

Unified Champion Schools

Explanation of Activities



SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS host a combination of at least three components: **inclusive sports, youth leadership/advocacy, and a school-wide activity**. In a “Unified Champion School” (UCS) there is an understanding that there is not just a single experience or event that happens for one day; but rather, there is an expectation that acceptance and inclusion are everyday occurrences that change entire schools and impact the whole student body throughout the year.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

FANS CLUBS are unique school-wide clubs that are designed around empowering youth with and without intellectual disabilities to build friendships and promote social justice through a variety of projects and activities. Fans Clubs often are formed when there is no existing club or youth leadership group in a school where young people with and without intellectual disabilities (ID) can work together on Unified Champion School activities, but may also be formed to supplement and add to a pre-existing inclusive club. Fans Clubs are encouraged to design their own projects involving Spread the Word to End the Word™ activities, Fans in the Stands, Unify Day, Sports Day, etc. Fans Club meeting schedules are determined by supporting faculty members and the club members.

SCHOOL COORDINATING TEAMS are comprised of one special education teacher, one general education teacher, one Special Olympics athlete, and one youth without intellectual disabilities, with the support of a school administrator. This group of individuals work together to serve as project leaders for their school’s unified program. They are encouraged to meet locally at least three times during the course of the grant project year.

YOUTH ACTIVATION SUMMIT (YAS) is a gathering of youth leaders from around the state, with and without intellectual disabilities, coming together to learn about youth leadership and social justice through Special Olympics sports and activities. Youth Summits identify strategies to overcome traditional school social barriers, address issues of acceptance, and identify the needs of their school and community. Youth leaders also learn how to educate each other, to become motivated for action and to identify steps they can take to change school climate, and have an impact on their community. SOWI aims to host a spring YAS each school year organized by the Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) Youth Activation Committee.



SOWI YOUTH ACTIVATION COMMITTEE (YAC) is a select group of middle and high school student athletes and partners from across the state that have demonstrated great leadership and compassion for our athletes. They serve as youth liaisons to the SOWI UCS staff in planning and implementing UCS in schools and communities throughout the state. They also play an important role in the planning and execution of the spring youth summit. The Wisconsin YAC meets face-to-face twice a year and has conference calls monthly.

SOWI EDUCATION LEADERS NETWORK (ELN) is a professional advisory board comprised of current UCS administrators, special education teachers, PE teachers, general education teachers, school district representatives, and representation from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. This group is not only an advisory board to SOWI and UCS school coordinators but also serves as unified school promoters in the school community and statewide. The ELN meets a minimum of twice a year to discuss planning of grant programs and finally the results of the grant year.

INCLUSIVE SPORTS

UNIFIED SPORTS® is an initiative to create inclusive sports training and competition through Special Olympics and other school-based programs. An example would be an after-school club where students with and without disabilities practice volleyball for several weeks and then compete against another team from their school or a neighboring school with a similar program. Each school may match the sport selection and season to fit its students' needs, but there must be elements of both training and competition and include a proportionate number of students with intellectual disabilities as well as students of other abilities.

UNIFIED RECREATION consists of inclusive recreational sports opportunities for Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities (Partners) which promote social inclusion and increase sports skills and knowledge. Composition of Unified Recreation teams is less formal than Unified Sports®, as the focus is on providing a sports opportunity for camaraderie rather than intense training and competition.



YOUNG ATHLETES™ (YA) is an inclusive sports play program designed to promote skill development rather than competition. The activities are designed to develop social, intellectual, and physical skills of 2-7 year-olds with and without intellectual disabilities. Each activity challenges athletes through learning the skills of sports, as well as learning to follow instructions, take turns, recognize colors, and encourage others. Students in 3rd grade and above can serve as mentors or coaches to the YA participants and help conduct the culminating events or other school projects.

CAMP SHRIVER is an inclusive week long day camp that offers both sports training and enrichment activities for youth campers. It serves as a venue for youth to form new friendships as they share and enjoy their common interests with others.

UNIFIED SPORTS DAY is an opportunity for school-wide engagement in a wide variety of sports skills and activities. The day is not focused on competition, but rather a fun way to bring awareness to the abilities of those with intellectual disabilities. Unified Sports days can also be district or community-wide.

WHOLE-SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD™ is a campaign designed to raise the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the "R-word" (retard or retarded) and urges people to resolve to stop using it as an insult, casual or intended comment.

GET INTO IT™ is a set of K-12 lessons and resources designed to advance students' civic knowledge and skill development, promote acceptance and understanding of people's differences and to motivate them to become advocates for and together with all people. The lessons and resources are designed for general education classrooms with modifications and extensions to include all learners. Features of these resources include: K-12 service-learning based lessons, "Active" lessons designed for after-school programs, P.E. classes or recess, interactive online games and activities, and lessons designed around a set of film and TV show clips called "Movies that Move". All components of Get Into It are aligned with important education initiatives such as: Anti-Bullying, Character Education, Service-Learning, 21st Century Skill Development, Inclusive Collaboration and Changing School Climate.



FANS IN THE STANDS is a program designed to encourage students to get a group of friends together to make posters and banners or to 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. This promotes unity and acceptance as well as teaches these students the true meaning of being a friend.

The goal of Unified Champion Schools is to **activate** youth, **engage** educators, and **promote** school communities of acceptance and inclusion where **all young people are agents of change** – fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities by utilizing existing Special Olympics programs and initiatives within schools