

THE PROBLEM

Despite the efforts of many countries to improve their education systems, young people continue to face multiple challenges. Globally, Covid 19 increased these obstacles. Youth still have difficulties academically succeeding and completing their studies, adding to the decline of their physical and mental health after school closures in more than 190 countries.

Unfortunately, people with intellectual disabilities (ID) were among the most affected regarding health, inclusion, and access to rights. They have been historically marginalized and vulnerable to negative attitudes, stereotypes, stigma, intimidation, exclusion, and social isolation, to which the pandemic did not contribute positively.

In summary, inclusion is the issue of our time. Until now, not all schools have had enough tools to include people with ID as fully valued members of their learning communities. In many countries, young people with ID are educated separately from peers without disabilities or do not attend school in the worst scenarios¹. Youth with ID are too often left behind.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE SOLUTION

Transforming education systems through inclusive sports.

With sports as the foundation, Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® (SOUCS) is a school-based strategy that equips young people with tools and training to create sports, classroom, and community experiences that improve attitudes and behaviors among all young people with and without ID. Meaningfully, youth are not just recipients. Instead, they are the architects of lasting change and community building. Along with SOUCS, schools around the world can:



Our view is simple, and our focus is clear: if we teach youth with and without intellectual disabilities to play together, they can learn, grow, and ultimately live together.

¹ Especially important in low- and middle-income countries, where almost 90% of children with disabilities do not attend schools.

HOW DOES THE SOUCS PROGRAM WORK?

A three-component model

From Pre-K through university, SOUCS intentionally promotes meaningful social inclusion by bringing together students with and without ID to create accepting school environments utilizing three interconnected components: Special Olympics Unified Sports®, inclusive youth leadership, and whole school engagement.



Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools®**

Unified Sports

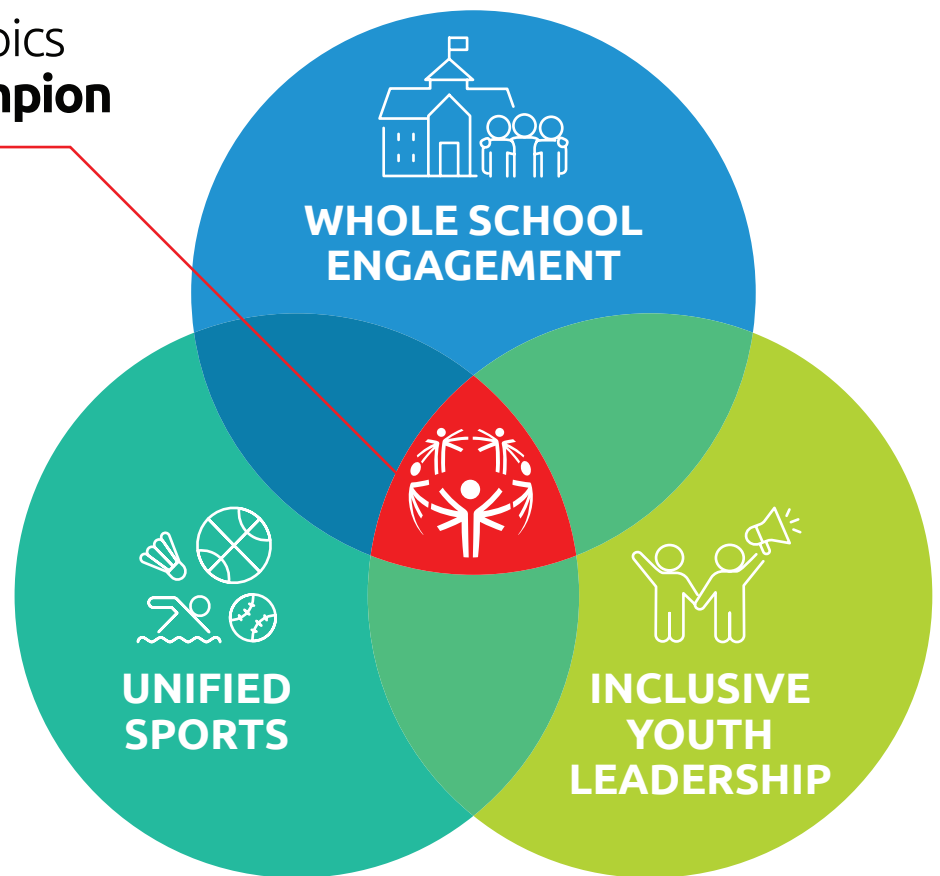
provide opportunities for students with and without ID to meaningfully participate in various fitness and sports activities alongside one another.

Inclusive youth leadership

offers youth with and without ID opportunities to become agents of change within their schools and communities.

Whole School Engagement

includes all school members, creating a community of acceptance and respect.



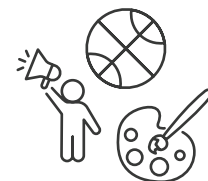
PRESENT GLOBAL REACH²



151 countries
have adopted Special Olympics
school programming across seven
global regions.



28,834 schools
reached worldwide.



**Approximately
1 million+ young people**
participate in inclusive experiences
through the Unified Champion
Schools programming.

² These data correspond to the 2022_Youth Program Data from the SO Census.