High School Playbook

Special Olympics
Unified Champion Schools

It is an incredible honor to be able to support Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools through the development of this playbook. As the Global Presenting Sponsor of Special Olympics Unified Sports, all of us at ESPN know the important role sports can play in uniting people of all abilities to play unified in sports and be unified in life.
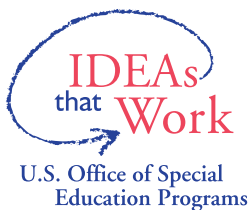
Being a good corporate citizen is a time-honored tradition at ESPN. Our relationship with Special Olympics spans more than 30 years and is a celebration of how the power of sports can inspire social inclusion and acceptance.

ESPN is proud to share inspiring stories with our fans and communities across the world, as we believe that sports creates a level playing field where people can work together towards a common goal. The lessons learned on the playing field about acceptance, inclusion and camaraderie are translated to all elements of life, and help to develop the leaders of a more unified world. Every day we see great stories that exemplify this from schools across the country. We know educators and students who use this resource will find a wide array of activities to help their schools become communities of welcome where everyone is recognized for their value and skills.

Good luck as you play unified!

Kevin Negandhi, ESPN SportsCenter Anchor
Sage Steele, ESPN SportsCenter on the Road Host & NBA Countdown Host

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Why do we need schools to be socially inclusive?

Creating an educational atmosphere that prepares every student for college, career and civic life is a complex proposition. Accomplishing this requires intentional planning and implementation, strong collaborations and initiatives that provide equitable and quality opportunities for all.

Successfully meeting the needs of all students hinges largely on the climate of the school, which affects every aspect of students' school experiences - from their social and emotional well-being to the overall quality of the educational experience. A positive school climate creates the necessary conditions where diversity is valued, equity is demanded, and every student is a contributing member.

A key aspect of an effective school climate is the way in which children with intellectual disabilities are provided opportunities to learn alongside their peers without disabilities and to engage in the normative life experiences of school. The sense of belonging or connectedness within the school is particularly important for students with intellectual disabilities and is associated with several important educational outcomes, including regular school attendance.[1]

Yet, even those students with intellectual disabilities who attend schools with policies and procedures that provide an inclusive *educational* experience are too often disengaged from many school-based, social opportunities. It is perhaps not surprising that students with disabilities participate less in school-sponsored teams, clubs and organizations than their peers without disabilities[2] and, overall, are more likely to experience social isolation within the school setting. This isolation manifests itself in detrimental effects that reverberate across the school setting. Consider the following:

• Bullying and other mean-spirited actions can have violent and tragic outcomes. 71% of young people say they have seen bullying in their schools.[3] **Students with disabilities are at greater risk for being victimized than their peers without disabilities.**[4][5]

• Students with intellectual disabilities do not routinely experience a school environment that addresses their academic needs and also their social needs to make friends. **While 61% of all students with disabilities spend more than 80% of their school day among their general education peers, for students with intellectual disabilities that rate falls to 17%.**[6]

A **Vision** of Social Inclusion

Imagine a school where no student is excluded because of the degree or type of disability, or the services required to meet her needs. All students are engaged in positive ways, and a variety of experiences are offered that build on individual strengths and respect diversity.

As you walk through the hallways, you see posters, flyers and artwork representing all kinds of clubs, teams and students. The clubs are inclusive, and there are teams and extracurricular opportunities for all.

You see students from the football team high-fiving students from special education classrooms. It is a place of respect where differences are accepted and appreciated. It is a school where the voices of all students are heard, and all students have the chance to be leaders.

Every student is given an opportunity to meaningfully contribute and participate, and they are noticed for their similarities and strengths rather than disabilities. All around you is a plethora of evidence that students feel a sense of belonging, and feel that they are a valued part of the school.

What is the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program?

Since its founding Special Olympics has been providing quality sports opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities across the globe. Today, Special Olympics serves as a driving force for social inclusion, with the vision to create a world where "people with intellectual disabilities of all abilities are welcomed in their communities and join with others to learn, work, compete and play with the same rights and opportunities as others."

Integral to this work is a focus on youth. Special Olympics views youth as "powerful and effective advocates… open-minded to new things," and as having "the courage of conviction to step up and defend their beliefs. For this reason, [Special Olympics] find(s) that young people are some of the most powerful and effective advocates on behalf of acceptance".

Since 2008 Special Olympics has been actively engaged in the development and implementation of a school-based strategy supported and endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education for promoting and increasing the social inclusion of youth with intellectual disabilities in schools and in their communities across the country.

The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program is aimed at promoting social inclusion through intentionally planned and implemented activities affecting systems-wide change. With sports as the foundation, the three component model offers a unique combination of effective activities that equip young people with tools and training to create sports, classroom and school climates of acceptance. These are school climates where students with disabilities feel welcome and are routinely included in, and feel a part of, all activities, opportunities and functions.

Youth and adults working together collaboratively in an inclusive setting create socially inclusive schools. **Unified Champion Schools promote a school climate that:**
• is free from bullying and exclusion,
• combats stereotypes and negative attitudes,
• eliminates hurtful language,
• promotes healthy activity and interactions, and
• is welcoming and values the engagement of all students.

It is not intended for students to simply be recipients of programming, but rather be architects of lasting change and community building, where adults serve as allies to youth, rather than managers of youth. In fact, a central tenet of the Unified Champion Schools program is **inclusive, intergenerational leadership**, where shared goals and work are owned collectively by both youth and adults.

Within Unified Champion Schools:

• Students with and without intellectual disabilities are provided opportunities for physical activity and for building positive peer relationships across the school setting - in hallways and lunchrooms, in classrooms and gymnasiums, and on athletic fields of play.

• Students with and without intellectual disabilities are provided opportunities to interact with their peers and to personally learn and grow.

At its core, the Unified Schools strategy is not just about including students with disabilities, but unifying all students; moving from adult-led programming to student-led mobilization and action; and transitioning from sports as recreation to sports as a catalyst for social inclusion and change.

Helpful Resources

More information on how schools can promote social inclusion can be found in
A Framework for Socially Inclusive Schools,
found at www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources

Special Olympics
Unified Champion Schools

Whole School Engagement

Inclusive Sports

Inclusive Youth Leadership

How does the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program support current education initiatives?

The activities of the Unified Champion Schools program enhance a number of key educational initiatives in important and relevant ways. The initiatives found below are frequently a part of school improvement plans and activities as school staff seek to increase student success. If you are already focusing on any of these initiatives, becoming a Unified Champion School will amplify and enhance your existing emphasis.

Core Content and 21st Century Skills

The resources and activities provided through the Unified Champion Schools program allow **students to gain core content and 21st century skills across the curriculum.** Deep understandings and ability to use acquired skills happen when students are provided experiences which draw on prior knowledge and utilize higher order thinking skills as they apply their learning to strengthen the environment around them. Critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, social and cross-cultural skills and leadership and responsibility are all 21st Century Skills that are reflected and reinforced through implementation of the Unified Champion Schools program.

A Positive, Caring, Equitable School Climate

Context matters. There is growing research that demonstrates students perform better academically, socially and emotionally when they are meaningfully engaged, contributing members of a school with a **positive, caring, equitable school climate.** A school that expects, encourages and supports inclusive practices is a critical underpinning to the establishment of an equitable learning environment for all students. This has been shown to result in positive impacts on student performance, and is supported by the Unified Champion Schools program.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Currently implemented in thousands of schools, **Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports** (PBIS) are being used to better teach and reinforce expected behaviors throughout the school. The Unified Champion Schools program supports this work across all school settings by providing meaningful opportunities for students to work and learn together in ways that support all learners and create an equitable, caring environment for all. Culturally responsive educational strategies, differentiated instruction and positive behavioral supports are just a few of the bedrock practices employed in inclusive schools. Inclusive education should be a universal commitment and a core value to ensure equitable access and success for students and adults at all three tiers of a PBIS school-wide system.

School Connectedness

School connectedness is an important factor in student success and well-being. Students who feel they belong and are valued contributors to the community are more likely to attend school, have higher grades and test scores, and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors and harmful activities such as bullying.[7] Practices that **promote school connectedness** are incorporated in the Unified Champion Schools program by providing opportunities for all students to engage in meaningful school-based activities.

Physical Health and Emotional Well-being

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services suggests that regular physical activity has a number of benefits to **overall physical health as well as the emotional well-being of adolescents** such as the reduction of anxiety and stress and improvements in self-esteem.[8] Unified Sports extends the opportunities for all students to be actively engaged in a variety of sports and physical activities which provide both physical and socio-emotional benefits.

Helpful Resources

Seven characteristics of socially inclusive schools have been identified. A guide outlining federal, state, and district level policy considerations that support these characteristics can be found in "**A Policy Guide for Socially Inclusive Schools**" at www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources

Why are Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools needed?

"…now that it's year after year, the freshman that are coming into it, they're seeing it, so it's becoming a part of the school's culture."
-Teacher

"It's not so much [students without disabilities are] escorting them to the cafeteria or they're escorting them to the gym. They're walking, chitchatting, talking, having a conversation with them like two friends would have."
-Administrator

"We're capable of doing anything, because we're special education coming together with students not in special education."
—Student with a disability

"I noticed that things have changed around the school, kids became more considerate, they watch what they said, and are accepting of kids with ID. They sit at their tables and talk to them."
— Student

The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program promotes a socially inclusive school climate where acceptance, respect and human dignity for all students is the norm. As the data below demonstrate, a Unified Champion School equitably supports students with and without intellectual disabilities and fosters meaningful opportunities for every student to contribute.

Within Unified Champion Schools, students without disabilities hold more positive attitudes toward their peers with intellectual disabilities, are more tolerant, and realize the impact their words and actions have on others.[9,10,11]
Socially inclusive school and classroom climates are more evident where students with disabilities feel welcome, are routinely included in and feel they are a valued part of all activities, opportunities and functions. [12]
Extensive evaluation of the Unified Champion Schools program has revealed the following positive impacts:[6,7,8]

84%

84% of students generally regard the experiences they've had through **their experiences within a Unified Champion School as a positive turning point** in their lives.

87%

87% of students learn that **standing up** for something they **believe is the right thing to do.**

71%

71% of students with and without intellectual disabilities **remained in contact with students with disabilities who they met through their school's inclusive programming after graduation**, with the most sustainable relationships occurring between peers who served as leaders together.

Developing Pro- social skills

Students who are engaged in programming develop valuable **pro-social skills**. The majority of students report learning:
• about **helping others** (87%)
• about how their **emotions and attitudes** can affect others (85%)
• that **standing up for something they believe** is the right thing to do (85%)

82%

82% of students felt that they were **able to change their schools for the better.**

How does the Special Olympics Unified Champion School program work?

The program is designed to be woven into the fabric of the school, enhancing current efforts and providing rich opportunities that lead to meaningful change in creating a socially inclusive school that supports and engages all learners. What a Unified Champion School "looks like" can vary greatly from school to school, based on the needs, goals, schedules and other factors unique to each school; but the basic building blocks remain the same.
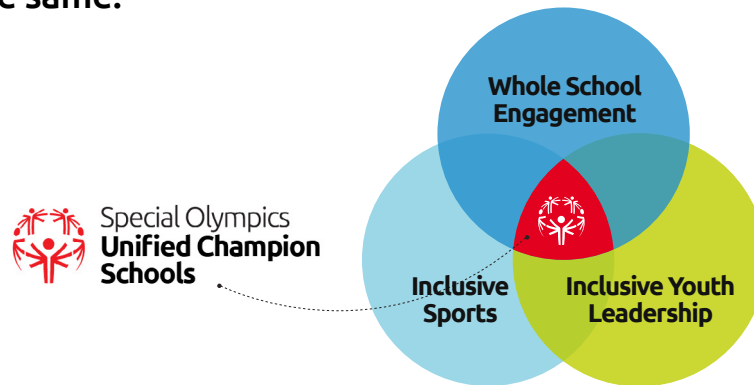
A Unified Champion School implements **three specific components,** all of which are intertwined with the others in a cohesive effort to increase social inclusion throughout the school. Those components are:

• **Whole School Awareness and Involvement:** awareness and education activities that promote inclusion and reach the majority of the school population and all students in the school have opportunities to participate through sustained school-wide activities.

• **Inclusive Youth Leadership:** students with and without intellectual disabilities working together to lead and plan advocacy, awareness, and other Special Olympics and related inclusive activities throughout the school year.

• **Inclusive Sports:** a fully inclusive sports or fitness program that combines an approximately equal number of students with and without intellectual disabilities, such as Special Olympics Unified Sports, Interscholastic Unified Sports, Unified PE or Unified Intramurals.

Inclusion Tip

In working toward becoming a socially inclusive school, it is important for the entire school community to remember that all students are peers first. The subgroups to which they belong are secondary to their status as peers, deserving of an equitably welcoming, nurturing and accepting school environment.

The experiences provided for one-on-one interactions to take place when youth participate in inclusive sports activities or work alongside one another to effect change, and raising awareness through school-wide activities where peer group influence is leveraged, are at the crux of the Unified Champion Schools program.

By offering a combination of inclusive sports and youth leadership options, as well as a variety of activities that engage students throughout the school, the school community as a whole has a part in building a socially inclusive school climate – one free from teasing, bullying and the exclusion of any group of peers. It is the synthesis of the cumulative experiences of students and adults throughout the entire school that results in schools realizing their full potential as socially inclusive communities.

We know that effective change does not happen unless it is done with intentionality, adheres to a shared vision for the process and outcomes, and is guided by a team of leaders who strategically move the school community forward in changing the policies and practices necessary to support the work. Therefore, rather than a strictly prescriptive approach, we envision the direction and implementation of the program to be determined by the school.

An inclusive Unified Champion School Leadership Team should be in place to ensure efforts are thoughtfully planned, guided by shared goals, collaboratively led, and intentionally implemented to support the current initiatives and priorities of the school. This team facilitates social inclusion work in the school within an inclusive, intergenerational leadership framework where adults and youth with and without intellectual disabilities co-create school-wide change.

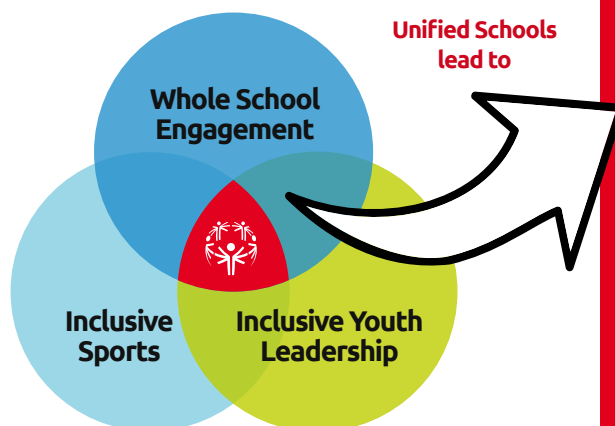Because youth and adults see and experience the school from different perspectives and with different interpretations, have different relationships and networks within the school community, and different power and tools to activate those networks, both must be engaged to drive systemic change.

Words of wisdom often shared by youth leaders engaged in Special Olympics is, *"Nothing about us without us."*

Creating a socially inclusive school is a process of building a school culture that encourages, supports and expects social inclusion at the heart of how the school functions. As the graphic below illustrates, each opportunity should incorporate a combination of the components, provide unique and engaging opportunities for students to participate, and enhance current social inclusion efforts. Not every activity will incorporate all three components, and not every activity will be engaging for all students.

However, all three components will be evident within the school, and the goal will be for each activity to integrate at least two of the components. Throughout the process of implementing the activities, it is important to offer multiple opportunities for all students to be engaged in a variety of ways.

The graphic below provides an example of how the three components can be woven together in becoming a Unified Champion School.

Whole School Engagement

Inclusive Sports

Inclusive Youth Leadership

Unified Schools lead to

Students with and without intellectual disabilities organize a Unified Walking Club. They make arrangements for accommodations to ensure all students have an equitable opportunity to participate. The club meets weekly and asks members to get friends and family to make a pledge for the miles they walk. The money will be used to support building an accessible playground at the elementary school. All students in the school are encouraged to help by pledging donations, organizing and collecting pledges, or participating in the club by walking each week.

To enhance inclusive efforts at the elementary school, the high school students engage the younger students in participating as walkers for special events.

They also design and teach inclusive activities during physical education classes at the elementary school, incorporating games which can be played on the accessible playground equipment.

An Introduction to **Whole School Engagement**

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools provide opportunities for all students to learn and practice social inclusion through sustained engagement whether in the classroom, during an assembly, as part of a sports experience, or through engagement in planned activities that reach the whole school. Through whole school engagement opportunities embedded within and between the Inclusive Youth Leadership and Unified Sports components, the school becomes a powerful community that represents new ways of thinking and acting.

Many possibilities exist for promoting social inclusion throughout the school such as assemblies and activity days, classrooms that nurture positive peer relationships between students of all abilities, and the expectation that respect and acceptance are the norm for the entire school environment. The result is a school where all students feel they play a meaningful part in school clubs, sports and even informal interactions that occur in the cafeteria or hallways.

Whole School Engagement is a unique and important component because it:
• Engages the entire staff and student body in building awareness and understanding of the benefits to all when the assets and contributions of each individual are recognized, honored and supported.
• Creates a socially inclusive school climate and expands ownership of the efforts beyond a passionate few, creating a ripple effect of actions and advocacy.
• Enhances the school climate by nurturing development, learning and achievement through engaging environments where students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members feel connected, safe and successful.
• Creates communities of acceptance where students with disabilities feel welcome and valued as meaningful participants in school activities, classroom learning and leadership opportunities.
• Models to the larger community that inclusivity can and does have positive outcomes for all members of the school or community.

