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UNIFIED SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

All Unified Schools are required to complete 2 of the 3 components: Unified Sports/Young Athletes and Whole School Engagement. The goal is for all schools in Year 2 and beyond to complete all 3 components and are named Unified Champion Schools.

3 Core Components:

1. Unified Sports/ Young Athletes (See coach’s resource guides for Unified Sports.)
   - Providing opportunities for students both with all types of disabilities and without disabilities to participate in sports meaningfully and by engaging other students in the school community.

2. Youth Leadership
   - Unified Youth Committee- an organized group of a proportional number of students with and without intellectual disabilities who are devoted to promoting inclusion and improving their school climate. This committee meets regularly throughout the school year as they identify issues in their school and develop plans and activities to address them.

3. Whole School Engagement
   - Activities which engage the entire student population that are run and organized by youth within the schools and conducted throughout the school year. The goal is for year-long engagement. Schools will strive to conduct at least 3 initiatives during the school year that create awareness, promote inclusion and encourage respect of all individuals.

Additional requirements:

- Monthly reports
  - This survey collects information about your schools Unified Youth Committee and/or Whole School Engagement activities. This information will be reported to Special Olympics North America (SONA). We encourage faculty liaisons to select students to complete these monthly reports.

- Mid-term and final reports - REQUIRED
  - Liaisons complete the Mid-term (January) and Final (June) surveys for Special Olympics PA. This information is required from each school for funding and will be reported to Special Olympics North America (SONA).

- Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools Liaison Survey (UMASS) - REQUIRED
  - This survey is part of the annual evaluation of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools required by the U.S. Department of Education and conducted by the Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston.
SCHOOL LIAISONS

As a school liaison, you will be overseeing the Whole School Engagement activities for the school year. Below are the responsibilities of the Whole School Engagement Liaison.

Whole School Engagement Liaison:

- **Recruit a core group of students to run the activities**
  - Possible recruits: Unified Sports Team, classes, other school clubs/committees.
  - Make sure the group is inclusive to all students (special education and general education).
  - See Recruitment Strategies on the following page for ideas on how to recruit students.

- **Plan activities**
  - Help students come up and plan 3 activities throughout the school year which impacts as many students in the building as possible (i.e. Spread the Word Campaign, Fans in the Stands, Unified Pep Rally, etc).
  - Pick a time and place that will engage all of the students in the high school. This could be during a lunch period, after school, or at a sports event.

- **Support the students during the event**
  - Provide the students with any support they need before, during, and after the event.
  - Encourage students with and without disabilities to take leadership roles during the events.
  - Ensure that all students have a voice and are being heard before, during, and after the event.

- **Complete reporting requirements**
  - Have a student(s) complete the monthly survey for SOPA.
  - Complete the mid-term and final report (survey).
  - Complete the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools. Teacher Liaison Survey (UMASS).
Effectively Unified Sports® Student Recruitment Strategies

High schools offering Interscholastic Unified Sports have employed a number of different successful approaches to recruit students with intellectual disabilities, with other types of disabilities, and without disabilities to participate on their Unified Sports teams, youth committees, and whole school engagement activities.

Since promotion of social inclusion is one of the key outcomes, students running the whole school engagement activities must have a proportional number of students with and without disabilities.

Following is a summary of best recruitment practices utilized by various high schools for Unified Sports, youth leadership, and whole school engagement activities. It is important to use as many as possible to ensure the broadest number of students are being reached.

Overview

☐ You need a TEAM of teachers, students, and staff promoting inclusion within a school building. If the teacher is the only one doing the outreach, the program will falter.

☐ Success is predicated on a group of educators and staff being highly proactive and energetic in engaging students and helping them to see the rewards of promoting inclusion in their school. This requires the use of compelling message points and using multiple promotional approaches to sell the program.

☐ Organize a small UNIFIED SALES FORCE comprised of special education teachers, general education teachers, and students, as well as staff involved with the school’s extracurricular activities.

☐ Having promotional pieces (flyers, posters, etc.) are effective in raising awareness of the program and need to be hung in highly visible locations throughout the building. However, these materials by themselves DO NOT sell the program. Closing the sale is done most effectively by personal selling by the teachers. This has proven to be the most successful approach time and again in schools.

