

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools



A PARTNERSHIP FOR INCLUSION

Special Olympics is a trusted partner of the **U.S. Government**, delivering cost effective, quality programming that makes schools across the country more welcoming and accepting of those with differences, creating a better learning climate for all children.



INCLUSION LEADS TO BETTER ATTENDANCE AND PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOLS

The Issue

- Studies indicate that **young people with intellectual disabilities are almost 3x more likely to be bullied** than their typically developing peers (10% report being bullied once a week or more).
- They also **face extreme social isolation**, with youth attitude surveys indicating that less than 30% of students say they would be comfortable even speaking to a classmates with intellectual disabilities.
- Such treatment and attitudes **create negativity that impacts the learning environment.**



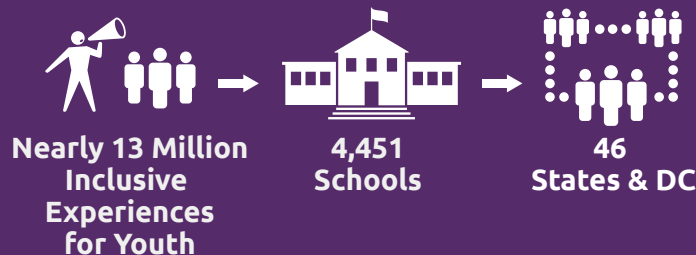
Our Role

- ✓ Working with the **Department of Education**, **Special Olympics** has taken a stand to say that schools cannot tolerate hostile school cultures where children with disabilities are targets of isolation or abuse.
- ✓ The **Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools initiative equips young people** with tools and training to:
 - **Create sports, classroom and community** experiences that reduce bullying and aggression;
 - **Promote healthy activity and interactions**, combat stereotypes and stigma;
 - **Eliminate hurtful language** and;
 - **Engage young people in pro-social activities** that lead to improved behavior and school climate. initiative

Success of the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools

- ✓ Pre-schoolers participating in the **Young Athletes program** (a childhood development program for children 2 to 7 years old) achieve critical development goals at 3 times the rate of those not participating.
- ✓ 93% of students exposed to the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools and campaigns such as **Spread the Word to End the Word** day have improved their behavior and attitudes toward people with intellectual differences.
- ✓ 89% of advisors for the **Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools** report an increase in participation by students with intellectual disabilities in school activities.
- ✓ Through **Special Olympics Unified Sports®**, 93% of young people with intellectual disabilities reported significant change in self-esteem/self-confidence. 91% of youth without intellectual disabilities reported a significant change in their social skills.
- ✓ These benefits of involvement in Special Olympics extend far beyond school years – adults who have been **athletes in Special Olympics are 100% more likely to be employed than peers who have not been involved.**

WITH SUPPORT
OF THE U.S.
GOVERNMENT



The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools initiative is changing youth attitudes and creating inclusive school environments where all students feel welcomed and connected. There is a strong correlation between school connectedness and educational outcomes such as school attendance, staying in school longer, and higher grades and classroom test scores.

(CDC, School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth, 2009).