There is a space for every individual in the school community to contribute to achieving the school's goals. In Unified Champion Schools such contributions are realized when students and staff are involved as participants in a whole school activity, and when students with and without intellectual disabilities serve as teammates on a Unified team, are leaders or members of an inclusive school club, or actively serve on the school's intergenerational leadership team.

An Introduction to Youth Leadership

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools offer opportunities for young people of all abilities to be leaders in designing and implementing classroom and extracurricular activities that promote equality and acceptance and, ultimately, create socially inclusive school climates. The Inclusive Youth Leadership component intentionally blends opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities across the Whole School Engagement and Unified Sports components to advance social inclusion in the school.

More than something that provides direct personal value to the young people, inclusive youth leadership has a larger purpose in shifting cultural norms and even shifting formal policies and practices within a school. The benefits and focus of youth leadership are no different than those of developing leadership in adults. We invest in teachers not merely because it is good for them individually, but because it impacts students and our schools more broadly. The same is true for why we engage students in inclusive youth leadership.

Inclusive Youth Leadership is a unique and important component because it:
• Recognizes the leadership assets and values that all students possess and can use to contribute meaningfully to the school community.

• Provides students with and without intellectual disabilities the knowledge, skills and dispositions to take on leadership roles in their school, creating an environment in which socially inclusive opportunities can thrive.
• Offers opportunities for all students to become leaders, developing an understanding that students of varying abilities and backgrounds can lead.
• Encourages intergenerational leadership opportunities that promote a deeper understanding of the strengths, gifts and skills of all students as co-leaders with adults.
• Guides administrators and teachers in incorporating the vision and insight of youth as they step into leadership positions and create inclusive environments in their schools.
• Offers teachers a greater understanding and appreciation for the viability and value of increased social inclusion in their classrooms leading to greater opportunities for students with different abilities to collaborate on classroom and academic projects.

When students from Unified Champion Schools take the lead as catalysts for change by re-envisioning and then restructuring their student council into an inclusive organization, initiating a Unified Sports opportunity, or working with teachers to nurture positive inclusive peer relationships in the classroom, the school's efforts to improve school climate and make meaningful curriculum connections will be enhanced. Inclusive youth leadership is also promoted through intergenerational leadership opportunities for students to lead a school initiative collaboratively with adults, such as collecting data and taking action to improve the school climate.
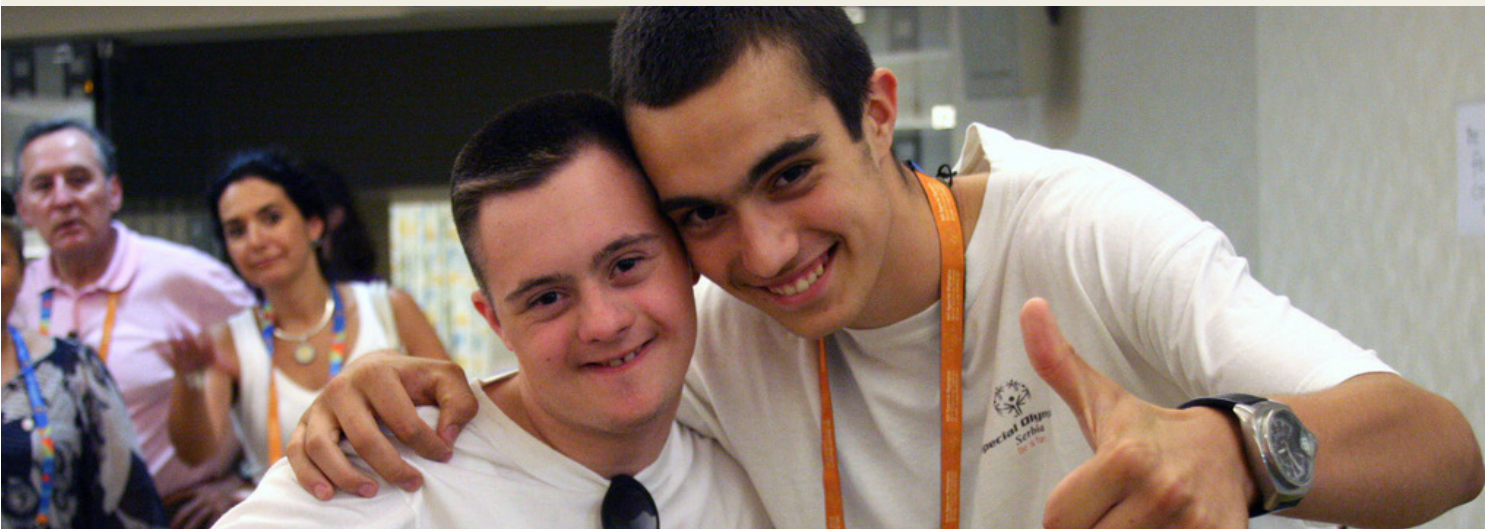
An Introduction to **Inclusive Sports**

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is a unique program that provides students with and without intellectual disabilities with opportunities to meaningfully participate in sports activities alongside one another in a variety of settings. Through the various models offered, schools are able to provide important inclusive sports experiences that work in tandem with

Whole School Engagement and Inclusive Youth Leadership efforts.

Through Unified Sports, students come together in a setting where all teammates are challenged to improve their skills and gain a better understanding of each other's abilities through a spirit of equality and team unity. Unified Sports leads to new friendships, improved self-esteem, positive changes in attitudes and behaviors, improved sports skills and a deeper connection to the school.[13,14,15]

Students with and without intellectual disabilities have opportunities to participate in Unified Sports activities through three basic models:

Competitive

Brings together students with and without intellectual disabilities of similar athletic abilities to train and compete on the same team. School-based teams in this model often compete within an interscholastic athletics league, an intramural setting, or through community-based Special Olympics tournaments

Player Development

Similar to traditional Unified Sports, but **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 less structured, cooperative team environments.

Recreation

Extends the concept of Unified Sports to the **non-competitive realm, offering inclusive recreational sports opportunities** for students with and without intellectual disabilities. Examples of Unified Recreation in schools include activities such as Unified PE, Unified Field Day or a Unified Walking Club.

For many students, Unified Sports provides the opportunity to experience the joy of participation in a school activity, whether they represent their school as part of an interscholastic Unified Sports team, play on an intramural team, or simply have an opportunity to be involved in other inclusive activities. Inclusive youth leadership and whole school engagement are supported in Unified Sports through varied opportunities such as youth engaging their peers with and without intellectual disabilities in initiating a Unified Sports day or activity for the whole school, or working with the physical education teacher to create inclusive sport and recreation opportunities within the school day.

Unified Sports is a unique and important component because it:

• **Provides valuable social inclusion** opportunities for all teammates to build friendships, on and off the playing field.

• **Integrates athletes with and without intellectual disabilities** in a setting where all teammates are challenged to improve their skills and become physically fit.

• **Prepares students for participation** in other school activities or community sports programs.

• **Strengthens self-esteem and builds confidence** as students take on leadership roles in the school and participate in inclusive activities.

• **Models genuine inclusion** for the entire school community.

• **Increases community awareness** of the spirit and skills of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Picture of a Special Olympics Unified Champion School

There it stands, SUCCESS FOR ALL HIGH SCHOOL!

As you enter the campus you can tell there is something special about this school. The sign outside welcomes everyone and highlights the successes of all students (e.g.,

 "Congratulations to the Unified Basketball Team for Winning the Regional Unified Basketball Tournament!").

As you walk through the front door of the school, the positive atmosphere speaks volumes. Students and adults are greeting each other and chatting, welcoming visitors to the school with a smile. The walls and bulletin boards are filled with diverse student work and posters highlighting inclusive clubs and activities, and a banner stating, "Special Olympics Unified Champion School," has an honored place in the entry hall. The trophy case includes pictures, trophies, ribbons, newspaper articles and school letters celebrating a wide variety of sports opportunities, including Unified Sports and student participation in inclusive state competitions, Special Olympics competitions, intramurals and interscholastic sports achievements.

All visitors are escorted around the school by an inclusive pair—one student with and one without an intellectual disability. It is obvious that these students are proud of their school and the way that everyone is engaged. They walk you through the hallways and explain how the Unified Club functions. With great pride, they explain that this has become the most popular club in the school; so popular, in fact, that they had to create a second club so that everyone had the opportunity to be actively engaged.

They shared that this year, the Unified Club worked with the school's cheerleaders to ensure there are pep rallies for every sport, including Unified Sports, and a cheering section at all school competitions. The Unified Club and cheerleaders also created a "Wall of Fame" to recognize Special Olympics athletes participating in regional or state competitions.

The members of the Unified Club focused on making the lunchroom a welcoming place by ensuring the walls are filled with a diverse collection of art and announcements of inclusive activities. They also organized activities to get students interacting (including a very competitive bocce tournament), have students volunteer to welcome students and visitors as they enter the cafeteria, and to be in charge of seating options to make sure that everyone has a place to sit and someone with whom to talk.

Student opportunities for inclusive engagement are not limited to the Unified Club, however. Last year the members of the Student Council approached the principal and their teacher-sponsor and petitioned for a revision of the selection process and membership guidelines to ensure that the Student Council accurately reflects the entire student body. In addition, the Student Council created a service project to support middle level students with a smooth transition into high school. As the Student Council finds success and acceptance, the members have become more verbal in identifying ways to ensure that their school and community are inclusive.

As you continue your tour through the school, you peek into a language arts classroom and see a small, inclusive group of students collaborating on an op-ed for the local newspaper, addressing how the gifts and abilities of all individuals enrich the work of the whole. Another group is working on a persuasive letter to the school board to make social inclusion a priority for all of the district's schools. A third group is working on an article for the school newspaper on the upcoming Unified Prom.

As you walk by the gymnasium, you notice inclusive physical education classes where students are participating together. Your tour guides enthusiastically tell you about Unified Sports and explain that they both play on a team. In addition to the ongoing bocce tournaments that take place during lunch, there are both Unified Basketball and Track

and Field teams. Because of the success and popularity of Unified Sports, the students and coaches plan to offer additional sports next year. Your school guides explain how the members of the Unified Club were instrumental in getting Unified Sports started at the school and how they continually work to engage more students on the teams.

The PTA Booster Club has expanded to support the Unified Sports teams, too. In fact, as the school began to offer more students the opportunity to play sports for the school through Unified Sports, more parents have become involved and joined the Booster Club.

Before you leave the school, the principal invites you to attend the Intergenerational Leadership Team meeting. As you sit in the meeting and listen to discussions about future assemblies, how to ensure that new students are paired up with other students who serve as their peer buddies, and specifics about this year's R-word campaign, it becomes obvious that everyone is committed to making Success for All High School a truly inclusive school. It is also clear that the students are equal members of the Leadership Team, leading discussions and making suggestions.

While the Team is pleased with the direction their school is taking, they continue to identify ways to improve the school climate. Last year the Leadership Team completed the "Characteristics of Socially Inclusive Schools Assessment" and "Social Inclusion Scale" to gain a better understanding of the climate of the schools in terms of its level of inclusion. They then used this information to engage others to find ways to make the school more socially inclusive. Since they were so pleased with the guidance that the first two assessments provided, the Leadership Team decided to use the Social Inclusion Rubric in their process of addressing continuous improvement because it provides clear pictures of what the school looks like as they move along the continuum.

As you exit the school, you leave with a smile on your face and many stories to share with others. It is clear that this is a school that fully embraces social inclusion and is creating a school environment where all students are engaged and successful. It is truly a Unified Champion School!

Definition of a Special Olympics Unified Champion School

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

Whole School Engagement

Inclusive Sports

Inclusive Youth Leadership

Inclusive 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.

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.

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

Unified Sports

Inclusive Classroom Experience

Booster Club for all teams

School Climate

Inter-connected Strategies

Communication

Continuous Improvement

Examples of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools

Read some Unified Champion Schools success stories!

You have read about the components that make up a Unified Champion School. One important characteristic of the program is that the components, and activities that make up each component, can be configured in a variety of ways to reflect the characteristics of the school and specific needs and ideas of the students. In other areas of the Playbook, possible activities or structures have been identified to assist with the initial implementation of supporting strategies.

However, the implementation of the Unified Champion Schools program can vary from school to school, and will likely expand and change over time as a school strives to meet its strategic goals of social inclusion. The longer the students and adults work to create a tolerant, supportive and respectful school climate, the more ideas they will identify to make their school more inclusive. So, a hundred or a thousand schools can be designated Unified Champion Schools, but each can look slightly different as staff and students work to meet the specific needs of the school and students.

The following brief descriptions reflect how the students and adults at high schools across the country have implemented the Unified Champion Schools program in powerful and effective ways. Each looks a little different, but each is a committed, socially inclusive school.

Cactus Shadows High School

Cave Creek, Arizona

The principal, Steve Bebee, is an outstanding example of how a high school leader creates a school-wide social inclusion leadership team and effectively engages the team to successfully integrate the Unified Champion School program into core school structures, programs and activities. Cactus Shadows High School takes inclusiveness seriously. Shared leadership among adults and students is nurtured to ensure the school is socially inclusive and bullying is reduced. Special education students have campus jobs, and administration and staff have daily contact with them.

While the school has experienced progress in inclusion, the goal is to enhance the opportunities for more students to understand, participate and contribute to inclusiveness. Special and general education teachers work together to provide quality opportunities for students to engage in inclusive activities.

Students have multiple opportunities to engage in creating a socially inclusive school climate through the Student Council, elective courses and the various Unified activities offered, all of which are popular with the students. The Adapted PE teacher engages incoming students without disabilities each year, and gives them opportunities to play on the Unified Sports teams and collaborate with students with disabilities.

The school also added a Health and Fitness program (Healthy LEAP) as a unit in their Adapted PE class which involves more students by engaging them in a fun fitness program, using sports and an interactive health program to educate them on proper nutrition and other healthy habits specific to Arizona; such as, sun safety, hydration and personal hygiene. Cactus Shadows also incorporated the Unified PE activities

into the Adapted PE course where each student with an intellectual disability is matched with a student without an intellectual disability, and they work together seamlessly. The Falcon Unified Club was started to provide avenues of engagement for students who are not interested in sports but who would like the social interaction and acceptance of a club that gives students opportunities to become involved in the community and hang out together outside of school.

In addition to the numerous school-wide activities implemented, such as the R-word campaign and disability awareness week, a student leader started a school spirit campaign called "Falcon Awesome" that encourages students to come together to compare and discuss how to unite the student body and embrace individuality and diversity. A banner hangs in the main gym with the new Falcon Oath reminding students of what it means to be a Falcon with respect, and 90% of students voluntarily pledged.

Overall, the administration, teachers and students at Cactus Shadows are committed to continuously improving their inclusive efforts at the school.

> "Cactus Shadows High School takes inclusiveness seriously. Shared leadership among adults and students is nurtured to ensure the school is socially inclusive and bullying is reduced."

Batesville High School

Batesville, Arkansas

This was one of the first schools to implement the Unified Champion Schools program in Arkansas, and they have demonstrated how a comprehensive program can take hold within a short period of time. They began the program with a calendar full of whole school engagement and awareness activities. Besides the official "Spread the Word to End the Word" campaign, the students and school leaders have implemented their own awareness campaigns throughout the year. The students also work to ensure that the physical environment in the school "speaks" social inclusion. Classes have made Unified banners that decorate the walls of the school and are used to increase spirit and support at pep rallies.

The Unified Club currently has 45 members, and they are always looking for new ways to make their school more socially inclusive. For example, the members of the club attended Camp Shriver in the summer where they came away with several ideas that have been incorporated into their school year activities.

Batesville High School students create their own social inclusion activities as well as participate in school-wide events. In the past, these have ranged from having a float in the Homecoming Parade to holding a school-wide pep rally to celebrate the successes of their USA Games athletes and students participating in state Unified Sports competitions. They participate in Unified Floor Hockey, Basketball and Softball along with several local sports competitions.

Realizing the importance of including everyone, they have chosen an interesting way to recruit members for the Unified Sports teams. They are appealing to the athlete within everyone; not every student can make a varsity sports team, but the Unified Sports team is open to all students.

They have engaged several players not previously aware of Special Olympics but became interested in Unified Sports because they wanted to play sports for their school. "Playing Unified" has opened more opportunities at this school for students both with and without intellectual disabilities.

The students also have implemented fundraising efforts such as the Polar Plunge to support the social inclusion work at their school, and members of Partners Club have volunteered at traditional Special Olympics Arkansas events in their area.

It is clear that students at Batesville High School are leaders in social inclusion.

Everett High School

Lansing, Michigan

Everett High School is part of a district-wide commitment to social inclusion and it benefits from high levels of administrative support and great expectations for all students. Everett High School is one of 18 schools in the district to implement the Unified Champion Schools program.

One of the strategies for increasing social inclusion at Everett High School is the Youth Activation Council, which is listed on the school website as an official school club. The members of the YAC include students with and without disabilities as well as English Language Learners.

Everett High School has a School Improvement Plan that identifies improving the school climate as one of the stated objectives. Students perceived a need for a better school climate, citing teasing, bullying and fighting in the halls as problems. However, they thought the work they were doing and R-word awareness was making a difference in the school climate, breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions.

YAC members view their role in the school as being "Upstanders," not "Bystanders." An "upstander" is someone who recognizes when something is wrong and acts to make it right. When "upstanders" see or hear about someone being bullied, they speak up. A "bystander" sees something wrong and does nothing about it—just stands by. They described experiences in which they spoke up to friends and family members about the "uncool" use of the R-word. Students expressed that the Unified Champion Schools program provides a sense of belonging and gives them a voice. They spend their YAC meetings planning many inclusive activities, including field trips, Unified Sports

events, Spread the Word campaigns, and dances or parties to engage students throughout the school. A clear sense of camaraderie has developed between students in special and general education through this work.

