

## UNIFIED PROGRAMS

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## UNIFIED—AN OVERVIEW

Special Olympics is raising awareness about the abilities of people with intellectual disabilities. Through sports, we showcase the skills and dignity of our athletes. At the same time, Special Olympics brings people with and without intellectual disabilities together to see and take part in the transformative power of sports.

We know the odds our athletes must overcome and the barriers they face every single day. We see this at training events and competitions as our athletes push to beat their personal bests. Their stories and successes inspire us all.

We rely on your expertise in knowing your Agency and which strategies are most appropriate for expanding your athlete enrollment. This list should be viewed as a menu. You can pick and choose whatever strategies or information fit your specific needs.

### **Special Olympics Programs** (Many descriptions included in this section of the handbook)

- Unified Champion Schools (formally Project UNIFY®)
- Young Athletes™ (currently not accepting new programs)
- Unified Sports®
- SO College
- Camp Shriver
- Fans Clubs
- Get Into It®
- Spread the Word to End the Word®
- Traditional Special Olympics sports programs (Agencies)

### **Target Areas for Athlete Recruitment**

- Pre-school and Elementary Schools
  - Introduce Young Athletes for 2-7 year olds to school administrators
  - Introduce Unified Champion Schools
  - Introduce Get Into It to Principal or Teachers
  - Encourage schools to offer Special Olympics as an extracurricular activity
  - Make Special Olympics an extension of physical education curriculum
- Secondary Schools
  - Introduce Get Into It to Principal or Teachers
  - Introduce Unified Champion Schools
  - Establish sports teams coached by high school students, faculty and coaches for Special Olympics athletes
  - Create Fans Clubs which involve high school students who volunteer on a regular basis assisting Special Olympics athletes in practice and competition
  - Promote the Unified Sports program to bring together athletes with and without intellectual disabilities to practice and compete on the same teams. Unified Sports can be part of an interscholastic or intramural after-school league at the junior high or high school level
  - Involve athletes and students to coordinate the Spread the Word to End the Word campaign
- Parks and Recreation Departments
  - Introduce the Camp Shriver model to be incorporated into existing day camp programs
  - Encourage parks and recreation departments to include Special Olympics training, competition and coach's training schools among the activities they offer
  - Work with them to gain access to facilities, transportation, publications and events
  - Encourage them to run Young Athletes
  - Start Unified Sports programs to generate interaction between employees with and without intellectual disabilities in integrated workplaces

## UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS (FORMALLY PROJECT UNIFY®)

### What are Unified Champion Schools?

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 is one that has demonstrated commitment to inclusion by adopting the three components as described below. These include Special Olympics Unified Sports®, Inclusive Youth Leadership and Whole-School Engagement.

While the components are listed individually, they should be implemented in coordination with each other and supported by a leadership team composed of representatives from all areas of the school, including students, teachers, administrators and parents. Research has proven that when all three components are incorporated, there is a deeper impact on the individual participants as well as the overall culture and climate of the school.

Strategies and plans for sustainability are a key to successfully ensuring that the three Unified Champion School components will continue into the future and truly become part of the school culture. Examples include such things as student fundraising, Unified Booster Clubs or Unified Sports/Club expenses included in school budgets.

### Unified Champion School Components:

**Special Olympics Unified Sports®:** A fully-inclusive sports or fitness program that combines an approximately equal number of students with and without intellectual disabilities. Examples include such things as Interscholastic Unified Sports, Unified PE or Unified Intramurals. These activities occur throughout the school year with the support of an adult coach and include opportunities for competition.

**Inclusive Youth Leadership:** Students with and without intellectual disabilities work to lead awareness, Unified Sports, advocacy, inclusion and other Special Olympics activities throughout the school year. Examples include such things as Unified Clubs, inclusive student councils or similar types of inclusive student groups. The clubs are supported by an adult liaison and offer leadership opportunities and/or training for students with and without disabilities.

**Whole-School Engagement:** Awareness and education activities that promote inclusion and reach the majority of the school population. Examples include such things as Spread the Word to End the Word (R-Word) Campaigns, Pep Rallies or “Fans in the Stands” for Unified Sports teams, Respect Campaigns or student fundraising. Ideally students with and without disabilities are involved with planning and leading awareness events with the support of an adult in the school.

