

SPECIAL IS WHAT WE DO

Special Olympics Northern California uses sports to jumpstart change and spark joy. Through the power of play, we unite people with and without intellectual disabilities to create a more connected community.

Our programs transform athletes into leaders and promote acceptance, unity, and respect throughout Northern California. We pride ourselves on driving progress locally while taking part in a bigger movement toward a more inclusive world.

WHAT IS THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS NORCAL SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM?

COACHING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Our **Unified Champion Schools** help ignite friendship and belonging between students with and without disabilities. Our programming spans Pre-K to Transition and includes Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and Whole School Engagement resources for educators. Together, we help celebrate acceptance and inclusion in school and the whole community.



LEARN MORE

We're here to help your school become a Unified Champion School!

CONTACT US at schools@sonc.org for more information and to get in contact with a local program manager.

[SONC.org/schools-program](https://sonc.org/schools-program)



“The Unified Champion Schools Program benefits everyone on campus by allowing students to be accepted for who they are and celebrated for their own uniqueness.”

—Ms. Maureen Mattson,
Pittsburg High School

VIEW ALL OF THE RESEARCH:



¹ Robert, S., Kemp, J., Truman, & Snyder (2012). Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2011. Available at <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/iscs11.pdf>

² Bradshaw, C.P., Sawyer, A.L., & O'Brennan, L.M. (2007). Bullying and peer victimization at school: Perceptual differences between students and school staff. *School Psychology Review*, 36(3), 361-382.

³ C. Marshall, E. Kendall, M. Banks & R. Gover (Eds.), (2009). *Disabilities: Insights from across fields and around the world* (Vol. 1-3). Westport, CT: Praeger Perspectives.

⁴ Special Olympics International. *Unified Champion Schools* (2022) in conjunction with U.S. Office of Special Education Services.

A COMMUNITY OF Champions

Creating Unity Through Inclusive Sports and Leadership

Special Olympics
Northern California



Special Olympics
Unified Champion Schools

Playing today for a more inclusive tomorrow

#OneNorCal

WHAT ARE *Unified Champion Schools?*

With sports as the foundation, every Unified Champion School participates in three main components: **Unified Sports***, **Inclusive Youth Leadership**, and **Whole School Engagement**.

**Unified Sports bring together students with and without intellectual disabilities to play on the same teams*

Schools who participate in at least one activity from each category during a school year earn Unified Champion School status.

ACTIVITIES OF A UNIFIED SCHOOL:

UNIFIED SPORTS

- Play on a Unified Sports Team
- Practice sports with general education peers
- Inclusive P.E.
- Young Athletes Day (ages 2-7)

WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

- Fans in the Stands
- Unified Sports Rally
- RESPECT Campaign
- Ability Awareness Day
- Youth Summit

INCLUSIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP

- Inclusive Buddy Club
- Student Council Involvement
- Student Volunteering
- Youth Activation Committee



WHY *Unified Champion Schools?*

The typical school and social environment for young people today can be fraught with challenges. Intense social and academic pressures are worsened by widespread hostile behavior such as bullying.

In the United States, **nearly 1 in 3 students ages 12 to 18 report being bullied** during the school year, and 71% of young people say they have seen bullying in their schools.^{1,2}

Children with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be bullied than their peers without disabilities.³

CHANGING SCHOOL CLIMATES

Unified Champion Schools lead to an overall culture shift toward a more inclusive, opportunistic campus for everyone.

Unified Champion Schools promote a socially inclusive school climate that helps students with disabilities become a part of the school community:

95% of Unified Champion Schools (UCS) liaisons felt that the UCS program has created a more socially inclusive environment, and **100% felt the UCS program** is valuable for the school as a whole.⁴

91% of liaisons indicated that the Unified Champion Schools Program reduces bullying, teasing, and use of offensive language in the school.⁴

95% of liaisons reported increased participation of students with intellectual disabilities (ID) in school activities, leading to more inclusive attitudes school-wide.⁴

85% of liaisons indicated that UCS programming increases the attendance of students with ID, with 81% indicating an increased attendance of students without ID.⁴



SOCIAL + EMOTIONAL SECURITY

Where students feel safe from verbal abuse, teasing and exclusion.



SOCIAL + CIVIC LEARNING

Where students feel supported in the development of social and civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions including: effective listening, conflict resolution, self-reflection and emotional regulation, empathy, personal responsibility, and ethical decision making.



RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

Where there is mutual respect for individual differences (e.g. gender, race, culture, etc.) at all levels of the school—student-student; adult-student; adult-adult and overall norms for tolerance.



SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS + ENGAGEMENT

Where there is positive identification with the school and norms for broad participation in school life for students, staff, and families.



“Before Unified PE, I only talked to students with disabilities. I didn’t really get along with my regular education peers. Now that I’m in Unified PE, people have encouraged me and made me work harder and want to be a better athlete.”

— Lauren, Sophomore in Unified PE



COMMUNITY SPORTS

SPECIAL OLYMPICS BEYOND THE BELL

Your students’ experience with Special Olympics Northern California doesn’t need to end when the school bell rings! Our Community Sports program offers FREE opportunities for your student to participate in sports outside of school throughout the year.

Sign Up Here:



11 SPORTS
6-8 WEEK SEASONS
AGES 6+
FREE TO JOIN AND PARTICIPATE