The students at the school have been described as "talking the talk and walking the walk." In fact, two students played significant roles in helping Michigan legislators understand issues around the use of the "R-word." They spoke about their experiences with Unified Cheerleading and testified before the Health and Wellness Committees of both the House and Senate in support of the "R-word" package of bills to remove the word, "retard(ed)," from state communications and laws. The girls were a major reason the bills were passed into law, and they were there to witness the Lt. Governor sign the bill into law at the R-word Rally.

The students do so much together. They participate in Unified cheerleading, track, bowling, bocce and basketball. Students attend the Youth Rally, participate in the Polar Plunge to get funding for the programs at school, and attend football games together. Further, they move outside of the school walls to perform community service.

In the spirit of true collaboration, they have experienced great success. Everett's Unified softball team attended the Special Olympics North America Softball Invitational in 2013 and brought home gold! A pair of Unified bowlers who attended the 2014 Special Olympics USA Games also brought home gold medals. Everett's Unified cheer team traveled to Los Angeles to participate in the 2015 Special Olympics World Games.

Through all that they do, the students and staff at Everett High School show the world the power and importance of social inclusion and support for all.

Montgomery High School

Skillman, New Jersey

Several factors make this a strong Unified Champion School. There is outstanding youth leadership. The school's Youth Activation Committee (YAC) was founded by two longtime Unified sports partners and Special Olympics New Jersey (SONJ) volunteers. Both were extremely dedicated and passionate about starting the club and ensuring that it would be successful and sustainable.

Their first action was to put a plan together for the Play Unified Club by attending SONJ's Youth Summit, bringing in SONJ staff for assistance and calling a meeting with the school administration and faculty members (i.e., special education, guidance, and athletics). Because of the student's success in engaging adult allies, the club has been successful in integrating all three components of the Unified Champion Schools program throughout the building and into the school culture. In addition, they recruited freshman and sophomore students to ensure that there would be a group ready to take over when the current students graduated.

The program grew out of a SONJ flagship Unified Sports program so that was their strongest component in the first year. Through a series of awareness campaigns--a disability awareness fair, a pep rally, participation of the Montgomery Unified Soccer team at the 2014 USA Games, nearly everyone in the building knows about the Play Unified Club.

In fact, the Unified soccer team made national news when they were invited to the New Jersey State House to witness Governor Christie signing New Jersey Equity in Athletics and Physical Activities Act, P.L.2014 c.10, on June 19, 2014. The law requires schools to provide students with disabilities equal access to athlete, physical education and physical activities.

The Montgomery program extends beyond the school into the community through both their Play Unified Club and Unified Sports events. The Tuesday night Unified Sports program offers participation opportunities for students of all ages and abilities. It brought the Play Unified Club and program to the attention of students and parents in the elementary and middle school, which paved the way for the program to be introduced at those levels.
The school entered a Unified Soccer team and bowling team in the Shriver Cup Championships, interscholastic Unified tournaments for Unified Champion High Schools in New Jersey, and they practice weekly with a pep rally scheduled before the tournaments. In addition, the Montgomery High School Play Unified Club participates in basketball leagues and run a Unified Volleyball and power lifting program at the school that includes SONJ athlete graduates.

The Montgomery High School Play Unified Club is fully inclusive. There is nearly a 50/50 ratio of students with and without intellectual disabilities on the club's leadership committee, and they work together as co-leaders. The students without disabilities make sure that all of the leadership activities are implemented so that the students with disabilities have a voice and equal and meaningful roles.

The school hosts monthly Play Unified Club activities during school, after school and on evenings and weekends. These include holiday events like pumpkin picking, a Thanksgiving dance and potluck dinner, Christmas shopping, egg hunts and back to school barbeques, which have allowed students to spend time with one another outside of school as well as during the school day.

The club meets weekly and invites new students to join at any time using posters and presentations to other school clubs such as Peer Leaders and Student Council. Three members of the Montgomery High School YAC serve on the State YAC, and one serves as the Chair. Further, students involved with the Play Unified Partnership are actively involved in the New School Mentor program.

The school hosts an annual Respect Week with a Disability Awareness Fair that runs every day during the week. They also sponsor a Cool School Plunge and Jingle All the Way 3K team as well as volunteer and participate as Fans in the Stands for state and league competition events.

The program at Montgomery High School reflects the integration of youth leadership, Unified Sports and whole school engagement. Further, they work extensively to take the program into the community, which provides additional opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to interact while making a difference. This program's success has definitely been powered by the passion and vision of its youth leaders.

Establishing your Leadership Team

This section details important steps for establishing your Unified Champion School Leadership Team:

1. Recruit team members.
2. Build the team's capacity.
3. Analyze the landscape.
4. Find your starting point.
5. Establish a plan and take action.
6. Conduct monitoring and continuous improvement.

It All Starts With Your Team

The first step to becoming a Unified Champion School is to bring together a team to lead the work. Evaluation of the Unified Champion Schools program has revealed the positive impact of having a leadership team to guide the implementation:

• Schools that had a leadership team were able to implement more robust programming than those without a leadership team.

• Schools with a leadership team reported more involvement of community members.

• Leadership teams increased opportunities for general and special education teachers to work together.

• Schools with a leadership team tended to be more confident in the sustainability of their program than schools without a leadership team.

The Unified Champion School Leadership Team should be intergenerational in nature, comprised of diverse leaders including students with and without disabilities, parents, teachers, pupil personnel services staff and administrators. The leadership team will be responsible for establishing the vision and overarching goals for the school, guide early stages of implementation, and ensuring fidelity to quality through consistent monitoring and nurturing with an eye toward continuous improvement. Sometimes this process takes a while, and schools are encouraged to spend the time necessary to build a strong foundation.

An Introduction to Intergenerational Work
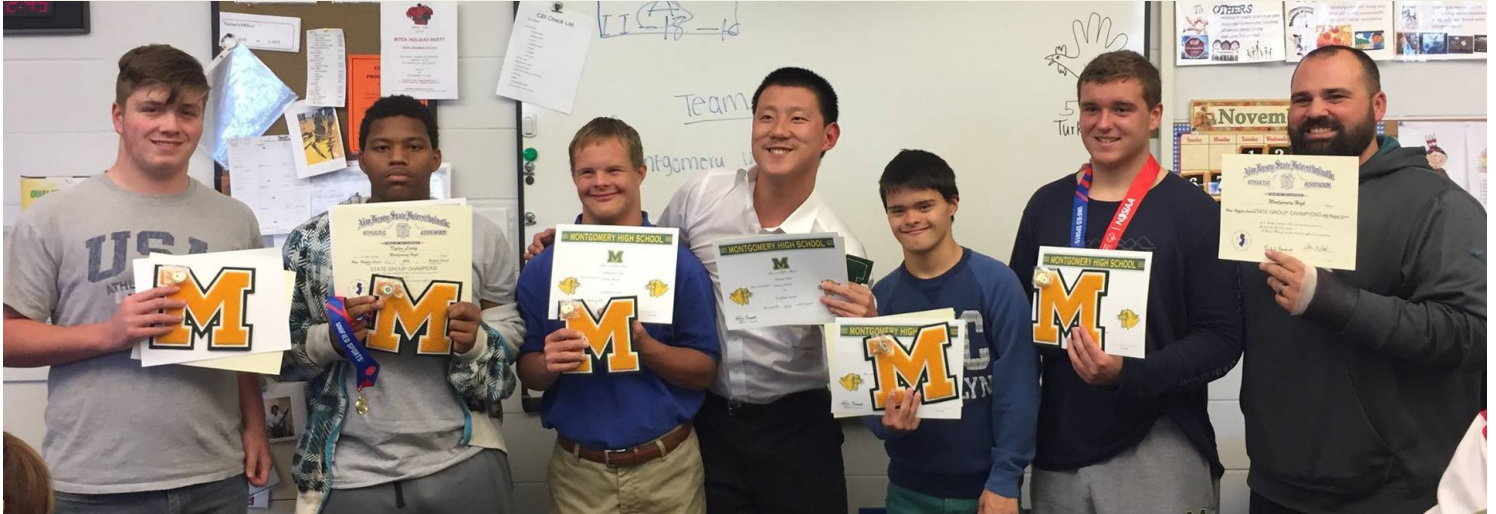
Intergenerational work is neither about young people nor adults, and it is not about the balance between the generations.

Rather, intergenerational work is about the work; it is a change strategy focused on the belief that different generations bring critical perspectives, skills and relationships to the work that the others do not. It is the belief that to achieve common goals we all need to work together.

Keys to Intergenerational Work

• A goal is identified that neither adults nor young people can achieve on their own.

• Nurturing the development of effective, empowered young people is a strategy for achieving goals.

• Effective, empowered adults share decision-making authority, and they support and create space for young people to lead (because it is a good strategy to achieve goals, not because it is a nice thing to do).

• Youth and adults form a team with differing and complementary skills, networks, perspectives and opportunities to lead.

• Both youth and adults share responsibility and accountability for the work and achieving goals.

Helpful Resources

More information on how adults can effectively nurture inclusive youth leadership
can be found in the **Inclusive Youth Leadership Guidelines**
at www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources

Adult-Driven vs. Intergenerational Leadership

The following are examples of Adult-Driven vs. Intergenerational Leadership.
How might the differences in the two approaches impact the work in the school?
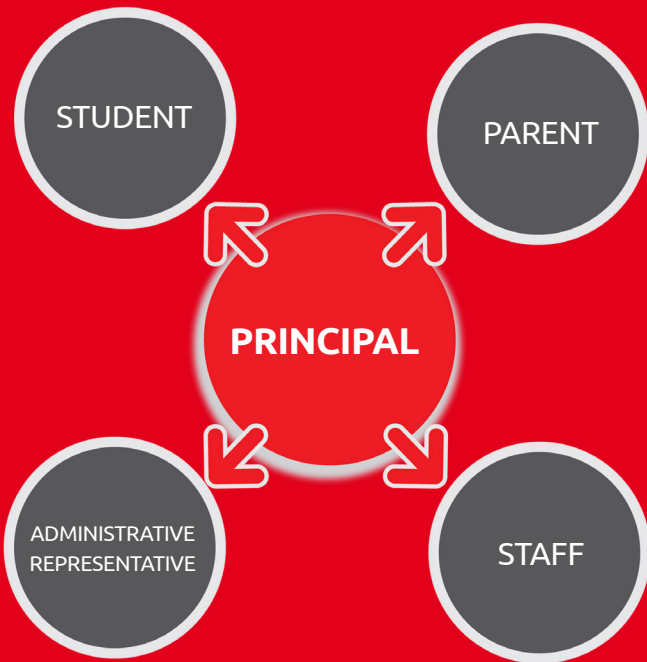
Adult-Driven Leadership Approach

A principal has pulled together a leadership team with student, staff, parent and administrative representation, to develop a plan for implementing the Unified Champion Schools program. At the first meeting, the principal asks staff members to talk about their priorities, describing the changes they want to see in their school. The students and parents are asked if they have any additional needs. The principal determines that, based on everyone's input, the group will focus their initial efforts on increasing dialogue about acceptance in staff meetings and homerooms to raise awareness about social inclusion.
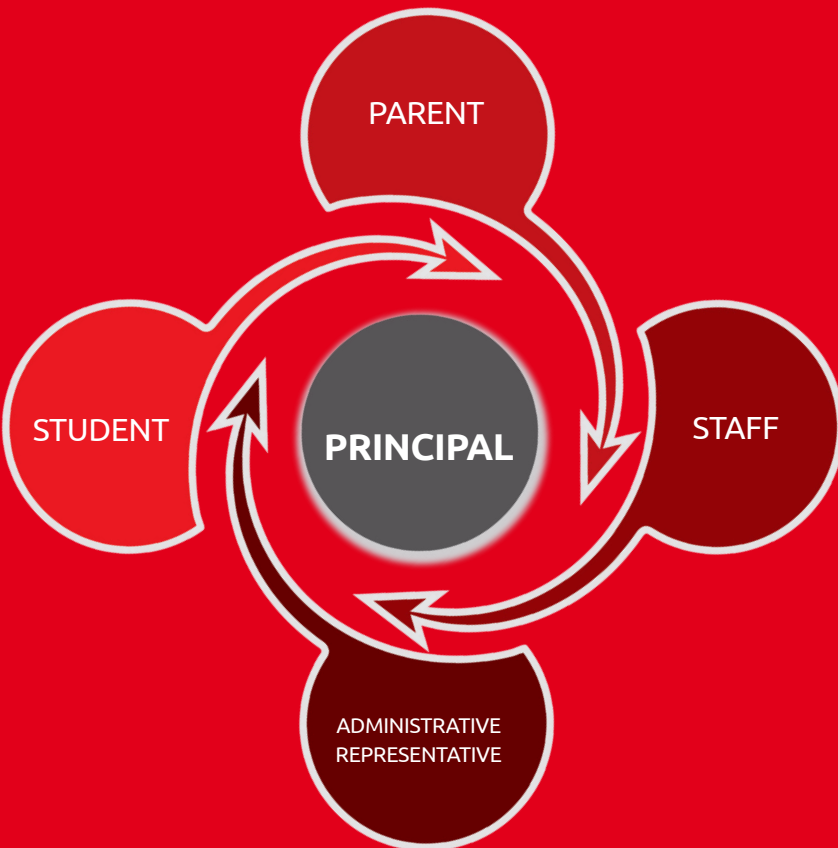
Intergenerational Leadership Approach

A principal has pulled together a leadership team, intentionally working to include students with and without disabilities, staff with diverse perspectives and roles in the school, and parents of students with and without disabilities. At the first meeting, the principal facilitates discussions about the purpose for the group, how each member enriches the skills, abilities and perspectives of the others, and what they hope to accomplish together. They also discuss their goals for having young people engaged in the leadership team and how they can work together to nurture the growth and development of both the students and adults. Having formed an initial sense of how they will proceed in their leadership work, they set up a schedule for future meetings to begin developing their strategic plan.

Getting Your Leadership Team Started

1. RECRUIT TEAM MEMBERS

The Unified Champion School Leadership Team should strive to include all of the following:

• Students with and without intellectual disabilities (3-4 students depending on the size of the school).
• Students from different social and academic groups including those who may not typically be selected to be a leader.
• Teachers (both special and general education).
• Parents of students with and without intellectual disabilities, who preferably are not also a teacher.
• At least one administrator or staff member with the ability to commit time and resources to the work.

2. BUILD THE TEAM'S CAPACITY

The first thing this group needs to do is establish the rules guiding how they will interact, ensuring that the team models the kind of inclusion they are promoting throughout the school. Without starting here, others may not follow the team's lead when they are asked to approach their work and relationships in new and potentially challenging ways. So, make a plan and take the time you need to make sure everyone understands why the team has been created, why it is intergenerational, and what each member can contribute.

To create a true collaboration between young people and adults, the following questions need to be answered at the beginning:

WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH THROUGH OUR INTERGENERATIONAL WORK?
• **Why are we a team of youth and adults and not just a team of adults or a team of students?**
• **How does the perspective of young people help us identify and achieve our goals?**
• **How does the perspective of adults help us identify and achieve our goals?**
• **What goals do we have for all students that we know are integral to our larger vision of the work?**

WHAT ARE WE READY TO SUPPORT?
• What are adults already investing to support youth and adults working together, and what are the adults in the school willing to invest (time and effort) to work effectively with young people?
• What is the level of buy-in from staff and students?
• What are we willing to change? What aren't we willing to change?

• What resources need to be shifted?
• Who is willing to change and who isn't?
• How do adults integrate and support youth across the full range of work rather than in isolated programs or committee settings?

3. ANALYZE THE LANDSCAPE

A great way to start thinking about your work together is to think about the context in which you are working and with whom. As a team, it can be helpful to brainstorm the support that already exists for this work. Who is already a supporter? Who is on the fence? Who doesn't know anything about your work? Who may be opposed? Additionally, it's a good idea to brainstorm what resources are available that could support your work. How will you get the supplies you might need? Where will you meet? Consider even small details such as whether you will have snacks for meetings. There are all sorts of resources you will use as you work together, and this sort of brainstorming will help you keep them front and center while also identifying additional potential partners in the work.

4. FIND YOUR STARTING POINT

Before you can begin planning and preparing for implementation of the Unified Champion School program in your school, it is important for the Leadership Team to take time to consider how socially inclusive the school is now. This will not only help the team prioritize goals and first steps, but also will serve as a baseline for measuring progress.

A good way for the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to better understand the current state of social inclusion in the school is to conduct a self-assessment. While this is an optional step, it is helpful to have baseline data that helps establish a starting point and to assess progress. Just as it's important to assess student progress in their learning, gathering relevant data is important for any new initiative in school, business or personal improvement.

This playbook offers two ways to gather baseline data:
• Leadership Team completes the Characteristics of Socially Inclusive School assessment.
and/or
• Survey the school community using the Social Inclusion Scale.

Reaching the Atypical Leader

Intentionally recruit students who may not immediately come to mind as leaders, such as students with disabilities or a disengaged learner. This is a critical step in assembling an effective leadership team that understands the school experience from multiple perspectives. It can sometimes be difficult to reach the atypical leader because all teachers don't "see" them.

Youth and adults working together to use a combination of strategies is often most effective. For example:

• Strive to include a range of perspectives on the team.

• Give a short presentation about social inclusion to each grade level to spark interest.

• Ask teachers to recommend students for the team.

• Invite students to nominate themselves or others.