Special Olympics Young Athletes introduces children, ages 2-7, with intellectual disabilities, their peers and families to the world of Special Olympics by pursuing the following goals:

- Engage children with intellectual disabilities through developmentally appropriate play activities designed to foster physical, cognitive and social development;
- Welcome family members of children with intellectual disabilities to the Special Olympics network of support;
- Raise awareness about the abilities of children with intellectual disabilities through inclusive peer participation, demonstrations and other events.

This program is designed to address two specific levels of play. Level 1 includes physical activities focused on developing fundamental motor tracking and eye-hand coordination. Level 2 concentrates on the application of these physical activities through a sports skills activity program and developing skills consistent with Special Olympics sports play. The activities consist of foundational skills, walking and running, balance and jumping, trapping and catching, throwing, striking, kicking and advanced skills.

Young Athletes is a versatile program that can work in various learning situations. The program is designed for families to play with their young athletes at home in a fun atmosphere but is also appropriate for preschools, schools and playgroups.

This initiative is modeled after the traditional Special Olympics program. Sites are required to practice Young Athletes a minimum of eight sessions and it is recommended that these sessions are conducted over eight consecutive weeks. Through practicing the various skills, Young Athletes are able to build on their strengths each week. After completing at least eight sessions, Young Athletes participate in a Culminating Event, much like a Regional or State Games. Here, athletes demonstrate the skills they've learned or improved upon over the weeks and participate in an awards ceremony in which all Young Athletes are acknowledged. It is our hope that by having a similar model to our traditional program, those that continue to participate in Special Olympics will have an easy transition to a local Agency when they turn 8 years old.

Young Athletes includes several resources to guide family members, educators and other professionals as they conduct the program with their children, brothers, sisters, cousins, grandchildren, students or patients. Sites are able to sustain a Young Athletes program by providing a Site Coordinator (much like an Agency manager), facility, volunteers, and children between the ages of 2 and 7 receive a kit, curriculum, ribbons, t-shirts, and more to conduct that program successfully at no cost. Additionally, families with a child diagnosed with an intellectual disability or delay and are unable to attend one of our current Young Athletes sites are eligible for a family kit at no cost to use at home. For more information visit [SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org](http://SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org)

### Overview

Special Olympics Unified Sports is an inclusive sports program that combines an approximately equal number of Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities) on teams for training and competition. Three models exist within Unified Sports: competitive Unified Sports, Unified Sports Player Development and Unified Sports Recreation. All three models provide different types of experiences in team and individual sports. Unified Sports is now offered throughout the world and has been a Special Olympics internationally sanctioned program since 1989. Special Olympics Unified Sports promotes social inclusion through shared sport training and competition experiences for individuals with and without intellectual disabilities. Unified Sports has proven to be highly effective in achieving social inclusion. Athletes feel a sense of belonging; they can meaningfully interact with others, develop mutually rewarding relationships, are recognized as contributors and are received with acceptance and respect. All three models, defined below, have social inclusion as the core outcome; however, the structure and function of each model varies.

### Unified Sports (Competitive)

The Unified Sports competitive model combines Special Olympics athletes and partners as teammates on sport teams for training and competition. Two things differentiate the competitive Unified Sports model from the other two models: 1) all athletes and partners on a Unified Sports competitive team must have attained the necessary sport-specific skills and tactics to compete without modification of the current *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules*; and 2) teams that participate in this model may be eligible for advancement to Regional and World Games. A Unified Sports team is an inclusive sports program with approximately equal numbers of athletes and partners. Unified Sports teams should never be comprised solely of people with disabilities. Athletes and partners should be of similar age and ability in team sports. However, a greater variance in age and ability is allowed in specific sports such as golf. Refer to *Article 1* of the *Official Special Olympics Sports Rules* for more details regarding age and ability matching by sport.