☐ Another strategy to use in conjunction with engaging the teachers is mobilizing the students. Using an Each One Reach One approach in which a student persuades a friend or classmate to join them promoting inclusion has proven to be highly effective.
Reaching Students with Disabilities

- Meet with the building’s Special Education Team Leader/Coordinator and staff. Provide concise and relevant information about the high school’s inclusive activities at one of their staff meetings, and include the head coach’s contact information so students and parents know how to reach him/her.

- Engaging special education teachers is vital! They play an essential role by reaching out to their students and parents and promoting the beneficial outcomes of inclusive activities. Teachers should discuss the program with their students so they fully understand the value and fun of being inclusive; make phone calls to parents of students and share how this fully-inclusive program is beneficial for their son or daughter; and send letters and information home which also has the teacher’s name and contact information.

- If the special education teacher invests the time to recruit students in his/her class through ongoing encouragement and communication with the students and their parents, this often leads to participation during inclusive activities.

- Work with para-educators and instructional assistants to reach prospective students. Often times these staff members have a close relationship with their students and can have a strong influence on them.

- During the team recruitment phase, the head coach should connect often with special education teachers and assistants for an update of the names of students they are actively recruiting. Follow up with these students and their parents, if appropriate.

- Set an ambitious, yet realistic recruitment goal for the special education team to attain in terms of number of participants with disabilities. (i.e. each teacher will successfully recruit X number of students).

- For High Schools with Existing Unified Sports Teams: Enlist the help of current Unified Sports participants and their parents to speak with their peers about the beneficial experience of joining a Unified Sports team.
Reaching Students without Disabilities

- Ask 4-5 popular general education teachers to be part of the UNIFIED SALES FORCE. Provide them with key selling points about the program as well as the benefits, and ask each one to personally reach out and convince a set number of students without disabilities to help run the inclusive activities.
- Have these teachers approach certain students they think would be ideal fits for the program and make a personal pitch to the them: For example: “I think you would be an excellent addition because of your leadership skills and ability to help your classmates reach their potential.”
- Make sure these teachers get the contact information for the students (name, home room, phone number, and email address) so the liaison can follow-up with them immediately. Also, they need to give the students the liaison’s contact information so they can contact him or her with questions.
- Engaging student leaders in the process is very important! Meet with them and ask them to enthusiastically recruit their friends and classmates to participate in the inclusive activities. The liaison needs to connect regularly with these student leaders so he/she can follow up with other potential students to run the inclusive activities.
- Meet with the faculty advisors for various groups and clubs who might be interested. These include student government, band, Best Buddies, theater, National Honor Society, debate team, etc.
- Utilize all available communication resources to promote the inclusive activities including morning announcements, the school web site, social media, assemblies and meetings, emails/letters/flyers, etc.
# WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Use this check-list below if your school does not have a Unified Youth Committee but is completing 3 Whole School Engagement activities. *Denotes a required survey or report; must be completed by teacher liaison.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Whole School Engagement Task Checklist</th>
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| September | - Recruit students: Unified Sports Team, Classes, School Clubs.  
            - Complete the Monthly Report for Special Olympics PA (survey sent to liaisons). |
| October   | - Begin planning your first activity (Spread the Word to End the Word rallies or events, Fans in the Stands for Unified Sports Winter teams, Recruit team for Polar Plunge, Unified Sports Day, etc).  
            - Complete the Monthly Report for Special Olympics PA. |
| November  | - Set final dates/ times/ locations for your first activity. Continue to recruit students for your team’s Polar Plunge (if applicable)  
            - Complete the Monthly Report for Special Olympics PA. |
| December  | - Polar Plunge/ Youth Centered Fundraiser  
            - Have your leaders complete the Monthly Report for Special Olympics PA. |
| January   | - *Complete Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools Mid-Term Report.  
            - Fans in the Stands during Indoor Bocce games (if applicable).  
            - Complete the Monthly Report for Special Olympics PA. |
| February  | - Begin planning Spread the Word to End the Word.  
            - Order Spread the Word materials  
            - Complete the Monthly Report for Special Olympics PA. |
| March     | - March 1st: Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign Day.  
            - If needed/desired begin planning spring Whole School Engagement campaign: Unified Sports Day, Disabilities awareness, Unified team pep rally, etc).  
            - Complete the Monthly Report for Special Olympics PA. |
| April     | - *Complete the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools Teacher Liaison Survey (UMASS).  
            - Fans in the Stands for Unified Track and Field meets (if applicable).  
            - Complete the Monthly Report for Special Olympics PA. |
| May/June  | - *Complete the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools Teacher Liaison Survey (UMASS).  
            - *Complete Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools end of year report (June).  
            - Complete the Monthly Report for Special Olympics PA. |
SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