• Ask someone who already has a relationship with the individual to extend a personal invitation.

Characteristics of Socially Inclusive Schools (CSIS) Assessment: Leadership Team

You might begin by having each member of the leadership team individually complete the Characteristics of Socially Inclusive Schools (CSIS) Assessment, which is found on page 39. Then as a group discuss each item and work to come to consensus about the current status of that item in the school before moving onto the next item.

If significant differences exist between the perspectives of various members of the team, take time to capture each perspective before moving on. It is very important to honor and seriously discuss different perspectives because they can provide important insights into areas that may need to be addressed. If you cannot come to agreement, it is possible to record more than one answer in the initial self-assessment, making note of significant variations in perspective. This will provide additional information about how cohesive social inclusion efforts are perceived or implemented among all contexts and individuals in the school. For example, if students indicate their peers don't have inclusive friendships, but teachers perceive that students develop inclusive peer relationships, it may be that classrooms have nurtured social inclusion in that setting, but it hasn't carried over into the hallways and informal settings in the school.

!

Youth Leadership Tip

It is important to remember to adequately prepare youth for an active role on the Leadership Team.

Be sure to intentionally develop their leadership skills through:
• Ensuring they understand each task the team encounters.
• Meaningfully engaging them in ongoing discussions.
• Providing them with opportunities to take leadership in carrying out appropriate tasks.
• Nurturing progress within each student

SOCIAL INCLUSION SCALE

The Leadership Team may not be the only group you'll want to include in the data collection process. It is also helpful to gather information from a diverse representation of the wider student body, parents, teachers, pupil personnel services, staff and administrators. The team may decide to use the Social Inclusion Scale found on **page 51** for that purpose.

There are several ways to collect survey data: send it out electronically or by mail; have students take it home; or survey attendees at an open house, during parent conferences or other school events. However you decide to conduct the survey, be careful to include a broad cross-section of the school community to capture as many perspectives as possible representing different stakeholder groups (e.g., parents of students with or without intellectual disabilities, students with or without intellectual disabilities or from different grade levels, special or regular education teachers).You do not have to gather data from every member of the school community, but it is essential to gather a random sample of those stakeholders to ensure the "picture" you obtain is truly reflective of your school.

Once the Leadership Team has compiled all of the data from the surveys returned, take time to cross-check the perceptions of the team members with those of the wider school community.

5. ESTABLISH A PLAN AND TAKE ACTION

Based on what you discover in your analysis of the landscape and baseline assessment, work as a team to complete a strategic plan. This plan will help identify priorities, strategies and outcomes that will guide the Leadership Team toward achieving the vision you create for this work. Map out your goals and make sure they align with and support each other. Develop action steps that will lead toward your intended outcomes and be sure to make your goals achievable to help generate success, which will feed further efforts. Early team goals are often about broadening the base of support and raising the profile of the issues. A framework for creating the Unified Champion School Strategic Plan can be found on **page 33**.

Characteristics of Success

The following characteristics form an effective framework, which assists Unified Champion Schools in successfully achieving high-quality social inclusion:

1. Social Inclusion is a purposeful process and is woven into the fabric of the school.

2. Efforts are student-centered.

3. Social inclusion is valued, nurtured and supported across formal and informal settings.

4. Consistent opportunities are provided to engage students in developing, implementing and sustaining a wide range of inclusive activities.

5. Shared leadership is embraced and includes a broad range of stakeholders.

6. Leaders are intentionally cultivated beyond a passionate few.

7. There is a vision and purpose to social inclusion that is understood and shared by the school community as work that is core to the school/district's mission.

8. Social inclusion is about all students being supported in contributing in meaningful ways, not some being the "helped" and others being the "helpers."

9. Students, teachers and administrators value and engage in ongoing reflection to guide continuous improvement.

10. Administrative support is concrete, visible and active at both school and district levels.

Resources to Guide Your Work

- Baseline Assessments: Characteristics of Successful School Assessment **(p. 38-50)** Social Inclusion Scale **(p. 51-54)**
- Planning: Unified Champion School Youth Strategic Plan **(p. 33 - 36)**
- Progress Monitoring: Social Inclusion Rubric **(p. 55-62)**

Characteristics of Socially Inclusive Schools (CSIS) Assessment: Leadership Team *continued*

There are a number of elements the team should discuss during the process of establishing the Strategic Plan for your school:

• Develop a vision and goals in alignment with the school's priorities to establish the foundation for social inclusion efforts.

• Find your starting point by identifying who you are as a school. Conduct a SWOT analysis to get a picture of where your school is now; where you want to be; and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that exist which will impact your work.

• Create a plan for how progress will be measured, monitored and used to support continuous improvement.

• Completing the "Inputs, Outcomes and Impacts" chart may help you advance this work with intentionality. This chart pulls together the overall plan by asking the team to identify the priorities and current status; inputs (who will be engaged in the effort); outputs (activities and intended audience); the short, medium, and long term impacts of those actions; and any assumptions or external factors that may affect the work.

• Create a plan that clearly outlines the actions that will be taken to foster a socially inclusive school. For each goal, the team should identify the major tasks that will need to be completed to achieve that goal, who will facilitate those actions, when each step will be completed, and who else might be engaged in the process.

Taking action toward creating a socially inclusive school is the core work of the Leadership Team. Identify what your school needs to become socially inclusive, engage others to implement the strategies that will create a positive impact, and monitor your progress to continue learning and growing. It's important to remember some actions can be big, but smaller more frequent actions are equally important because they are invaluable in helping to build toward your school's ultimate success. Don't forget to celebrate big and small successes along the way.

6. CONDUCT PROGRESS MONITORING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

As the Leadership Team engages others and facilitates implementation of the three components (Inclusive Sports, Youth Leadership, Whole School Engagement), great things are sure to begin happening in your school. It can be helpful to continue to collect data to measure progress and identify areas for continuous improvement to inform and enhance your efforts. The Social Inclusion Rubric found on **page 51** can help you in these efforts.

The rubric will provide a picture of the school's level of social inclusiveness as efforts are made to become a Unified Champion School (UCS) or to expand and enhance the implementation of the three components in an existing designated school. This information can then be used to monitor progress, inform revisions to the strategic plan, discover new and exciting strategies to develop and provide a picture of next steps.

The advantage of using this type of rubric is that it provides "snapshots" of what social inclusion looks like across the school. These pictures can be very helpful in identifying the status, conditions and impacts of implementation. As your team evaluates the descriptors for each of the levels, you might find that your school has made more progress in one area than another. This can help you target your strategic plan while providing highlights of what to strive for along the continuum of implementation.

Special Olympics
Unified Champion School Strategic Plan

Leadership Team Members
School(s) to be involved:
School(s) to be involved:
What do we hope social inclusion will achieve? As a team, ask yourselves what you would like success to look like in concrete, measurable terms. What will people in our school do that demonstrates we are a socially inclusive school? Which set of goals will help us progress on the social inclusion rubric? Identify 3-5 SMART goals. SMART goals are: S - Specific M - Measurable A - Action-oriented R - Realistic T - Time-bound
How will social inclusion help meet our school's broader goals?
Have our goals been prioritized, and which ones are most critical to the success of this effort?

Finding Our Starting Point

Effective planning starts with an assessment of the current situation. It begins with asking
1) Who are we? and 2) Analyzing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
Who are we?

1. Who are we as a school?

2. What are the common interests of our school community and how can we best represent them?

3. What are our values?

SWOT ANALYSIS
(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)

*What are our **strengths** relative to social inclusion in our school?*

*What are our **weaknesses?***

*What **opportunities** are made available by implementing the Unified Champion Schools program to support social inclusion?*

*If we do not address social inclusion, what are the **threats?***

5. What are the primary obstacles to social inclusion and how might we overcome them?

6. Are there previous initiatives that failed due to lack of support or other obstacles? What were they, and why did they fail?

7. What assistance do we need with this work?

MONITORING
1. Who has oversight and review authority for the plan content? Who is responsible for measuring progress?

2. What measures of progress will we use?

3. How often will we review progress?

4. How will we use progress monitoring to ensure our efforts continuously improve?

INPUTS

OUTPUTS

OUTCOMES - IMPACT

	Activities	Participation
	What we will do	What we will reach

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Short Term Results	Medium Term Results	Long Term Results

Who will we engage?
What resources do we have?

CURRENT STATUS	
Where are we now?	

PRIORI-TIES	
What goals will we address first	

Assumptions about Social Inclusion in our School

External Factors That May Influence Outcomes

GOAL	MAJOR TASK	When will each task be completed?	Who will Facilitate the completion of this goal?	Who Else can help?
What we will do	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	**What we will do**	**What we will do**
What we will do	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	**What we will do**	**What we will do**
What we will do	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	**What we will do**	**What we will do**

Assessments

Characteristics of Socially Inclusive Schools (CSIS) Assessment: Leadership Team

The following assessment is designed to assist the inclusive leadership team to determine the degree of inclusiveness in the school and set a baseline for future work. Individual members of the team should take the assessment separately then combine the results. The compilation of the perspectives of different individuals will result in a more accurate report or will highlight perspective variations.

Please read the following questions and select the options that apply to your school. You can select more than one option per question, as applicable. If you do not select any option, it is equal to selecting 'none,' 'no one,' 'not evident' (in other words, no score for that particular question).

Please note that three academic categories of students are referenced in the assessment:
1) Advanced, 2) General and 3) Special Education. While individual students might fall into more than one of these categories for different classes, please respond regarding each category as a whole for the purpose of this assessment.

Also, please note that 'special education students' and 'students with intellectual disabilities' have been used interchangeably in this assessment.

Name: _____

School Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Role:

◯   **Principal/Assistant Principal**

◯   **Guidance Counselor/Social Worker**

◯   **Teacher**

◯   **Other School Staff**

◯   **Student**

◯   **Parent**

◯   **Other (specify)_____**

GUIDELINES FOR SCORING

1. When you select a particular option for a question, it is equivalent to one point. Based on this criterion, record the score for each question at the end of the question.

2. Please note that questions 1 and 2 are organized slightly differently than the other questions. However, the scoring criterion is the same. Whether the question is in matrix format or a simple multiple choice format, record "1" point for each option that is evident in your school. If an identified option is not evident in your school, leave the cell blank.

For example, in Question 1, if students in 'advanced', 'general' and 'special' education influence or are involved with school communications (e.g., announcements, newspaper), record a "1" in each cell in that row. If only students in one or two of those categories are involved, record a "1" in the appropriate column. If no students are involved, leave all cells blank.

At the end, sum each column then combine the three column scores to get the score for the question. For the rest of the questions (all multiple choice), record a "1" beside each option that is evident in your school. If that option is not evident, leave it blank. Sum the responses for each question and record that answer in the place provided.

3. At the end of each domain (e.g., 'youth leadership'), calculate the score for the domain by adding scores for all the questions in that particular domain (e.g., Q1 to Q5 for 'youth leadership', Q6 to Q9 for 'creating and sustaining relationships', and so on).

4. When the entire assessment is complete, please input the score for each domain on the first scoring sheet ('scoring sheet for individual response') provided at the end and determine in which category you belong by referring to the second column ('score ranges by level') in the scoring sheet. Please note that there are four levels: limited, emerging, inclusive and fully accomplished. The ranges for these levels are not uniform across the domains.

5. To compute the total score, simply add all the scores from the third column ('your domain score'). Again, the level for total score can be determined by referring to the second column ('score ranges by level').

6. To obtain the scores for the school, please use the second scoring sheet ('scoring sheet for the school'). For this, calculate the average score from all the individual responses (leadership team), and input in the 'school's domain score.' Then, find out the categories for each domain for the school by referring to second column ('score ranges by level') in the scoring sheet. The school's total score and level can be determined by following similar step as Q5 above.

I. YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Q1. Which students, if any, influence school decisions, and how are they involved?

	Advanced Education	General Education	Special Education
Communications (e.g., school newspaper, announcements)			
Student government			
Surveys			
Class discussions			
Events/assemblies (i.e., leading/ determining focus, not just attending)			
Youth leadership club			
Principal Advisory Committee			
Other (specify)			
Score (for each column)			
Score for the question (total of all three columns):			

Q2. In what ways are students of different abilities involved in improving the inclusiveness of the school?

	Advanced Education	General Education	Special Education
Decisions about class scheduling			
Development of inclusive events			
Creation of communications supporting inclusion (e.g., posters, newspaper articles, bulletin board displays)			
Participation in inclusive clubs or sports			
Other (specify)			
Score (for each column)			
Score for the question (total of all three columns):			

Q3. Which students serve as youth leaders in school (e.g., through sports teams, classroom discussions, service opportunities)?

___ Advanced education students
___ General education students
___ Special education students

Score: _____

Q4. Which students, if any, receive instruction in social-emotional skills (e.g., decision making, collaboration, self-management, conflict resolution)?

___Advanced education students
___General education students
___Special education students

Score: _____

Q5. In what social-emotional learning (SEL) areas, if any, do students receive instruction?

___Decision making
___Conflict Resolution
___Communication
___Ethics
___Emotion Regulation/Self-management
___Empathy

Score: _____

Total Score for Youth Leadership (Q1 to 5) :

II. CREATING AND SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Q6. Where do students with intellectual disabilities interact with students without intellectual disabilities?

___Hallways
___Cafeteria
___Library/Media Center
___Enrichment classes (e.g., gym, art, music)
___Core academic classes
___Sports
___Extracurricular clubs/service-learning opportunities

Score: _____

Q7. Which members of the school community are formally involved in efforts to include students with intellectual disabilities in school programs or activities?

___Special education teachers
___General education teachers
___Administrators, support staff and other school personnel
___Students participating in Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program
___General education students

Score: _____

Q8. Where do students without intellectual disabilities demonstrate their friendships with students with intellectual disabilities?

___In class
___In the hallways
___During sports and extracurricular activities
___Outside of organized activities (e.g., in their homes, during weekends)

Score: _____

Q9. Where do parents of students without intellectual disabilities interact with parents of students with intellectual disabilities?

___At school events
___At organized community events (e.g., sports, religious services)
___Outside of organized activities (e.g., in their homes, during weekends)

Total Score for Youth Leadership (Q6 to 9) :

III. UNIFYING PROGRAMMING

Q10. Which resources, if any, does the district provide for unifying programming?

___Money
___Time (e.g., holding training during school hours, program development)
___Personnel
___Facilities

Score: _____

Q11. Which students regularly participate in school athletic programs?

___Advanced education students
___General education students
___Special education students
___Students with exceptional athletic ability

Score: _____

Q12. Which students regularly participate in extracurricular opportunities?

___Advanced education students
___General education students
___Special education students

Score: _____

Q13. For which clubs and sports does the school celebrate accomplishments?

___Traditional sports teams
___Unified Sports® teams
___Academic extracurricular clubs
___Other extracurricular clubs

Score: _____

Total Score for Youth Leadership (Q10 to 13) :

IV. SCHOOL COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Q14. Which individuals, if any, have an active voice developing and implementing an inclusive vision and goals for the school?

___Students
___School personnel
___Parents
___Community members

Score: _____

Q15. Which community organizations collaborate with the school on events or activities?

___Sports organizations (e.g., community recreational department lends equipment for school teams; members of local sports teams help coach Unified Sports teams)
___Social service organizations (e.g., social workers train students to become peer mediators; social service organizations invite students to help in the creation of a community-wide health campaign)
___Media organizations (journalists work with students on the school newspaper; local newspaper features school events or accomplishments)
___Public safety organizations (e.g., police make a presentation about drug use during a school assembly; EMTs lead student training on CPR)
___Health services organizations (e.g., doctor provides exams for members of Unified Sports teams; school nurse presents sessions on health, wellness and movement)
___Local business leaders (e.g., business leaders partner with unified club on projects; local grocery store participates in healthy eating project)
___Religious organizations (e.g., church/synagogue/mosque help to organize school canned food drive for a food pantry)

Score: _____

Q16. Which students interact with community organizations through curricular and extracurricular activities?

___Advanced education students
___General education students
___Special education students

Score: _____

Q17. Which students leave school grounds to participate in school-sponsored community activities?

___Advanced education students
___General education students
___Special education students

Score: _____

Total Score for Youth Leadership (Q14 to 17) :

V. COMMUNICATION

Q18. When do educators discuss the importance of inclusive language?
___In school-wide events and posters
___In the curriculum
___In day-to-day instruction
___With the broader community

Score: _____

Q19. In what ways is inclusive language used when communicating with students, school staff, parents or community members?
___Through formal communications
___Through informal communications
___In meetings
___In informal conversations

Score: _____

Q20. With whom does the school share the accomplishments of special education students?
___Special education students and parents
___Other students and parents
___All school personnel
___Broader community

Score: _____

Q21. Who stops others from using language that is hurtful toward students with intellectual disabilities (e.g., terms such as: retard[ed], "those kids", slow class)?
___School personnel
___Parents
___Community
___Students
___No one

Score: _____

Total Score for Youth Leadership (Q18 to 21) :

VI. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Q22. Who receives instruction from the school about addressing the needs of the special education student population and the use of inclusive teaching strategies?

___Special education teachers
___General education teachers
___Administrators, support staff and other school personnel
___Parents
___Students
___Community

Score: _____

Q23. When do special and general education teachers have opportunities to collaborate?

___Informal discussions
___Professional development sessions
___Regular planning time
___Team teaching
___Faculty meetings
___School-wide events

Score: _____

Q24. When do school personnel receive professional development training on promoting students' social-emotional skills (SEL)?

___In SEL specific workshops (e.g., conflict resolution, restorative justice)
___SEL strategies are integrated into all professional development

Score: _____

Q25. In what ways does the school integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into the school?

