



CALIFORNIA INTERSCHOLASTIC FEDERATION

STATE MEDIA RELEASE

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CIF PARTNERS WITH SPECIAL OLYMPICS AND CDE TO PROVIDE INCLUSIVE SPORTS OPPORTUNITIES AT LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS

SACRAMENTO — The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF), Special Olympics Northern and Southern California and the California Department of Education (CDE) today announce their partnership to establish an inclusive culture that promotes participation opportunities for student-athletes with disabilities. This new partnership will enable CIF member schools to implement unified sports programming on their respective campuses.

Additionally, CIF is also working with U.S. Paralympics to provide ambulatory and wheelchair events at CIF State Championship events including, 2016 Track & Field State Championships and 2017 Swim & Dive State Championships.

As a former coach, I am so pleased about the new partnership,” said State Superintendent Tom Torlakson. “It will help schools ensure that students with intellectual, developmental, physical and other types of disabilities have an equal opportunity to benefit from all the things they can learn by participating in sports – teamwork, discipline, focus, persistence, practice, healthy living and so many other life lessons.”

It is estimated that over 10 percent of the students in California schools have a documented disability. The inclusion of athletic programs for students with disabilities increases opportunities and encourages access to the academic benefits through athletic participation. Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same sports team, teaching teamwork and the value of inclusion for all participants.

“Unified sports on high school campuses is the next great frontier for the Special Olympics movement,” said Bill Shumard, President/CEO of Special Olympics Southern California. “This is a bold move by the CIF, giving Special Olympics athletes on high school campuses in our state the same opportunity to train and compete in the same framework as other students on campus. This will lead to further acceptance and inclusion of students with special needs on school campuses...we are thrilled with this opportunity.”

David Solo, President & CEO, Special Olympics Northern California adds, “CIF’s visionary decision to partner with both Special Olympics Northern and Southern California in order to provide students with greater access to the Unified Sports program enables us to move closer to a world where the intellectually disabled are accepted by society as a whole and inclusion is commonplace.”

With the announcement of this partnership CIF launched a new section on www.cifstate.org titled “Inclusive Sports.” This resource will provide CIF member schools with tools to implement programs for students with disabilities on their school campuses.

“Unified programs will offer new and expanded opportunities on our high school campuses,” said Roger L. Blake, CIF Executive Director. “Working with California Special Olympics and California Department of Education, CIF will provide strategies and best practices for integrating and growing unified sports programs at our 1,576 member schools.”

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