



Effective Unified Sports® Recruitment Strategies for High School Coaches

High schools have employed a number of different successful approaches to recruit students with and without disabilities to participate on their Unified Sports® teams.

Following are several strategies for a Unified Sports® coach. It is important to use as many as possible to ensure the broadest number of students are being reached.

Overview

- You need a **TEAM of teachers and staff** promoting Unified Sports® within a school building. If the coach is the only one doing the outreach, the program will falter.
- Success is predicated on a group of educators and staff being highly proactive and energetic in engaging students and helping them to see the rewards of joining their high school's interscholastic Unified Sports® team. This requires the use of compelling message points and using multiple promotional approaches to sell the program.
- Organize a small **UNIFIED SALES FORCE** comprised of special education teachers, general education teachers, and staff involved with the school's extracurricular activities.
- Having Unified Sports® promotional posters are effective in raising awareness of the program and need to be hung in highly visible locations throughout the building. However, the posters by themselves DO NOT sell the Unified Sports program. **Closing the sale is done most effectively by personal selling by the teachers.** This has proven to be the most successful approach time and again in every successful school.
- Another strategy to use in conjunction with engaging the teachers is mobilizing the students. Using an **Each One Reach One** approach in which a student persuades a friend or classmate to join them on a Unified Sports® team has proven to be effective.
- Start your recruitment by contacting all of the members of the previous year's Unified Sports® teams and asking them to join your team. Ask these returning team members to reach out to one or two friends to join the team. Peer-to-Peer connections are highly effective.

Reaching Students with Disabilities

- Meet with your building's Special Education Team Leader/Coordinator and staff. Provide concise and relevant information about your Unified Sports® team at one of their staff meetings, as well as your contact information so students and parents know how to reach you.
- Ask the special education teachers to take a proactive role in reaching out to their students and parents and promoting the beneficial outcomes. This includes talking with

the students, making phone calls to parents of students who would be excellent fits, sending letters home, and discussing it with the students so they fully understand the program.

- ***If the special education teacher invests the time to recruit students in his/her class through ongoing encouragement and communication with the students and their parents, this often leads to participation on a Unified Sports® team.***
- Work with para-educators and instructional assistants to reach prospective students. Often times these staff members have a close relationship with their students and can have a strong influence on them.
- Each day during the team recruitment phase, ask your special education sales force for an update of the names of students they are actively recruiting. Follow up with these students and their parents, if appropriate.
- Set an ambitious, yet realistic recruitment goal for your special education sales force team to attain in terms of number of Unified Sports® participants with disabilities. (i.e. each teacher will successfully recruit X number of team members). This number will depend on the sport's roster size.
- Enlist the help of current Unified Sports® participants and their parents to speak with their peers about the beneficial experience of joining a Unified Sports® team.

Reaching Students Without Disabilities

- Ask 4-5 popular general education teachers to join your **UNIFIED SPORTS SALES TEAM**. Provide them with key selling points about the program as well as the benefits, and ask each one to personally reach out and convince a set number of students without disabilities to join the Unified Sports® team. This number could be two, three or four students per teacher, depending on the roster size of the sport.
- Have these teachers approach certain students they think would be ideal fits for the program and make a personal pitch to them: "I think you would be an excellent addition to the Unified XX team because of your leadership skills and ability to help your classmates reach their potential."
- Make sure these teachers give the students your contact information as the coach. Conversely, make sure the teachers get the contact information for the students (name, home room, phone number, e-mail address) so you can follow-up with them immediately.
- Meet with the faculty advisors for various groups and clubs which might have students currently not playing sports who might be interested. These include student government, band, Best Buddies, theater, National Honor Society, debate team, etc.
- Ask student leaders to help you reach their peers and promote participation on a Unified Sports® team. Stay in touch with these students so you know with whom to follow-up.
- Utilize all available media resources to promote your Unified Sports® team including morning announcements, the school web site, letters/flyers, etc.