___Through a program/curriculum focused on social-emotional learning
___Through classroom management strategies informed by social-emotional learning best practices
___Through explicit school norms (e.g., student code of conduct)
___Through a range of pedagogies (e.g., cooperative learning, service-learning, conflict resolution/mediation related learning, moral dilemma discussions)
___Through adults modeling appropriate behavior
___Through extracurricular activities that foster social-emotional learning

Score: _____

Total Score for Youth Leadership (Q22 to 25) :

VII. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Q26. Aside from data on student achievement, consider the data collection processes that you use to support your school improvement efforts, and check all that apply below:

___Data are collected on school climate.
___Data are collected on social inclusion.
___Evaluation measures used to assess school climate and/or inclusion are research-based, established tools (reliable and valid).
___Data are collected regularly (annually or biannually).
___Data are not collected for school improvement efforts.
___Data are collected, but they not analyzed or used for school improvement efforts.

Score: _____

Q27. Data are collected regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities:

___Through formal communications
___Through informal communications
___In meetings
___In informal conversations

Score: _____

Q28. Data are collected from:

___Students.
___School personnel.
___Parents.
___Community members.

Score: _____

Q29. With whom do administrators share findings and strategies about inclusive practices?

___Leadership team
___Special education department
___Students
___All school personnel
___Parents
___School district personnel
___Broader community

Score: _____

Total Score for Youth Leadership (Q26 to 29) :

SCORING SHEET FOR INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE

Please note that the scoring range is different for each domain (second column). Please input your score for each domain in 'Your Domain Score' column and then determine under which level (Limited, Emerging, Inclusive and Fully Accomplished) you fall in each of the domains by referring to the second column.

Domain	Score Ranges by Levels	Your Domain Score	Your Level
Youth Leadership	Limited (0-13) Emerging (14-26) Inclusive (27-38) Fully Accomplished (39-51)		
Creating and Sustaining Relationships	Limited (0-5) Emerging (6-9) Inclusive (10-14) Fully Accomplished (15-19)		
Unifying Programming	Limited (0-5) Emerging (6-9) Inclusive (10-14) Fully Accomplished (15-18)		
School Community Collaborations	Limited (0-4) Emerging (5-9) Inclusive (10-13) Fully Accomplished (14-17)		
Communication	Limited (0-4) Emerging (5-8) Inclusive (9-12) Fully Accomplished (13-16)		
Professional Development	Limited (0-5) Emerging (6-10) Inclusive (11-15) Fully Accomplished (16-20)		
Continuous Improvement	Limited (0-5) Emerging (6-10) Inclusive (11-14) Fully Accomplished (15-18)		
Your Total Score	Limited (0-40) Emerging (41-80) Inclusive (81-120) Fully Accomplished (121-160)		

SCORING SHEET FOR THE SCHOOL

Please input average score (from all the responses) for each domain in 'School's Domain Score' column and then determine under which level (Limited, Emerging, Inclusive and Fully Accomplished) your school falls in each of the domains by referring to the second column.

Domain	Score Ranges by Levels	School's Score (average of the individual domain scores)	School's Level
Youth Leadership	Limited (0-13) Emerging (14-26) Inclusive (27-38) Fully Accomplished (39-51)		
Creating and Sustaining Relationships	Limited (0-5) Emerging (6-9) Inclusive (10-14) Fully Accomplished (15-19)		
Unifying Programming	Limited (0-5) Emerging (6-9) Inclusive (10-14) Fully Accomplished (15-18)		
School Community Collaborations	Limited (0-4) Emerging (5-9) Inclusive (10-13) Fully Accomplished (14-17)		
Communication	Limited (0-4) Emerging (5-8) Inclusive (9-12) Fully Accomplished (13-16)		
Professional Development	Limited (0-5) Emerging (6-10) Inclusive (11-15) Fully Accomplished (16-20)		
Continuous Improvement	Limited (0-5) Emerging (6-10) Inclusive (11-14) Fully Accomplished (15-18)		
Your Total Score	Limited (0-40) Emerging (41-80) Inclusive (81-120) Fully Accomplished (121-160)		

The Social Inclusion Scale is designed to be administered to students, parents and school personnel once a year. Ideally the administration should take place at the same time each year to get a more consistent view of perceptions over time. If you plan to administer the scale to the entire population, you may want to create an online version of this survey (using Survey Monkey or another platform) to make scoring and reporting easier for your team to analyze.

Social Inclusion Scale

Instructions: In this survey, you will find questions about your school's inclusiveness, which refers to the extent that all students in your school community are valued, respected and supported. The following questions are designed to measure how well your school specifically includes special education students (or students with all disabilities) in the school community.

Please indicate your role:

◯   **Student**

◯   **Teacher**

◯   **Pupil Personnel Services**

◯   **Administrator**

◯   **Other School Staff**

◯   **Parent/Guardian**

In the following chart, please identify the degree to which you **agree** or **disagree** with the following statements:

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Every student of any ability can be a leader in this school.				
2. In this school, the accomplishments of students of all abilities are celebrated (e.g., award ceremonies in school assemblies, sports awards dinners, displaying school projects).				
3. At this school, after school activities (e.g., sports clubs) include students with and without disabilities				
4. Most people in this school feel responsible for including special education				
5. This school provides opportunities for all students, including special education students, to help others (e.g., service-learning, community service).				
6. This school provides opportunities for all students, including special education students, to share their ideas (e.g., contribute to school decisions or inclusion efforts.				
7. In this school, students do not use negative terms to refer to students with disabilities.				
8. In this school, adults do not use negative terms to refer to students with				
9. This school encourages students to develop friendships with special and general education students and interact in social situations (e.g., extracurricular activities, lunchtime, unstructured time within and between classes.				
10. In this school, adults encourage special education students to participate				
11. Students in this school learn from having students of all abilities in the classroom.				

In the following chart, please indicate whether any of the following activities were **offered** at your school? If the activity was offered, please indicate **where** you participated in it. Also, indicate whether you helped **plan or lead** the activity. With this data, you will be able to see where and how students are engaged in the Unified Champion Schools program, which can be used to inform next steps.

Activity/Event	Was this activity offered at your school?		Did you participate in the activity or event?		Did you help plan or lead the activity or event?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
R-word Campaign or Spread the Word to End the Word Day (Raise awareness of the hurtful use of the R-word ("retard[ed]") and advocate to end the use of the word.)						
Inclusive Sports (Students with and without intellectual disabilities train and compete together on the same teams.)						
Traditional Special Olympics Sports (Sports teams where only students with intellectual disabilities compete.)						
Unified Club or Youth Activation Committee (Any club where students of all abilities participate together as equals to make the school socially inclusive.)						
Young Athletes Program Volunteer (This is a program where students volunteer to help young children, ages 2-7, with physical activities.)						
Special Olympics Unified Sports Day (This is similar to a track and field day.)						
Fans in the Stands (students support and cheer athletes at Unified Sports competitions or Special Olympics events.)						
Other extracurricular activities that include students with and without intellectual disabilities.						

SCORING: AN EXAMPLE

USE: The results from this survey will provide you with a snapshot of the responses to the Inclusion Scale (whether responses are mostly in positive range or in a negative range). This data can be used to inform next steps (e.g., school leadership's team's discussion of action planning) for the social inclusion efforts in your school.

Calculating the percentages of response type

1. The response scale of this survey comprises the following categories: "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Agree" and "Strongly Agree." One way to get a good picture of the responses is to see the percentages for each of these categories. For example, consider all student responses to this scale. The percentage of responses can be calculated across all four categories for each of the questions in the Scale. This would then help you see patterns of agreement or disagreement by population.

2. An average for each category (e.g., average of '% Strongly Disagree') can also be computed by taking average of the columns. This will provide information on the average percentage of responses falling into the negative category ("Strongly Disagree," "Disagree") or positive category ("Agree," "Strongly Agree"). The table below provides an example.

3. A similar process can be used for other responding groups (school personnel, parents).

4. Record the number of respondents (N) and response rate (N/total available population) for each population.

Question Number	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Agree	% Strongly Agree	% Total
Q1	10	5	50	35	100
Q2	5	15	45	35	100
Q3	5	25	35	35	100
Q4	15	50	20	15	100
Q5	0	25	45	30	100
Q6	10	20	30	40	100
Q7	0	10	40	50	100
Q8	0	25	50	25	100
Q9	0	20	35	45	100
Q10	5	20	35	40	100
Q11	35	30	30	5	100
Average	**7.27**	**22.27**	**37.73**	**32.73**	**100**

Interpreting the example:

Again, please note that the negative range includes "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree", and the positive range includes "Strongly Agree" and "Agree". In this example, students showed some variation in their perception of social inclusion, leaning towards a positive perception (70.46% were in the positive range, while 29.54% were in the negative range.) Among all the questions, those with the highest negative perception include "Q4" and "Q11," which indicate some areas of potential improvement. Among all the questions, those with the highest positive perception include "Q1" and "Q7," which indicate areas of particular strength and celebration.

NOTE: To calculate which questions have the highest negative perception, add the percentage values for "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" for each question (i.e., the two columns to the left of the bolded blue line). The highest sums indicate which questions were scored more negatively than others. In addition, to find the questions with the highest positive perception, add the percentage values for "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" (i.e. the two columns to the right of the bolded blue line).

*This assessment was developed in collaboration with the National School Climate Center (NSCC).

Social Inclusive Rubric

The following rubric is designed to help you determine the degree of inclusiveness in your school and to assist with continuous improvement planning by documenting your school's path to social inclusion. By measuring your work against a set of indicators or benchmarks, you will obtain clearer pictures of social inclusion, identify with which level your schools aligns, and be able to identify necessary next steps to continue progress. In order to have an accurate and comprehensive report, it is important to obtain input from various stakeholders, including students. Also, don't forget to gain the perspective of parents and various staff across the school such as paraprofessionals, custodians, bus drivers and cafeteria staff in addition to educators and students. The compilation of the perspectives of different individuals or stakeholder groups will result in a more accurate report and can help identify differences in perspectives, which provide important insights.

Directions

Using this rubric, rate your school on seven categories—Inclusive Youth Leadership, Creating and Sustaining Relationships, Unifying Programming, School/Community Collaborations, Communication, Professional Development and Continuous Improvement. Based upon the descriptors under each level in the rubric, determine whether your school is at the "Novice," "Emerging," "Accomplished," or "Highly Inclusive" level for each category. Please note that when a category is rated as "Accomplished" or "Highly Inclusive," descriptors from preceding levels also will likely be present at the school.

Working as individuals or groups, read all the descriptors under each level and determine which level is most reflective of your school. While all descriptors under a level might not be evident at your school, select the level that is most like your school. It is possible (and probably even likely) that the selected levels will be different for the various categories. For example, you might determine that your school is "Accomplished" regarding Unifying Programming and "Novice" for Inclusive Youth Leadership, but that information will be helpful when identifying priority areas for improvement.

If you work as a group, discuss the descriptors for each level and come to consensus on the level that is closest to your school.

If completing the rubric as individuals, compile the individual results to obtain a collective view of each category.

If there is a significant difference between the ratings identified for a specific category, debrief with each group or individual to find the reasons for their conclusions. This in itself might suggest additional areas for focus. For example, a group of students might view opportunities for "Youth Leadership" differently than teachers or administrators view those same opportunities. Why are there variations in opinions? Have their experiences at school impacted their perspectives? What does that tell you? How can those differences inform school improvement efforts? Be sure to validate each perspective and accept it as a valid response based on each rater's experience. There are no right or wrong answers, as each response offers insights into how social inclusion is experienced by various individuals or groups in the school.

This rubric can be periodically administered to monitor progress of school improvement efforts and determine priorities for next steps.

INCLUSIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Novice	Emerging	Accomplished	Highly Inclusive
Student leaders are represented by a narrow range of the student population.	Youth are represented on selected school committees and participate in some decision-making processes.	Youth of all abilities are provided opportunities to be leaders in their schools and communities.	Student leadership positions are held by a diverse representation of the student body with all students being supported and provided the necessary skills to be agents of change in their communities.
Student participation in leadership opportunities is limited to traditional avenues (e.g., student council).	Youth with and without disabilities are given opportunities to provide leadership, but all opportunities are not inclusive.	Youth with and without disabilities share leadership in school groups and committees in inclusive settings.	Students and adults share leadership in creating and maintaining an inclusive climate and physical environment in their school.
If there is work by youth to create a more inclusive school, participation is generally limited to students without disabilities.	Goals are set and decisions are made by adults with youth input.	Goal setting and decision making is shared by youth and adults.	
Goals are set and decisions are made by adults.	Some leadership training happens at the outset of an activity.	Youth and adults actively initiate intergenerational leadership within the school, including serving on the Unified Champion School Leadership Team.	All students are prepared for leadership roles by being given opportunities to learn and practice making and executing their decisions.
Little or no leadership skill development occurs.		Leadership skills are developed in all students through classes, extracurricular activities, service opportunities and sports.	Goal setting and decision making are led by students with and without disabilities on behalf of all youth.
		Instruction in socio-emotional learning (SEL) (e.g., decision-making, conflict resolution, ethics) is provided to all students.	Youth engage in assessments, evaluations and reflections to examine their leadership knowledge, skills and impacts on themselves and others.

CREATING AND SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Novice	Emerging	Accomplished	Highly Inclusive
Students' preconceptions and stereotypes about students with intellectual disabilities are not challenged.	Students with and without intellectual disabilities are afforded frequent opportunities to interact in social and academic settings (e.g., through unified clubs, after-school activities, community service).	The school staff and students intentionally build a sense of community among students with and without disabilities that promotes student engagement and relationships in formal and informal settings with the school.	There is a caring, respectful and compassionate community within and beyond the school setting to create supportive relationships for all families, youth and adults.
Multiple perspectives are not intentionally sought or incorporated into nurturing and supporting a positive school environment.	Instructional strategies are utilized that provide differentiated instruction to allow students with diverse learning needs to receive instruction together.	The skills, abilities and perspectives of all students are valued and respected by staff and school/district leaders.	Staff and school/district leaders actively seek to enlist the skills, abilities and perspectives of all students, understanding that the work of the whole is enriched by diverse perspectives and abilities.
Limited steps are taken to ensure the school provides a physically inclusive setting.	The Unified Champion Schools program is explored as a means for students to interact, support each other and establish relationships.	Opportunities are sought to engage a broad range of students, parents, staff and community members in the ongoing work of the school, providing opportunities for the development of positive intergenerational relationships.	All students, staff, parents and the broader community are viewed as equal partners in creating and sustaining an inclusive school community.
There are no established avenues for students of diverse backgrounds to interact and form relationships. In fact, schedules and building arrangements sometimes hinder interactions.	Some staff model and expect positive relationships between students with and without disabilities.	All school staff foster opportunities to build positive relationships between students with and without disabilities in the classroom.	Policy development and decisions at the school and district levels intentionally incorporate diverse perspectives and ensure opportunities for student interaction and engagement.
	Curriculum and classroom management strategies incorporate social-emotional learning such as collaboration, conflict resolution, regulation and self-management.	School schedules and building arrangements ensure regular opportunities for students to interact.	Students work to ensure all students are engaged in the school and feel they are important and respected.
		Adults model effective social-emotional learning skills.	School norms explicitly expect and support social-emotional learning.

UNIFYING PROGRAMMING

Novice	Emerging	Accomplished	Highly Inclusive
School and community programs provide for a limited range of student ability needs to be adequately met. Traditional school sports and clubs rarely involve students with intellectual disabilities. The continuum of opportunities for students to learn in an inclusive setting is limited to coursework at their ability levels. There are no social or sports avenues for students with and without intellectual disabilities to learn and grow together. Few resources (e.g., money, time, personnel) are provided for unifying programming.	A broad range of parallel activities are offered that collectively honor and develop the skills and abilities of all students. The district provides equitable support for inclusive student activities such as Unified Sports® and unified clubs, demonstrating equal value for these activities as traditional sports and clubs; however, implementation is not consistent or evident in all schools. School staff explores various opportunities for students to learn in inclusive settings, but all students are not encouraged to participate	Access and opportunities for all students to participate in inclusive settings in both instructional and non-academic activities are provided regularly. School staff consistently works to ensure the effectiveness of the inclusive learning environment both inside and outside the classroom. Traditional school sports and clubs consistently work toward becoming more inclusive and welcoming for all students. An extensive selection of Unified Sports, clubs and social activities are offered to all students. Unifying programming is included in the school budget and action plan.	School activities and groups intentionally engage a diverse student population. There is an expectation for the entire school community to continuously seek opportunities to become a more inclusive learning environment, offering unified programs and activities. School leaders ensure extra-curricular and sports opportunities are provided that build inclusiveness and eliminate boundaries between students. Recognition programs are provided for all students participating in Unified Sports, unified clubs and extra-curricular activities, including traditional methods such as athletic letters, award banquets, and school assemblies. The district allocates resources to support Unified Champion Schools activities.

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

Novice	Emerging	Accomplished	Highly Inclusive
The school generally works in isolation from the community, though community partners sometimes support specific projects.	Students and staff seek opportunities to engage community entities in school activities, but there are limited interactions.	Students and staff are trained in collaborative skills and are expected to build meaningful diverse partnerships with the community.	The school and community create and work toward a shared vision that supports and sustains an inclusive school climate.
School policy inhibits or prevents students from leaving school grounds to participate in community activities.	Opportunities exist for select students to interact with a few community organizations on a limited basis.	Two-way communication and ongoing interaction with community partners is central to the school.	Students and staff at the school maintain mutually beneficial relationships with community entities that represent a broad cross-section of the community.
The school is occasionally asked to assist with events or projects in the community, but only selected students are engaged in the activities. Community members have little or no opportunity to share their ideas and perspectives with the school.	Interactions with the community are planned by adults with little or no input by the students. Community members have little voice or active involvement in the school.	Students and adults at the school work with multiple community partners to develop common goals and implement shared projects. The community accepts and encourages inclusive practices in the schools and wider community. All students are provided opportunities for engagement in the community through a variety of programs.	School and community programs equitably develop each student's potential through sports and academic, civic, social and service activities that engage both students with and without intellectual disabilities. Participants in school-community collaborations regularly reflect on their shared goals, progress and effectiveness of their collaborative process.