### Unified Sports Player Development

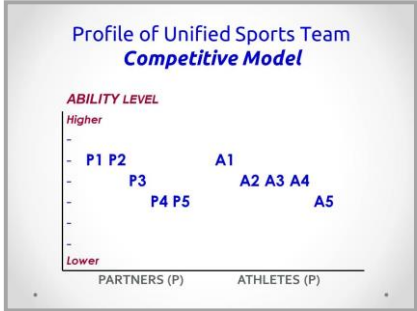
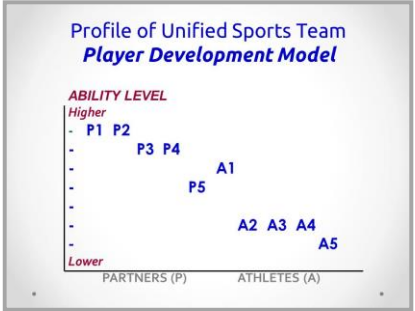
The Unified Sports Player Development model combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and partners as teammates on sports teams for training and competition. What differentiates Unified Sports Player Development from the other two models is: 1) teammates are not required to be of similar abilities, and 2) teammates of higher abilities serve as mentors to assist teammates of lower abilities in developing sport-specific skills and tactics, and in successfully participating in a cooperative team environment. Athletes and partners should be of similar age. However, a greater variance in age is allowed in specific sports such as bocce. Because of differences in abilities, rules modifications are necessary and designed to both ensure meaningful involvement of all teammates and define for higher ability players their roles as mentors so they do not dominate play. Each Program is given the opportunity to establish rules modifications that fulfill these outcomes.

### Unified Sports Recreation

Unified Sports Recreation consists of inclusive recreational sports opportunities for Special Olympics athletes and partners. What differentiates this model from the other two is that this model does not follow any prescribed training, competition and/or team composition requirements established by Special Olympics. These recreational opportunities may take place in partnership with schools, sport clubs, the community and other private or public organizations as introductory one-day events, exhibitions or demonstrations (including *Unified Sports Experiences*) or ongoing activities such as physical education classes and intramurals.

*\*Information from Special Olympics, Inc.*

## Comparison among Unified Sports Competitive, Player Development and Recreation Models

Unified Sports Competitive	Unified Sports Player Development	Unified Sports Recreation
Inclusive sports program	Inclusive sports program	Inclusive recreational sports program
Approximately equal number of athletes and partners train and compete	Approximately equal number of athletes and partners train and compete	Composition of teams should be at least 25% athletes or partners
Similar ability and age of athletes and partners	Similar age of athletes and partners	Does not require athletes and partners to be of similar age and ability
Training and competition scheduled for a season or class	Training and competition scheduled for a season or class	Preferably, participation is regularly scheduled; demonstration, fundraising and featured events applied as a catalyst for ongoing activity
Differentiation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Have attained sufficient &amp; necessary sport-specific skills and tactics</li> <li>2) No modifications of Official Special Olympics Sports Rules</li> <li>3) Eligible to advance to higher levels of play beyond the Program level (such as Regional and World Games)</li> </ol>	Differentiation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Not required to be of similar ability; teammates of higher ability serve as mentors to assist players of lower abilities</li> <li>2) Rules modifications define players' roles, ensure meaningful involvement and prevent player dominance</li> <li>3) No advancement beyond the Program level</li> </ol>	Differentiation: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Does not follow any prescribed training, competition and/or team composition requirements established by Special Olympics</li> <li>2) No advancement beyond the Local level</li> </ol>
Never comprised solely of individuals with disabilities	Never comprised solely of individuals with disabilities	Never comprised solely of individuals with disabilities
Awards based on place of finish within divisions	Program has choice of providing awards based on finish or participation (same award for all)	No awards are provided; however, recognition can be provided on a Program-by-Program basis
 <p>The graph shows a scatter plot of ability levels for Partners (P) and Athletes (A). The y-axis is labeled 'ABILITY LEVEL' with 'Higher' at the top and 'Lower' at the bottom. The x-axis is labeled 'PARTNERS (P)' and 'ATHLETES (P)'. Data points are labeled P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, A1, A2, A3, A4, and A5. P1 and P2 are at the highest ability level, followed by P3, P4, and P5. A1 is slightly lower than P3, and A2, A3, A4, and A5 are at the lowest ability level.</p>	 <p>The graph shows a scatter plot of ability levels for Partners (P) and Athletes (A). The y-axis is labeled 'ABILITY LEVEL' with 'Higher' at the top and 'Lower' at the bottom. The x-axis is labeled 'PARTNERS (P)' and 'ATHLETES (A)'. Data points are labeled P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, A1, A2, A3, A4, and A5. P1 and P2 are at the highest ability level, followed by P3, P4, and P5. A1 is slightly lower than P3, and A2, A3, A4, and A5 are at the lowest ability level.</p>	Examples include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Physical Education Class</li> <li>2) Partner's Club – playing sport recreationally as part of club activities</li> <li>3) Intramural Team or Community Free/Open Play</li> <li>4) Exhibitions / Demonstrations, one-day featured events like <i>Unified Sports Experiences</i> (purpose of which is awareness, exposure and/or fundraising)</li> </ol>

## FANS CLUBS

Fans Clubs for Project UNIFY® are unique school-wide clubs that are designed around empowering youth with and without intellectual disabilities to promote social justice through a variety of projects and activities. The club offers Unified Sports training and competition, as well as social, leadership, and recreational opportunities adding to students character development and acceptance of students with disabilities.

