Levels of Relationships and Influence

There are many different ways to interact with Special Olympics athletes. The following separates each different level of influence you can incorporate into daily Project UNIFY® activities.

**Level 1 – Basic Positive Social Interaction**
By: smiling, waving, high-five, pat on the back, “good to see you”, “how's your day?”, etc. Tell youth to incorporate this influence on an everyday basis when they see their peers with intellectual disabilities. By incorporating this social interaction, you are establishing a basic positive relationship.

**Level 2 – Taking a Personal Interest in the Student**
By: initiating conversations and finding out their interests, family information, pets, favorites, aspirations, nicknames, etc. Encourage athletes and partners to get to know each other on a more personal level. This can be accomplished by incorporating activities in your training sessions or by partners taking the initiative to walk with athletes in the halls, sit with them at lunch, etc.

**Level 3 – Identifying, Acknowledging and Encouraging Young People’s Gifts and Talents**
By: conversing with them, observing them, playing with them, looking closely at their work, listening to them, and by words of affirmation, writing notes, attending events, a pat on the back, etc. Make sure to acknowledge those individuals that are putting in the extra effort to impact their school community and bring about change.

**Level 4 – Challenging Young People**
By: having high expectations, issuing challenges, helping them to set goals, using affirmations, checking in with them, etc. You can challenge youth to take on a project/activity and make it their own. Encourage them to take a leadership role in changing the social climate at their school.

**Level 5 – Focusing on Building Specific Assets**
By: developing a plan for building specific external assets and working with them directly on key internal assets. For instance, provide key instruction to the sport as a whole and also keep a strong focus on building potential in each member of the team.

**Level 6 – Keeping in Touch Over Time**
By: sending a card, a phone call, e-mail, attending an event they are involved in, etc. Remind youth that they are key advocates for their friends with intellectual disabilities and that they have been given the tools and resources to keep in touch with them for the rest of their lives. They can continue to volunteer for Special Olympics but they can also always keep in touch with the friends they made through this Project UNIFY® experience.