COMMUNICATION

Novice	Emerging	Accomplished	Highly Inclusive
Inclusion and inclusive language is rarely used in formal and informal school communications. School communication leaders/staff have not been trained to use inclusive language. School communications prioritize certain students' academic, athletic and service attributions and contributions. There are no formal programs to eliminate the use of offensive or abusive language within the school.	School staff members are trained in the use of inclusive language and generally use these skills in their daily communications. School regularly offers assemblies and events which focus on inclusion and how to talk about it with peers, parents and community members. Programs that reduce the use of offensive or abusive language (e.g., R-word) are offered.	School communications highlight students' diverse gifts, talents and contributions, demonstrating the value placed on both students' unique individual abilities and similarities. Students are taught to use inclusive language in their school and personal verbal, written and social networking communications. There are clear expectations that all students and staff use inclusive language in their daily communications, which is supported by modeling and reinforcement. Signs, posters and displays in the school reflect inclusion and the school's commitment to ensuring every student is valued.	Mechanisms and systems are in place to regularly inform stakeholders of the positive impacts of inclusiveness on the entire student body. The word/concept of "student" is intentionally used to refer to all students. School communications use inclusive language and formats. The value students and staff place on inclusion is communicated throughout the school, in trophies and awards that are displayed, the goals and mission of the school, and the activities and efforts that are promoted. The word "inclusion" is frequently used on the school's web site and in presentations given by school leaders, staff and students. Students with and without intellectual disabilities regularly speak to school and community groups about the importance of social inclusion.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Novice	Emerging	Accomplished	Highly Inclusive
Basic knowledge about addressing the needs of a diverse student population is provided to all staff; however, it does not address issues of social inclusion.	Informational programs are provided to parents, students and staff to increase understanding of diverse student abilities, inclusive teaching strategies and the importance of social inclusion.	Specific district professional development opportunities frequently incorporate discussions and skill building in supporting inclusiveness.	Students, staff and families are provided opportunities to increase their competencies to create and sustain an inclusive school environment.
Professional development is targeted at distinctly different audiences rather than shared learning experiences between general education and special education staff.	Special and general education teachers occasionally collaborate as professional learners within a professional learning community.	School and community events are offered to students and the broader community to increase knowledge and skills that support inclusive schools.	High-quality, ongoing professional development on social inclusion and school climate is supported through the use of regular and frequent professional learning communities.
Social-emotional learning is not explicitly addressed in district-supported professional development.	Professional development is offered in classroom management strategies and pedagogies that support and are informed by social-emotional learning best practices.	Collaborations between special and general education teachers are encouraged to build competencies in providing an inclusive learning environment, including social inclusion.	There is an expectation that special and general education teachers will collaborate to create an inclusive learning environment, and are provided regular, scheduled opportunities for this to occur.
		All staff members are expected to become proficient in teaching, supporting and reinforcing social-emotional skills.	Students with and without disabilities are engaged as co-facilitators of professional development to share strategies they find most effective in creating and sustaining an inclusive school environment.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Novice	Emerging	Accomplished	Highly Inclusive
Plans for developing and supporting an inclusive school climate are implemented without collecting data to guide decisions. Programs and activities to create a more inclusive school climate and increase the effectiveness of the learning environment for all students are adopted without a shared vision and collective agenda.	School and district leaders allocate time and resources to develop effective learning environments that provide inclusive school climates and meet the needs of all students. Efforts to improve school climate and increase effectiveness of instructional practices are consistently reviewed and revised to provide inclusiveness and effectiveness of the learning environment. Data is collected to monitor inclusion of students with disabilities in academic settings.	A social inclusive assessment (e.g., CSIS Assessment, Social Inclusion Scale) is used to establish baseline data regarding the degree of social inclusion in the school. All constituents (including students, staff, parents and community) are given regular opportunities to reflect and share input on the effectiveness of the learning environment in meeting the needs of all students. Policies are in place and actively used to ensure social inclusion for all students through instructional effectiveness, school programs and school climate. Data is collected to assess inclusion of students with disabilities in extracurricular activities, sports and social events.	Data is regularly collected on the inclusiveness of the school climate and effectiveness of the learning environment from multiple sources across all stakeholders in the school and community throughout the year. Data on discipline, attendance, and participation in extracurricular offerings is disaggregated to ensure all students and disability subgroups have equitable opportunities to succeed in formal and informal settings. A baseline assessment is conducted during initial stages of implementation, and a rubric (e.g., Social Inclusion Rubric) is used to assess progress and identify areas for continuous improvement. This evidence guides decisions and plans for continuous improvement. Evidence is used to improve experiences and progress toward goals to ensure inclusiveness and effectiveness of the learning environment. Evidence of progress is communicated with the broader community to deepen understanding of an inclusive school climate and an effective learning environment.

Whole School Engagement Implementation Guide

Whole School Engagement is a unique and important component because it:

✓ Engages the entire staff and student body in building awareness and understanding of the benefits to all when the assets and contributions of each individual are recognized, honored and supported.

✓ Expands ownership of the efforts beyond a passionate few, creating a ripple effect from their actions and advocacy.

✓ Recognizes that the engagement and contributions of all abilities, perceptions and attitudes benefits both youth and adults.

✓ Nurtures engaging environments where students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members feel connected, safe and successful.

✓ Creates schools that are communities of acceptance where students with disabilities feel welcome and valued as meaningful participants in school activities, classroom learning and leadership opportunities.

✓ Positively impacts acceptance of all types of differences and teaches students and staff to embrace diversity among all students.

GOALS OF WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT.

• Students with and without intellectual disabilities will interact socially and develop mutually beneficial friendships.

• Students with and without disabilities will hold more positive attitudes toward, and demonstrate a greater understanding and acceptance of, each other.

• Schools will become communities of acceptance where students with and without intellectual disabilities feel welcome and contribute meaningfully to all school activities, opportunities and functions.

• The school climate will be enhanced by nurturing development, learning and achievement through engaging environments where students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members feel connected, safe and successful.

An important feature of creating a socially inclusive school climate is engaging the entire school community in the process. Whole School Engagement activities that advance social inclusion knowledge, skills and dispositions in students, teachers, staff, administrators and others positively impact the school climate. An inclusive school climate that fosters understanding and respect for all can influence how students think and act both within and beyond the school.

School-wide opportunities focused on social inclusion raise awareness and create an educational environment where respect and acceptance are the norm and all students feel included and engaged. This welcoming community cultivates a positive school climate and enhances other school-wide efforts such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Whole school activities also offer a platform to demonstrate the power of young people to positively impact their school community by promoting social inclusion. Using tools such as Spread the Word to End the Word (R-word Campaign); Fans in the Stands; Unified Sports Field Days and the play, It's Our School, Too!, provide opportunities to integrate Unified Sports and inclusive youth leadership efforts into activities that spread social inclusion throughout the school.

Helpful Resources

Be sure to check out the series of mini-lessons that can be used school-wide within a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework:

- **Tolerance and Acceptance**
- **Understanding Disabilities**

found at

www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources

What is the Principle of Meaningful Involvement in Whole School Engagement?

The principle of meaningful involvement provides an important foundation for students with and without intellectual disabilities to be engaged as valued members of the school community. A socially inclusive school ensures every student is given an opportunity to contribute to the success of his or her school because of the unique skills and qualities they bring to the work.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

• All students have the ability and opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the success and well-being of the school community.

• Students with and without intellectual disabilities are intentionally engaged in whole school activities in formal and informal settings.

• Young people and adults work collaboratively to expect, nurture and support acceptance and respectful behavior in fostering a socially inclusive school climate.

Implementing Whole School Engagement

The first step to engaging your whole school in advancing social inclusion is typically to have a planning meeting with your school's Unified Leadership Team. As you work to become a Unified Champion School, be sure students are engaged as co-leaders throughout the process. Remember to always be on the lookout for opportunities to hand over decision-making and leadership to young people. The roles that each of you play will vary from school to school. The questions and checklists found below will be answered and completed by youth, youth and adults working together, or adults as appropriate for your particular school environment.

Topics to discuss with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team

• What types of whole school activities does our school need/want to incorporate?

• Where do we already have formal and informal opportunities for students to understand and begin to incorporate social inclusion?

• What types of whole school activities (e.g., pep rallies, assemblies, speakers, contests) do we already do in our school? Can/do any of these activities already support social inclusion? If not, how can they be revised to support the social inclusion of all students?

• What types of whole school activities are valued by students with and without intellectual disabilities at the school?

• Are there any existing clubs, teams, classes or school groups that might be interested in planning and leading a whole school activity?

• How does the Principle of Meaningful Involvement impact the type of whole school activities that are implemented and how they are presented?

• Who will be the adult advisor/coordinator for various activities?

Examples of Whole School Engagement Activities in Unified Champion Schools

Whole School Engagement

Inclusive Sports

Inclusive Youth Leadership

Special Olympics
Unified Champion Schools
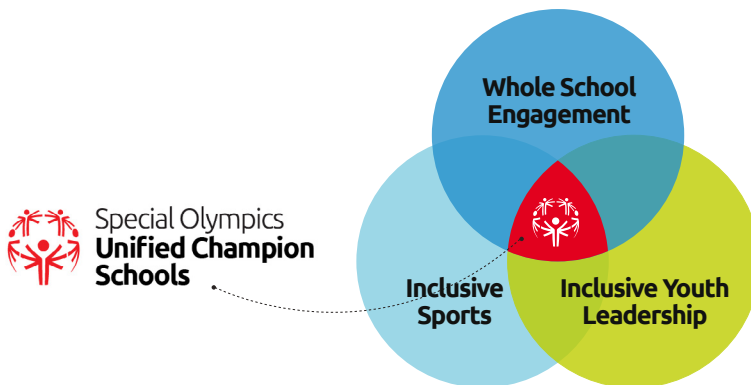
Inclusive Sports

• A campaign to engage the whole school as Fans in the Stands is initiated at the start of the Unified Basketball season.

• The Unified PE class hosts a Unified Sports Festival to promote wellness and the importance of physical activity for all students.

• The intramural and interscholastic Unified Sports teams provide demonstrations during half-time of the varsity sports throughout the year.

• Pep rallies are held for all interscholastic sports teams, including Unified Sports and varsity teams.

Inclusive Youth Leadership

• The National Honor Society, which includes students with and without disabilities, hosts a series of assemblies once a month to increase awareness of social inclusion and foster respect among all students.

• The junior prom committee seeks nominations for diverse students to be on the prom court and engages students with and without intellectual disabilities in planning and decorating for the prom.

• The Unified Club works with the school PBIS leadership committee to incorporate social inclusion as part of the school-wide expectations for student behavior.

Whole School Engagement

• The required civics class incorporates lessons on social inclusion into the unit on social justice to ensure all students increase their knowledge and skills.

• The Student Council coordinates a Spread the Word to End the Word campaign to raise consciousness of the school and community about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the word, "retard(ed)," and encourage people to pledge to stop using the R-word.

• The Art Department holds a poster contest inviting students to design posters for the school halls, advocating for social inclusion and creating a welcoming school climate.

Enhancing Whole School Engagement Experiences

• Include school administration early in the process. Engage administrators in concrete, visible and active ways at both school and district levels.

• Be intentional about incorporating social inclusion into curriculum development, school-wide PBIS efforts, school climate improvement and wellness activities.

• Share the goals of whole school engagement (e.g., raise awareness about inclusion and create a socially inclusive school climate; recruit more participants in Unified Sports or inclusive school clubs).

• Start from where you are and start small. Select and plan an initial activity that is manageable, energizing and appeals to the whole school.

• Build on current activities that are already being offered with an intentional focus on having it become a socially inclusive activity.

• Develop a process for engaging all students in social inclusion efforts, ensuring the development of socially inclusive attitudes, values, knowledge, skills and actions.

• When building awareness, nurturing inclusive relationships and building expectations for inclusive behavior provide opportunities in both structured and unstructured settings.

• Provide consistent opportunities to engage a broad range of stakeholders throughout the school and wider community in developing, implementing and sustaining a wide range of inclusive activities.

• Connect with your state Special Olympics program for support and sharing successes.

• Share photos, videos and stories of social inclusion activities and events using the school's website or social media.

Helpful Resources

More information on how adults can effectively nurture inclusive youth leadership can be found in the **Inclusive Youth Leadership Guidelines** at www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources

There are a plethora of ways the whole school can be engaged in learning about and creating a socially inclusive school. The tips and checklists that follow offer some ideas to get started with a few different activities that can be customized and expanded upon to best address your identified needs and fit into the structure of your school.

Getting Started Checklist for School Assemblies

School assemblies can be effective for sharing information with the entire student body, creating energy and excitement or orientating the school community to a new opportunity.

___1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss ways to engage the entire school in activities to increase social inclusion. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the assembly.

___2. Dedicate a club, class or group meeting to identifying an issue of concern students would like to address during an assembly and brainstorm ideas for the structure for the activity, such as a guest speaker, pep rally, activity day or student presentation.

___3. Research the issue(s), understand who it affects and what changes are needed.

___4. Meet with the principal to discuss plans for the activity and ensure administrative support and approval. Make sure the presentation is well thought out and organized.

___5. Develop a plan.
• Set the date and time for the assembly.
• Create a plan for each task that needs to be completed, including deadlines and a list of who is responsible for carrying out each step.
• Make sure the date, time and location are all cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.
• Consider joining efforts with another group in the school or community to broaden the group of stakeholders.

___6. Invite guest speakers, develop a presentation and prepare any necessary materials.
• Make sure the assembly is relevant to your community. Try to personalize parts of the assembly to your local community and/or school.
• Get the audience involved, ensuring the event is fun, memorable and engaging.
• Incorporate a speech, skit or other presentation to inform attendees about the topic.
• Consider using videos, visuals or other multimedia to maintain participants' interest.
• Identify and utilize people who can lead part of the assembly and will educate, motivate and activate participants.

___7. Communicate with school staff about the date, purpose of the assembly and why this is important to your school. Consider asking staff to assist with communication through announcements, the school website, letters sent home, school newspaper and local news media.

___8. Publicize the assembly around the school.

___9. After the assembly, be sure to thank all of those involved with the successful event. Send a special thank you note to any guest speakers.

Getting Started Checklist for
"It's Our School, Too!" Play

This play is written for a cast of 10-20 students with and without intellectual disabilities. The script addresses a variety of vignettes from real schools designed to raise awareness of the school experience through the eyes of students with intellectual disabilities.

___1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss performing the play, It's Our School, Too! in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the performance.

___2. Access the script for the play in the Educator Resources section found at: www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources

___3.   Share the script with students in your drama class, club or other interested group. Discuss student interest in performing the play and identify the areas of concern students have about inclusion in their school.

___4. Develop a plan.
• Assign roles and schedule rehearsals.
• Set the date, time and location for the performance.
• Create a plan for each task that needs to be completed, including deadlines, and a list of who is responsible for carrying out each step.
• Make sure the date, time and location are all cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.

___5. Communicate with school staff about the date, purpose of the play, and why it is important to your school. Consider asking staff to assist with communication through announcements, the school website, letters sent home, school newspaper and local news media.

___6. Publicize the assembly around the school and community.

___7. Conduct performance(s) for the school and/or community.

___8. Facilitate a forum after the play to discuss what the audience experienced and identify any relevant issues that exist in the local school and/or community.

___9. After the performance, be sure to thank all of those involved with the successful event. Send a special thank you note to any donors or sponsors.

___10. Work with the student council, Unified Club, school advisory committee or other interested group to analyze the issues and develop a plan to implement changes to create a more socially inclusive school.

SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD

Getting Started Checklist for Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign

The Spread the Word to End the Word Campaign **www.r-word.org** raises the consciousness of society about the dehumanizing and hurtful effects of the word "retard(ed)" and encourage people to pledge to stop using the R-word. Activities vary from school to school, but are often planned to coincide with the Spread the Word annual day of awareness (held yearly the first Wednesday in March).

___1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss holding an R-Word Campaign in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the campaign.

___2. Work with students in the Unified Club, class or other group in the school to organize activities to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of using the R-word.

___3. Meet with the principal to discuss plans for the campaign and ensure administrative support and approval.

___4. Decide what activities the campaign will include, such as:
• Hold a small rally or school assembly. Have students give speeches about the campaign and distribute information to students.
• Set up a pledge station where all students will sign the pledge to stop using the R-word.
• Sell t-shirts with a slogan about stopping the use of the R-word.
• Provide a lesson on the use of respectful words that includes information on stopping the use of the R-word as part of your school's PBIS lessons on behavior expectations.
• If school policies allow, encourage students to share information about the campaign via social media or the school website. They might also consider writing a blog, developing a podcast or including information in the school newspaper.

___5. Develop a plan.
* Schedule the campaign activities.
• Create a plan for each task that needs to be completed, including deadlines and a list of who is responsible for carrying out each step.
• Make sure the scheduled activities are all cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.
• Hold a meeting with everyone who will be working a pledge station and provide them with talking points and discussion topics.

___6. Communicate with school staff about the dates, purpose of the campaign and why this campaign is important to your school. Consider asking staff to assist with communication through announcements, the school website, letters sent home, the school newsletter and local news media.