Social Media Accounts

- Our overall recommendation for sharing events and news related to Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is to:
  - Attach the handle @SpecialOlympicsPA to your Facebook post, and/or attach the handle @SpecialOlympiPA to your Twitter or Instagram post. This way Special Olympics Pennsylvania can easily spot great stories to share with the rest of our movement.
- If you (or the school) do not have a Unified Champion School specific social media profile: **We recommend you DO NOT start one.**
- Special Olympics PA would be more than happy to share your content on our social media sites! You can send content to njones@specialolympicspa.org.
- If you have a social media account, but do not actively use it, we recommend that you shut it down by posting the following:
  - “We're officially #SOUnified! This page will be discontinued & all information on Unified Champion Schools can be found here: http://www.specialolympicspa.org/special-programs/initiatives/ius or at https://www.facebook.com/specialolympicspa

On your personal social media

- Be mindful of your language. Special Olympics advocates for people-first language. This means that you should refer to all participants as people first. For example, you should say 'a person with an intellectual disability' instead of 'an intellectually disabled person.' This ensures that the disability does not define the individual, and acknowledges that there are several other aspects of a person outside of their disability!
- Be sure that your message reflects that of the Special Olympics Unified Sports mission. Your post should be inclusive and respectful. Your post should not include any profanity or otherwise offensive language.
- Ensure that all people in your photos would be okay with you sharing their photo. If you are unsure, be sure to ask permission before posting!
- Make sure to hashtag #SOPAUnified, #PlayUnified, and #SOUnified so your post is grouped with others like it, and so that we can see your post, too!
SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE (CONTINUED)

Sharing your story

- We love to hear stories about your Unified Sports experience! If you have a compelling story you'd like to share, there are a few ways you can!
  - Post your story on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter for all of your friends and family to see! To ensure we see it too, use the hashtag #SOPAUnified, #SOUnified, and #PlayUnified. Make sure your account is on public so that we can see and share your story!
  - If you'd like to see your story shared on Special Olympics' website, you can use the easy form at http://www.specialolympics.org/share/
  - Consider starting a blog for your school's program where you can share stories and experiences from the Unified Champion Schools program. Some popular free platforms are Blogger, Weebly, Tumblr, and WordPress!
**LANGUAGE GUIDE**

**Special Olympics Unified Sports®**
On first reference, refer to as Special Olympics Unified Sports®. Unified Sports on second reference is fine. Always capitalize when referring to the program that brings together people with intellectual disabilities (athletes) and those without intellectual disabilities (partners) on sports teams for training and competition.

**Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools**
Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is a comprehensive program of the Unified Schools strategy that combines Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership and Whole School Engagement to create the greatest impact. **Note: The term Project UNIFY or Project UNIFY schools is no longer in use.**

**Unified Club**
A Unified Club is a non-academic, school-based club that brings students with and without ID together for planning and participating in Special Olympics activities including Unified Sports; social and community activities that foster understanding and acceptance, and that promote leadership and collaborative skill building. **Note: The term Partner's Clubs is no longer in use.**

**Whole School Engagement**
Whole School engagements are 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 (RWord) Campaigns, Pep Rallies or “Fans in the Stands” for Unified Sports teams, Respect Campaigns or student fundraising.

**Spread the Word to End the Word®**
The campaign for mutual respect and dignity that has spread across the United States and around the globe, involving people of all ages – from high schools to college campuses and corporate offices. The goal of Spread the Word to End the Word is for people to think about the hurtful and disparaging uses of the word “retard” and pledge to stop using it. **Note: For more information go to:** [http://www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org)

**Using this language in an “Elevator Pitch” example:**
My name is Eric, and I go Brighton Middle School. Brighton is a Special Olympics Unified Champion School. My Unified partner’s name is Kate and we play soccer together on the Brighton Bulldogs. We have so much fun together and I learn a lot from her. I’m also a member of the Unified Club at my school where I help plan events such as Spread the Word to End the Word Day, which is a big deal at my school.