A Fans Club should be a sanctioned school club. The meeting schedule and format should follow school club policies and procedures. Fans Clubs should have a School Coordinating Team who network with administration, and the athletic, physical education, and special education departments.

Fans Clubs are encouraged to:

- Spread the Word to End the Word®
- Participate in Unified Sports
- Attend local sporting events together
- Attend or put on a Youth Activation Summit
- Arrange for a local coach to speak to the club or conduct drills
- Be “Fans in the Stands” at a local SOWI event
- Make banners to support their favorite teams
- Attend an Athlete Leadership Program (ALPs) workshop
- Sponsor a dance or movie night for the school
- Have a pizza party or other social gathering

### Further Definitions

School Coordinating Team: Comprised of one special education teacher, one general education teacher, one athlete, and one youth without an intellectual disability.

Youth Activation Summit: a gathering of youth leaders with and without disabilities coming together to learn about youth leadership and social justice through Special Olympics sports and activities.

Fans in the Stands: a program designed to encourage students to get a group of friends together and make posters, banners or organize a pep rally for the Special Olympics athletes at their school. It also encourages those students to attend a Special Olympics event to cheer on their classmates.

Spread the Word to End the Word: a campaign designed to raise the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the “R-Word” (retard) and urges people to resolve to stop using it as an insult, casual or intended comment.

ALPs: See a full description of this program in the *Athlete Leadership Program* section of this handbook.



*Get Into It*, a K-12 service-learning curriculum developed by Special Olympics, is available at no cost to schools and teachers worldwide, and is fit for students with and without disabilities. *Get Into It* teaches young people about intellectual disabilities while empowering them to “be the difference,” by learning values of inclusion, tolerance and respect. The overall goal of *Get Into It* is to increase participation of youth without intellectual disabilities by establishing school-based Special Olympics Programs and activities.

There are several components to *Get Into It*. Made up of four lesson plans compatible with curriculum standards, *Get Into It* teaches youth language, arts, social studies, history, health and physical education. The lessons range from students engaging in a discussion about stereotypes to students learning about inspirational Special Olympics athletes.

In addition to increasing the participation of youth in Special Olympics, the *Get Into It* curriculum addresses current trends in school reform, such as the standards movement, character education, positive youth development and service-learning.

*Get Into It* has been endorsed by several leading educational organizations, among them the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC), Education Commission of the States (ECS) and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Development of *Get Into It* has begun in the following Special Olympics regions around the world: North America, Asia/Pacific, East Asia/Chinese Program, Europe/Eurasia, Latin America and Middle East North Africa.

Schools, teachers and parents can download the *Get Into It* curriculum free of charge from [SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org](http://SpecialOlympicsWisconsin.org). There also is a condensed version called *Get Into It Active* and an app with a variety of games appropriate for all ages!

Additionally, *Movies that Move* is a series of short fully licensed clips from popular Hollywood movies with age-appropriate teacher guides by Nonprofit Film Clips for Character Education. It provides an opportunity for all students, regardless of ability or background, to discuss inclusion, acceptance, the power of words, and youth leadership while building new relationships with each other and working together to transform their school climate from the inside out. The clips stimulate a love of learning, an attitude of inquiry, a passion for truth, and a questioning mind. Beyond answers alone, Film Clips help students ask the right questions, and discover their answers through mutual respect, creative thinking, reasoning, judging, and understanding.

Hard copies of the curriculum are available by contacting SOWI.

## **SO COLLEGE**

SO College functions as an official club on campus and connects college students and individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport to build friendships and help lead the social justice movement of Special Olympics. Created by college students for college students, the network seeks the membership of campuses that seek the common goals of enhancing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and building a more accepting world for all.

SO College programs are made up of three core elements: Inclusive Sports, Youth Leadership, and opportunities for Full Campus Involvement. Together these components can help students work for and with Special Olympics athletes to help transform school campuses into communities of acceptance and respect.

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