___7. Check with your state Special Olympics office for R-word stickers, posters, banners and other items to use at the pledge station. Check the resources available here: **www.r-word.org/r-word-resources**

___8. Publicize the R-word Campaign around the school and community.

___9. Be sure to track your statistics such as the number of pledges signed, number of people involved and highlights of success stories. Consider asking the local newspaper to share this information with the community.

Getting Started Check list for Fans in the Stands™

Fans in the Stands commit to ensuring that every student or team has supporting fans who cheer at every game, rain or shine, win or lose. Be a Fan™ is a fully integrated marketing campaign designed to send a powerful message that taps into core values and attributes: unity, acceptance, empowerment, respect, inclusion, dignity, courage, strength, pride, confidence and fun.

___1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss getting Fans in the Stands implemented in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the activities.

___2. Organize groups of students who may be interested in being fans in the stands. This effort may be organized by the Unified Club, Pep Club, Cheerleading Squad or other group at the school.

___3. Develop a calendar of all interscholastic, Special Olympics and Unified Sports events that will take place during each semester.

___4. Publicize Fans in the Stands. Communicate with school staff about the dates of events. Ask staff to attend, if possible, and to assist with communication through announcements, the school website and the school newsletter.

___5. Identify students who will take responsibility for ensuring cheering fans are present at each event.

___6. Prior to each event, create items such as posters and t-shirts to encourage the team

Getting Started Checklist for Unified Sports Day or Unified Sports Festival

Host a Unified Sports Day or Unified Sports Festival at the school with students organizing a day of inclusive sports activities for the student body.

___1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss hosting a Unified Sports Day at your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the activity.

___2. Meet with the principal to get approval and administrative support. Share the goals and possible activities. Be sure to stress the positive impact it can have on creating a socially inclusive school climate.

___3. Consider collaborating with the physical education department or Unified Sports coach/team members to organize activities and make accommodations to ensure all activities are accessible to all students.

___4. Develop a plan.
• Set the date and time for the day's activities.
• Decide on the activities to be included, whether the day will have a theme or focus on a specific sport, and identify how all students will have equitable opportunities to participate.
• Create a plan for each task that needs to be completed, including deadlines and a list of who is responsible for carrying out each step.
• Make sure the date, time and location are all cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.

___5. Communicate with school staff about the dates, purpose of the event and why this is important to your school.

___6. Publicize the Unified Sports Day to your school and community. Reach out to the local newspaper and radio station. Include information about the event on the local access television station.
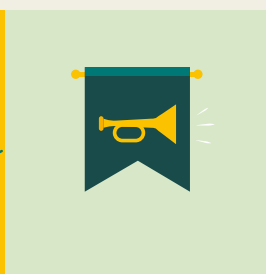
___7. After the event, be sure to thank all of those involved with making it successful. Send a special thank you note to any sponsors or donors.
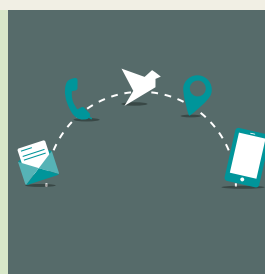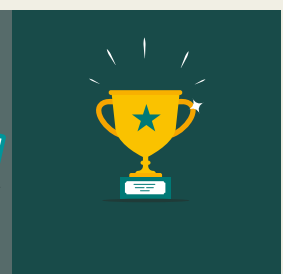
Meet with the Team
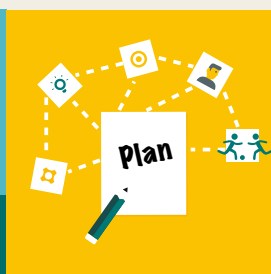
Develop a plan Set date & time

Publicize the event

Amplify the event through social media

Thank evryone involved after the success

Whole School Engagement Action Plan

STRATEGY / ACTIVITY	TASKS	When will each task be completed?	Who will facilitate the completion of this goal?	Who Else can help?
1.	1.	1.	1.	
2.	2.	2.	2.	
3.	3.	3.	3.	
4.	4.	4.	4.	
5.	5.	5.	5.	
6.	6.	6.	6.	
7.	7.	7.	7.	
8.	8.	8.	8.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: ☐ Inclusive Youth Leadership ☐ Unified Sports				
1.	1.	1.	1.	
2.	2.	2.	2.	
3.	3.	3.	3.	
4.	4.	4.	4.	
5.	5.	5.	5.	
6.	6.	6.	6.	
7.	7.	7.	7.	
8.	8.	8.	8.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: ☐ Inclusive Youth Leadership ☐ Unified Sports				

Inclusive Youth Leadership
Implementation Guide

Inclusive Youth Leadership is a unique and important component because it:

- ✓ Encourages co-leadership opportunities that promote deeper understanding of the strengths, gifts and skills all students possess and can use to contribute meaningfully to the school community

- ✓ Brings together students with and without intellectual disabilities as leaders in their school, creating a socially inclusive environment in which lasting friendships can form.

- ✓ Provides students with and without intellectual disabilities the knowledge, skills and dispositions to take on leadership roles in their school.

- ✓ Offers opportunities for all students to become leaders, developing an understanding that students of all abilities can lead and expanding student investment in creating a socially inclusive school.

Opportunities to nurture youth leadership abound in any high school. Ensuring that various leadership roles are inclusive and accessible to all students with a variety of skills, abilities and perspectives will greatly enhance efforts to create and sustain change. Possibilities might include a student-led effort to form a Unified Sports team, initiating a Unified Club comprised of students with and without intellectual disabilities, working to intentionally include a diverse group of students within existing clubs, or engaging non-traditional leaders in school and classroom decision-making

Inclusive youth leadership offers opportunities for young people of all abilities to be leaders in their schools and communities by promoting equity and acceptance. These leadership activities help students find their voices by teaching them to become change agents, striving for respect and inclusion. Social inclusion is best fostered when activities for classrooms, for the whole school, and within extracurricular and community contexts are designed and implemented by a diverse group of students within a school.

Helpful Resources

Guidance and activities for youth to develop inclusive leadership skills can be found in the **Inclusive Youth Leadership Activitie**s at www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources

GOALS OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP

• Young people representing the diversity of the student body are engaged in leadership positions, and school staff members identify youth leadership as a priority for the school.

• Youth with and without intellectual disabilities become co-leaders in their schools, serving as catalysts for change. This is imperative in moving beyond having some students identified as the "helpers" while students with intellectual disabilities are considered the "helped". Co-leadership is a strengths-based model where all students have equitable opportunities to contribute to their school community in meaningful ways.

• Administrators and teachers actively support the vision and insight of youth as they step into leadership positions and create inclusive environments in their schools.

• Teachers gain a greater appreciation of the ability of a wide range of students to take leadership roles and for the viability and value of providing opportunities for students with different learning abilities to collaborate on classroom and academic projects.

• Youth with and without disabilities gain the skills, knowledge and dispositions to become advocates for themselves and their peers.

• Policymakers and education leaders develop policies and support quality practices to encourage inclusive school climates that are safe and nurturing learning environments for all students.

What is the Principle of Meaningful Involvement in Inclusive Youth Leadership?

The principle of meaningful involvement provides an important foundation for students with and without intellectual disabilities to be offered leadership opportunities through Unified Champion School activities. A socially inclusive school ensures every student is given an opportunity to contribute due to the unique skills and qualities they bring to the work.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

• All students have the ability and opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the success and well-being of the school community.
• Students with and without intellectual disabilities are intentionally engaged in inclusive leadership roles in formal and informal settings.
• Youth and adults work collaboratively to enhance the knowledge, skills and dispositions of each individual.

Meaningful involvement is not achieved when some students:

• Display superior skills and abilities without involving their peers in equitable ways.
• Take control of most decisions and leadership activities.
• Do not participate actively, seek to engage a diverse group of students, or nurture leadership skills in themselves or others.

!

Youth Leadership Tip

Watch for both formal and informal opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to take an active leadership role. Sometimes adults take control of decisions simply because it's faster and easier.

Practice the guideline,
"Always be looking for times adults can step back and let young people lead."

Examples of Inclusive Youth Leadership Activities in Unified Champion Schools

Whole School Engagement

Inclusive Sports

Inclusive Youth Leadership

Special Olympics **Unified Champion Schools**
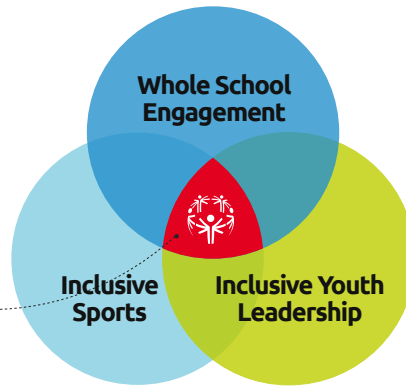
Inclusive Sports

• Students advocate and obtain administrative support for starting a Unified Bocce team. They help organize practices and competitions, as well as manage uniforms.

• Students work with a physical education teacher to design a Unified PE course as an elective.

• Students form a cheerleading squad for the Unified Soccer team.

• The Student Council works with the school board to change the policy on how athletic letters are awarded to include Unified Sports teams

Inclusive Youth Leadership

• Students and a faculty advisor work together to initiate a Unified Club in their school to work on promoting social inclusion.

• Students in the National Honor Society work with faculty to revise their by-laws to ensure students with and without disabilities have equitable opportunities to be members.

• The school's Student Advisory Committee works with the principal to re-envision the group as an intergenerational leadership committee comprised of students with and without disabilities and adults.

Whole School Engagement

• A language arts class organizes and conducts an essay contest in partnership with the local Kiwanis Club, asking students to share their vision for a socially inclusive school.

• The Drama Club works with the Creative Writing Club to revise the script for the play, It's Our School, Too!, to reflect current issues in their school and put on a performance for the entire school.

• Students start a mentoring program pairing high school students with and without intellectual disabilities with middle or elementary school students.

Youth Leadership Tip

Make sure all students have opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the work. Refrain from setting up partnerships that put students without intellectual disabilities in the role of "helper" with students with intellectual disabilities being the "helpee." Provide accommodations for everyone to be successful such as breaking down tasks into smaller chunks, making adaptations so the task is more accessible (e.g., taping a speech for a student who is anxious about speaking in front of groups), or arranging for extra time to carry out a complicated task. It is always good to remember to only give the help that is needed to allow each person to be as independent as possible.

Topics to discuss with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team

• What types of inclusive youth leadership opportunities does our school need/want to incorporate?

• Where do we already have formal and informal leadership opportunities for students? Are these inclusive opportunities, involving typical as well as atypical leaders?

• What inclusive youth leadership opportunities are valued by students with and without intellectual disabilities?

• How do we nurture student partnerships to support students with and without intellectual disabilities in serving in co-leadership capacities?

• How does the Principle of Meaningful Involvement impact the type of inclusive youth leadership opportunities offered to students with and without intellectual disabilities?

• How will we structure youth leadership? Will we incorporate it into existing groups or clubs in the school? Start a Unified Club? Create more intergenerational leadership opportunities?

• Who will be the adult advisor/coordinator for various activities?

!

Youth Leadership Tip

The first step to getting inclusive youth leadership started in your school is typically to have a planning meeting with your school's Unified Champion School Leadership Team.

As you work through implementation of the program in your school, be sure students are engaged throughout the process.

Remember to always be on the lookout for opportunities to hand over decision-making and leadership to young people. The roles that each of you play will vary from school to school.

Each step in answering the questions and completing the checklists found below will be completed by youth, youth and adults working together, or adults as appropriate for your particular school environment.

Enhancing the Inclusive Youth Leadership Experience

• Ensure adults are adequately prepared to foster inclusive youth leadership.

• Be intentional about developing the leadership skills of all students.

• Co-create the values, norms and processes that groups will use to guide their work.

• Be explicit about what inclusive youth leadership means, including the commitment to inclusiveness and expectations for all stakeholders (youth and adults).

• Support all students in contributing in meaningful ways. Guard against some students being the "leaders" with other students being the "helpers."

• Help students learn to model social inclusion throughout their daily interactions at school.

• Be sure to cultivate youth leadership beyond the typical leader, spreading leadership opportunities to a wide range of students.

• Provide ongoing opportunities for students and adults to reflect on and refine their leadership skills.

• Guide students in providing frequent communications with staff, administrators and other students to keep them informed of their progress and activities, while increasing the numbers of people within the school who are committed to the work of social inclusion.

• Share photos, videos and stories of social inclusion activities and events using the school's website or social media.

Getting Started Checklist for Unified Clubs

___1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss starting a Unified Club in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting and organizing the club.

___2. Work with an administrator to help identify a teacher to serve as the advisor to the club.

___3. Make personal invitations to students with and without intellectual disabilities who are interested in promoting equality and acceptance. Identify a core group of 3-5 students who can serve as an advisory committee during the initial set-up stages of the club as well as provide leadership after it is established.

___4. Work with the newly created student advisory committee to accomplish the steps necessary to establish the club with the adult advisor supporting the student leaders in their efforts, while allowing the students to take primary leadership.
• Find out what your school's requirements are for starting a club and make sure you follow the appropriate steps for approval.

• Develop a presentation that includes why it is important to have a socially inclusive student club and what type of events you plan to do. Include facts or statistics and identify the issue(s) the club will address within the school. It is important to explain how this club can impact students and improve your school.

• Work with your principal to have the socially inclusive student club designated as a sanctioned school club, following all rules and policies that are expected of other clubs in the school.

• Set up an infrastructure for the club, including the election of members to fulfill leadership roles (e.g., chair, secretary, treasurer). Whenever possible establish co-leaders, having students with and without intellectual disabilities partnering to serve as club officers or committee chairs.

• Ensure someone is designated to:
    o Be the liaison with the adult advisor and your state Special Olympics office, as needed.
    o Keep track of funds and project costs.
    o Maintain membership records and take meeting notes.

___5. Have an introductory meeting with the advisory committee and club advisor to determine key logistics for the club.
• How often with the club meet?
• When will the club meet and for how long? Consider taking advantage of time during the school day to maximize club participation.
• Where will the club meet?
• Is there money for activities? Does your school allocate money for clubs? Does your state Special Olympics office have money to support club activities? Are there grant opportunities (such as State Farm Youth Advisory Board or Youth Service America grants)? What fundraising activities can the club participate in?

___6. Make sure the student advisory committee understands their roles and responsibilities.
• Consider issues determined to be important by the members of this club.
• Establish a protocol for making decisions and provide a structure of leadership in fulfilling established goals.

Next Steps for the Unified Club's Student Advisory Committee

Come up with a plan to recruit members and engage them in the club:
- Extend personal invitations to friends, teammates and other interested students to join the club.
- Advertise the club through posters, announcements, school paper or other communications. You might coordinate with an art club or class to help make colorful posters. Be sure to announce time and place for meetings, and describe the types of activities you will be doing.
- If allowed, use social media to promote the club. Include information about the club, pictures and descriptions of past activities and updates on any upcoming activities. Invite students from your school to stay up-to-date with the club's activities.
- Talk to the special education teacher(s) in your school to help engage students with disabilities. Ask them to share club information with students and assist you with any advice you may need for recruiting students with disabilities.

Hold your first meeting. Establish an agenda for the meeting that includes the following:
- Provide a description of the club and its purpose.
- Include an "icebreaker" or "get to know you" activity at the first meeting to start establishing friendships among club members.
- Have the student advisory committee introduce themselves and explain their roles.
- Distribute a membership form to obtain contact information from each member.
- Establish club routines and protocols for interacting and collaborating which ensure everyone is meaningfully engaged (such as discussion strategies that provide opportunities for each member to participate equitably).
- Brainstorm ideas for future activities.
- Discuss ideas for committees to get everyone involved and provide more opportunities for leadership.
- Share the dates of upcoming meetings and activities.
- Give closing remarks.
- Remind members of the next meeting and encourage them to recruit additional members.

Develop a list of activities to build into the initial meetings.
- Consider including diversity or disabilities awareness training as part of one of your first few meetings to ensure all participants have a better understanding of various disabilities so students can better support each other.
- Discuss the Unified Champion Schools program and how the Unified Club can expand opportunities for social inclusion.

Use your regularly scheduled meetings to further enhance the skills of club members while accomplishing goals and planning for activities. Meetings should be led by the student advisory committee, but find opportunities for all students to take a leadership role during the meetings.
- Always welcome new members or interested students.
- Discuss ideas and strategies with the group. Be certain each individual has the opportunity to share his or her thoughts.
- If you see an individual controlling conversation or leadership of the group, pause and ask others about their opinion on the topic.
- Provide all members with notes of the meeting and action items to be completed through social media or other established forms of communication.

Getting Started Checklist for Making Existing Clubs Inclusive

Transform an existing school club into an inclusive club supporting the group to include diverse student representation, including students with and without intellectual disabilities. Engage your inclusive club in the following steps:

___1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss making more clubs at your school inclusive. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the activity.

___2. Talk with your principal about social inclusion and why it is important for students with disabilities to be included in school clubs.

___3. Speak with club advisors and officers about the value of inclusive youth leadership and how it aligns with and enhances their goals.

___4. Connect with the club members to better understand their current work. Ask them the following questions:
• What is the club's mission?
• What type of work are you currently doing?
• Are students with intellectual disabilities members of the club?
• How might the club benefit from including students with disabilities?
• How might the school benefit from having clubs with more diverse student representation?

___5. Work with the club members to increase their understanding of social inclusion and gain skills in collaborating with diverse students. Club members might find it helpful to lead activities from the Get Into It curriculum found at https://getintoit.specialolympics.org/educators.

