. There is no dedicated UCS staff. Team has identified diversity gaps, but there is no plan in place for addressing/closing those gaps. Team is comprised of members of 1- 2 different demographic categories (i.e.: race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, neurodiversity, age, parental status, socio-economic background, and military service*.) Program staff are new to UCS implementation, working with schools and districts, identifying	Team has dedicated 36% or more of total staff time to UCS; there is at least one staff member that commits more than 40% of their time to UCS work. Team has conducted a gap analysis (or sought the assistance of SONAUCS staff to support this effort) has a recruitment plan in place and has sought out diverse candidates to fill key vacancies. Team is comprised of 3-4 members of the named demographic categories. Program staff members regularly seek professional development on UCS implementation, working with schools and districts, identifying and responding to specific context needs and working with cultural humility.	Dedicated UCS staff in place; the Team commits more than 10% of total staff time to UCS work. Team uses a completed gap analysis to inform recruitment efforts. Team has successfully identified capacity needs and hired staff to close diversity gaps. Team hires to ensure staff make-up aligns with the demographics of the city/Program/target urban district. Diversity plan informs all hiring. Program staff members are sought out as leaders on UCS implementation, working with schools and districts, identifying and responding to specific context needs and working with cultural humility.

and responding to specific context needs and/or working with cultural humility.		

Continuous Improvement		
Establish structures and processes to ensure the development and ongoing support of UCS implementation at the school, district and Program levels.		
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Program has named annual **Measures of Success** (MoS) or **Key Performance Indicators** (KPI) and has designed a plan for tracking and reporting these metrics. Team meets some grant reporting timelines; submitted information is partially accurate and may be incomplete. Team submits an annual budget. May or may not adhere to fiscal requirements. Program has account management / stewardship capacity to sufficiently support UCCS partners/supporters. Program has and implements an overall fundraising strategy with targets (cash and budget-relieving) and reviews/revises it at least quarterly.	Program has established MoS, KPI, evaluation tools and metrics and internally shares data/progress. Team meets 70% or more of grant reporting timelines. Submitted information is accurate and complete. Team submits annual budget, adheres to fiscal responsibilities/reporting requirements and coordinates internally to align budget with strategic plan objectives and goals. Program has existing corporate partners (UCS or general) with potential to provide incremental funding to support UCCS. Program has demonstrable history of, or success with, securing UCS funding. The district uses data collected about the inclusion of students with disabilities in academic settings, extra-curricular activities, sports and social events to inform new and revised practices.	Program actively uses metrics to evaluate progress and regularly uses that data to inform activity and report impact. Team meets all grant reporting timelines; submitted information contains all pertinent details, contextual and background information needed to match grant requirements. Team submits annual budget, adheres to fiscal responsibilities and reporting requirements, aligns budget with strategic plan objectives/ goals, and advance plans for the next fiscal year. Program has identified corporations with giving emphases on DEI and/or underserved youth/schools as potential new UCCS funders. Program has past experience with planning for and achieving UCS through some measure funding sustainability. SONA UCS staff and Team engage in monthly dialogue about the levels of implementation of the 3 components.