___6. If there is a selection process for the club, guide members in establishing a selection protocol to increase the diversity of student representation to include students with intellectual disabilities.

___7. Engage students by visiting inclusive general education and special education classrooms to identify students who are interested in being part of the club. You might also consider requesting that teachers ask their students if they are interested.

___8. Hang posters about the club around school and include messages in the daily announcements to gain interest.

___9. Continue to work with members to ensure all students are provided leadership and co-leadership opportunities and increase skills in collaborative decision-making. Utilize activities from the Inclusive Youth Leadership Activities Guidebook to ensure members feel more equipped to lead in equitable situations.

___10. Read more information about how to transform existing school clubs to become socially inclusive in the Inclusive Youth Leadership Resources.

Inclusive Youth Leadership Action Plan

STRATEGY / ACTIVITY	TASKS	When will each task be completed?	Who will Facilitate the completion of this goal?	Who Else can help?
1.	1.	1.	1.	
2.	2.	2.	2.	
3.	3.	3.	3.	
4.	4.	4.	4.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: ☐ Whole School Engagement ☐ Unified Sports	5.	5.	5.	
	6.	6.	6.	
	7.	7.	7.	
	8.	8.	8.	
1.	1.	1.	1.	
2.	2.	2.	2.	
3.	3.	3.	3.	
4.	4.	4.	4.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: ☐ Whole School Engagement ☐ Unified Sports	5.	5.	5.	
	6.	6.	6.	
	7.	7.	7.	
	8.	8.	8.	

Unified Sports
Implementation Guide

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is a component of the Unified Schools strategy that engages students with and without intellectual disabilities on the same sports team. Unified Sports provides valuable social inclusion opportunities for all teammates to build friendships, on and off the playing field. Through modeling genuine inclusion for the entire school community, all teammates are challenged to improve their sports skills and fitness. In the process, young people with and without disabilities increase their positive attitudes and perceptions toward their peers, establishing friendships.

There are three basic models of Special Olympics Unified Sports. It is up to each school to choose which model or combination of models will be most beneficial for their students. These models provide a framework for guiding implementation within each school in offering a variety of Unified Sports options for students:

• **Competitive**
• **Player Development**
• **Recreation**

What distinguishes each of the Unified Sports Models from each other?

Competitive

• Students with and without intellectual disabilities train and compete on the same team.

• All teammates should be of similar age and ability levels.

• Teams adhere to training, competition and team composition requirements.

• School-based teams often compete within an interscholastic athletic league, an intramural setting, or through Special Olympics tournaments.

Player Development

• Students of higher abilities serve as mentors, assisting teammates of lower abilities in developing sport-specific skills and tactics.

• All teammates should be of similar age.

• There is a non-competitive, cooperative team environment.

Recreation

• This is the most flexible model because it does not follow any prescribed training or team composition requirements.

• Recreational sports opportunities are offered within a non-competitive realm.

• Recreation typically takes place solely on school property and does not advance into competitions.

• Examples of Unified Recreation activities in schools include Unified PE, Unified Field Day, or a Unified Walking Club.

GOALS OF UNIFIED SPORTS

• Friendship and socialization
Participation in Unified Sports provides a forum for positive social interaction between teammates and often leads to long-lasting friendships.

• Sport skills development
Students develop sports skills to enable them to compete with greater proficiency and develop physical fitness.

• Meaningful inclusion
All teammates play important, meaningful and valued roles on the team.

• Competition experience
Students with and without intellectual disabilities benefit from physical and mental challenges by participating in a variety of competitive and non-competitive environments.

What is the Principle of Meaningful Involvement?

The principle of meaningful involvement is the most important foundational philosophy when developing inclusive school sports and activities. Students are provided a sports environment that ensures every player is given multiple opportunities throughout the school year to develop their unique skills and qualities.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement
• Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the performance of the team/activity.
• Teammates participate according to the rules of competition.
• Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.

Meaningful involvement is not achieved when some team members:
• Display superior sports skills without involving their teammates.
• Control most aspects of the game, especially during the most critical periods.
• Do not train or practice regularly and only show up on the day of competition.

WHY DO SCHOOLS NEED UNIFIED SPORTS?

In January 2013, "…Office for Civil Rights issues guidance detailing school districts' legal obligations to provide students with disabilities equal access to athletics activities. The guidance letter clarifies existing law and encourages school districts to improve and expand upon athletic opportunities for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities have the right, under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, to equal opportunity to participate in their schools' extracurricular activities…."

IDEAs
that
Work

U.S. Office of Special
Education Programs
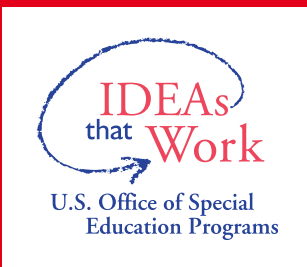
Basketball

Track & Field

Bocce

Skiing

Bowling

Examples of Unified Sports Opportunities

Check with your State Special Olympics Program to see which sports are supported in your state if your school wants to include a Unified Sports Team under the competitive model.

Softball

Flag Football

Soccer

Floor Hockey

Handball

Golf

Examples of Unified Sports Activities in Unified Champion Schools

Inclusive Sports

• The Unified Bocce team hosts a series of instructional sessions during lunch to offer students an opportunity to learn how to play.

• After the intramural flag football season ends, the Unified Sports teams join together to host a celebration and awards banquet to honor everyone who supported the teams.

Inclusive Youth Leadership

• Students with and without intellectual disabilities on the Unified Sports intramural ski team organize and speak at an assembly about student collaboration to enhance each other's skills.

• High school students lead a week long sports camp for elementary students to develop soccer skills in students with and without intellectual disabilities.

Whole School Engagement

• The Student Council organizes Fans in the Stands to engage the whole student body in supporting the Unified Sports teams.

• The Physical Education Department works with each of their classes to host a Unified Sports Day focused on one of the sports they've studied each semester.

Implementing Unified Sports

To initiate a Unified Sports opportunity in your school, you'll typically want to start with a planning meeting with your school's Unified Champion School Leadership Team and / or your Unified Club. You may also want to invite a Special Olympics staff member to the meeting. As you work through the implementation of Unified Sports in your school, be sure students are engaged as co-leaders throughout the process. Remember to always be on the lookout for opportunities to hand over decision-making and leadership to young people. Each step in answering the questions and completing the checklists found below will be completed by youth, youth and adults working together, or adults as appropriate for your particular school environment.

Topics to discuss with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team:

• Which Unified Sports Model (Competitive, Player Development or Recreation) is most appropriate for the students in our school? Connect with your state Special Olympics Program to learn about what opportunities exist for interscholastic or team-based competition.
  o Which sports are of greatest interest to the students with and without intellectual disabilities?
  o Which Unified Sports does your State Special Olympics Program offer for schools?

• Which sport(s) will allow for the most meaningful participation opportunities for students? Are there any existing clubs, teams, classes or school groups that might be interested in planning and leading a Unified Sports opportunity? The sport(s) you select will determine which students can participate and how many. This is a very important decision.

• What types of Unified Sports activities does our school need/want to incorporate?

• How will we work together/collaborate/be involved with the state Special Olympics Program?

• Where do we already have formal and informal opportunities for students to understand and begin to incorporate social inclusion?

• How will our coaches be trained?

• How does the Principle of Meaningful Involvement impact the type of sports activities that are implemented and how they are presented?

• Who will be the adult advisor/coordinator for various activities?

• Other things to consider:
  Which sports facilities will you be able to use and when?
  What paperwork is required for participants?
  How will transportation be arranged, if needed?

Enhancing Unified Sports®:

Social inclusion efforts like Unified Sports will have a greater impact and be more sustainable when they are connected to other initiatives and goals of the school. For example, the school may decide to include indicators of social inclusion from the Social Inclusion Rubric (found in the Establishing Your Team section of the Playbook) when assessing progress on the school improvement plan. Other strategies for enhancing the impact of the Unified Sports experience and increasing positive impacts throughout the school include:

• Recognize Unified Sports teams (both intramural and interscholastic) in the same ways as other teams in the school (e.g., pep rallies, morning announcements, varsity lettering, yearbook pictures, athletics banquet).

• Encourage Unified Sports teammates to wear their jerseys, warm up jackets or other team attire before or after a competition so they can be seen and acknowledged by all classmates during the school day.

• Hold inclusive post-game parties and celebrations to build team cohesion and deeper social connections.

• Hold a fun, inclusive sport activity such as a kickball game, yoga or inclusive walking as part of Unified Sports Recreation opportunities for other members of the school to experience Unified Sports.

• Consider some type of culminating competition, celebration or recognition within each season.

Unified Sports® Sustainability Tips

- Integrate Unified Sports into the physical education curriculum.

- Ensure Unified Sports is recognized as an official school sport, activity and club on campus.

- Reduce costs by using the same uniforms across sports and grade levels, where appropriate. Purchase a single set of uniforms that can be used for multiple sports year after year, and share school equipment for Unified Sports teams when possible.

- Work with the Unified Youth Club and/or Athletics Boosters to raise funds for the Unified Sports program.

- Get key Unified Sports expenses, such as transportation or coach stipends, included within the annual school budget.

- Involve younger students in leadership roles to help ensure the program will continue after older students graduate.

- Start "Fans in the Stands" to share the excitement of Unified Sports with the entire school and local community.

Helpful Resources

Unified Sports Coaches Training & Sport-Specific Courses: www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports

Special Olympics Unified Sports® Resources: www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports

Special Olympics Coaching Guides for each sport: www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports

Seven Criteria for Unified Sports Success: www.specialolympics.org/unifiedsports

Student Guide: www.specialolympics.org/hsplaybook-resources

There are distinctive differences between the three Unified Sports models, and implementation will vary depending on the particular sport, school structure and model selected. The checklists which follow serve as a good starting point for creating Unified Sports opportunities. Whether your school is rural, urban or somewhere in between, the following activities provide ideas that can be adjusted to suit the needs and interests of your students. While not included here in checklist form, schools interested in starting Unified PE as an elective course can find curriculum and resources for getting started at **LINK**

!

Inclusion Tip

Certain Unified Sports (e.g., Track and Field, Bocce, Bowling) do not require ability matching, which allows students of any ability level to participate. Schools should note, however, that data has shown individual sports provide less inclusive personal relationship building than team sports.

Unified Sports Competitive & Player Development Models Getting Started Checklist

___1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School
Leadership Team to discuss getting a Unified Sports team started in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the season.

___2. Make contact with your state Special Olympics office to begin the process of forming a Unified Sports team at your school.

___3. Choose the sport you will implement and when/where it will take place.

___4. Recruit an adult head coach and identify others who can support the team in different ways.

___5. Complete training requirements for coaches. A free on-line course is available at www.NFHSLearn.com.

___6. Recruit teammates with and without intellectual disabilities.
Ensure there will be a meaningful role for each student who is interested in participating (e.g. teammate, assistant coach, club member, fan, manager).
    6a. **Competitive:** Use a "targeted approach" to focus recruitment on students without disabilities who will be of similar ability as students with disabilities and will be committed to the team.
    6b. **Player Development:** Focus recruitment on students without disabilities who will be of similar age as students with disabilities and be committed to the team.

___7. Ask interested teammates/parents to complete and submit required participation forms.

___8. Secure logistics and set a team schedule:
    • Work with Athletic Director or Administration to identify the team practice schedule, transportation, equipment, uniforms and facility needs.
    • Develop a competition schedule for intramural or interscholastic teams.

___9. Conduct team orientation meeting (this could include parents).

___10. Hold regular practices and competitions.

___11. Ensure the Unified Sports teams receive the same kind of support as other teams in the school, including cheerleaders, pep rallies, recognition banquets, sports achievement awards and letters.

Unified Sports Recreation Model
Getting Started Checklist

___1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss getting Unified Sports started in your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the activity.

___2. Make contact with your state Special Olympics office to begin the process of initiating a Unified Sports activity at your school.

___3. Choose the sport/activity you will implement and when/where it will take place.

___4. Recruit an adult and identify others who can support the activity in different ways.

___5. Complete training requirements for coaches. A free on-line course is available at www.NFHSLearn.com.

___6. Recruit participants with and without intellectual disabilities. Ensure there will be a meaningful role for each student who is interested in participating.

___7. Ask interested students/parents to complete and submit required participation forms.

___8. Secure logistics and set a schedule:
• Work with Athletic Director or Administration to identify the schedule, transportation, equipment, uniforms and facility needs.

___9. Conduct an orientation meeting (this could include parents).

___10. Get together on a regular basis with a schedule.

Unified Sports Coach Guidelines

• Have the necessary knowledge.
• Complete Unified Sports coach's training.
• Select the team members at the appropriate age and
  ability level to ensure full participation.
• Be a non-playing head coach.
• Commit to regular practice sessions.
• Coach everyone using individualized approaches.
• Nurture and expect teamwork from all players.

Getting Started Checklist for Unified Sports Day or Unified Sports Festival

Host a Unified Sports Day or Unified Sports Festival for the school, with students organizing a day of inclusive sports activities for the student body. This is an example of Unified Recreation, which provides an opportunity for the entire school to be involved.

___1. Schedule a meeting with the Unified Champion School Leadership Team to discuss hosting a Unified Sports Day at your school. Develop a timeline for recruiting, organizing and preparing for the activity.

___2. Meet with the principal to get approval and administrative support. Share the goals and possible activities. Be sure to stress the positive impact it can have on creating a socially inclusive school climate.

___3. Consider collaborating with the physical education department to organize activities and make accommodations to ensure all activities are accessible to all students.

___4. Develop a plan.
• Set the date and time for the day's activities.
• Decide on the activities to be included, whether the day will have a theme or focus on a specific sport, and identify how all students will have equitable opportunities to participate.
• Create a plan for each task that needs to be completed, including deadlines and a list of who is responsible for carrying out each step.
• Make sure the date, time and location are all cleared with the necessary school personnel before releasing the information to others.

___5. Be sure to communicate with staff about the date, purpose of the Unified Sports Day and why this is important to your school.

___6. Publicize the Unified Sports Day to your school. Reach out to the local newspaper and radio station. Include information about the event on the local access television station.

___7. After the event, be sure to thank all of those involved with making it successful. Send a special thank you note to any sponsors or donors.

Unified Sports Action Plan

STRATEGY / ACTIVITY	TASKS	When will each task be completed?	Who will Facilitate the completion of this goal?	Who Else can help?
	1.	1.	1.	
	2.	2.	2.	
	3.	3.	3.	
	4.	4.	4.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: ☐ Whole School Engagement ☐ Inclusive Youth Leadership	5.	5.	5.	
	6.	6.	6.	
	7.	7.	7.	
	8.	8.	8.	
	1.	1.	1.	
	2.	2.	2.	
	3.	3.	3.	
	4.	4.	4.	
This strategy/activity also connects with: ☐ Whole School Engagement ☐ Inclusive Youth Leadership	5.	5.	5.	
	6.	6.	6.	
	7.	7.	7.	
	8.	8.	8.	

Glossary

Co-leaders/co-leadership
Two or more people who communicate and work together to achieve a shared goal. In Special Olympics, coo-leadership can take many forms. One example is when two people decide to start a Unified Club together. While the two people may have different responsibilities within the club, they both work towards the same goal of leading a successful club.

Fans in the Stands
A formal way of encouraging students to support and cheer on students with and without intellectual disabilities at Unified Sports or Special Olympics events.

Get Into It® Educational resources
A number of lessons, activities, and resources that teach students of all ages about respect and acceptance of differences while providing them with the tools to serve as active agents for change in not only their school, but the community as well.

Inclusive 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. Special Olympics Unified Sports and Special Olympics Young Athletes are examples of inclusive sports.

Inclusive Youth Leadership
Students with and without intellectual disabilities working together to lead and plan advocacy, awareness, and other Special Olympics and related inclusive activities throughout the school year. Examples include such things as: Unified Clubs or a similar type of inclusive student group. The clubs are supported by an adult liaison and offer leadership opportunities and/or training for students with and without disabilities.

Intergenerational leadership
Youth and adults work together to implement the Unified Champion Schools program through shared goals that are owned collectively.

Special Olympics Unified Schools
Special Olympics Unified Schools refers to the larger global schools strategy to engage youth. It is the strategy for promoting social inclusion among youth with and without intellectual disabilities (ID,) reaching out to youth where they spend the majority of their time – schools.

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. This model is implemented in the United States. After first reference, it can be referred to as Unified Champion Schools.

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.

Spread the Word to End the Word/R-Word Campaign
A set of resources and tools to help students eradicate the hurtful and harmful use of language that demeans and diminishes others.

Unified Champion School Leadership Team
Takes responsibility to design, implement and sustain socially inclusive strategies in the school. It is generally composed of at least one special education student and one general education student; at least one special education teacher and one general education teacher; at least one school staff member/counselor/social worker; and the principal, assistant principal or other school-level administrator.

Unified Sports Experience
These are exhibition games that team people with and without intellectual disabilities on the field of play. These games often involve celebrities. Unified Sports Experience events create an opportunity to spotlight the importance of friendship, sportsmanship and inclusion.

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.

Young Athletes
Athletes is plural. The Young Athletes program was created to reach out to children with and without intellectual disabilities ages 2 to 7 and introduce them to the world of sport, with the goal of preparing them for Special Olympics training and competition. It is conducted as an inclusive program, and is often part of a Unified Champion School at the elementary or preschool level.

Youth Activation Committee
A Youth Activation Committee is made up of young people who work together to promote school communities where all young people are agents of change. The Youth Activation Committe can be district-based, state-based, national or regional.

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Special Olympics
Unified Champion Schools

www.SpecialOlympics.org/UnifiedSchools