



Special Olympics North Carolina
Unified Champion Schools
Toolkit and Resource Guide



WELCOME

Welcome to the Special Olympics North Carolina (SONC) family! SONC aims to build a society of acceptance and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities by supporting student led initiatives to bring authentic and meaningful involvement to their school. Special Olympics Unified Sports training and competition provide an opportunity for students with and without intellectual disabilities to develop friendships on and off the playing field.

To ignite young people's passion for our cause, we have to reach them where they most often are: school. At all grade levels, students lives' revolve around their schools and school activities. That is why we developed Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools, a school-based initiative to create opportunities for authentic social inclusion.

This toolkit it set up so students and educators can develop successful Unified Champion School programs. This resource includes strategies for student led respect rallies, fundraisers, Unified Sports experiences, and developing inclusive Unified Clubs. It also includes a section for students and educators seeking additional resources to support in-school activities.

This toolkit will be a great first step in ensuring you feel comfortable and informed on how to build and sustain a successful Unified Champion School program. In addition to this resource, you always have access to the SONC staff who are committed to supporting your Unified Champion School efforts. There is nothing that inspires more excitement and optimism than activating young people around the mission of inclusion and acceptance for all.

SONC is excited to take part in this journey with you!

Keith Fishburne

President and CEO, Special Olympics North Carolina

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Unified Champion Schools 101	4
The Three Components Menu	5
Unified Sports: It's Time to Play Unified!	6
Inclusive Youth Leadership: All Youth Are Leaders	7
Whole School Engagement: Beyond the Classroom	8
School Leadership Teams.....	9
UCS Funding and Fundraising.....	10
Working with SONC	11
Our School: UCS Planning Sheet	12
Resource Guide.....	13

UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS 101

All Unified Champion Schools incorporate the following 3 components in a way that creates meaningful inclusion for students with intellectual disabilities in their school community:



Inclusive/Unified Sports

A fully inclusive sports or fitness program that combines students with and without intellectual disabilities. **Examples include:** Unified P.E., Unified Intramural Sports, Unified Interscholastic Sports or Unified Recreational Sports (i.e. Unified Basketball, Unified Bocce, Unified Soccer, etc.)

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:** Unified Clubs, inclusive student councils, or similar types of inclusive groups.

Whole School Engagement

Host awareness and education activities that promote inclusion and reach majority of the school population. **Examples include:** Spread the Word Campaigns, Pep Rallies or “Fans in the Stands” for Unified Sports teams, or student fundraising.

THE THREE COMPONENTS MENU

Unified Champion Schools must complete at least 1 activity that meets the 3 components during the school year. Circle your choices or write in your own ideas below:

Inclusive/Unified Sports	Inclusive Youth Leadership	Whole School Engagement
Choose at least 1 activity below:	Choose at least 1 activity below:	Choose at least 1 activity below:
Unified or inclusive P.E. class	Unified Club	Spread the Word Campaign
Special Olympics Young Athletes (for 2-7 year olds - Pre-K, Head Start, or Elementary School)	Inclusive Student Council (or other extracurricular club)	Fans in the Stands
Unified Recreational Sports (ex: kickball)	Peer Buddies	Pep Rally
Unified Player Development Sports (ex: students without intellectual disabilities helping Special Olympics athletes train for local competitions)	Youth Volunteers	Youth Fundraising
Unified Competitive Sports (equal number of students with and without intellectual disabilities – ex: Unified Track and Field, Unified Basketball)	Lunch Buddies	Respect Campaign (or any awareness campaign)

UNIFIED SPORTS

Special Olympics Unified Sports® is a component of the Unified Champion 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.

Unified/Inclusive Sports in action:

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.



Special Olympics
Young Athletes

Special Olympics Young Athletes is an early childhood play program for children with and without intellectual disabilities, ages 2 to 7 years old. Young Athletes introduces basic sport skills, like running, kicking and throwing. Young Athletes offers families, teachers, caregivers and people from the community the chance to share the joy of sports with all children. **For more information about Young Athletes, contact Sherry Paul, Young Athletes Manager, at spaul@sonc.net.**

INCLUSIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP

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.

Inclusive Youth Leadership in action:

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 "helped." 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.

WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

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.

Whole School Engagement in action:

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.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Each Unified Champion School must identify a School Leadership team, made up of student leaders, 2 staff liaisons, and a school administrator, all dedicated to supporting Unified Champion School activities.

Staff Liaisons (2)

- Every school is required to designate 2 staff liaisons (a primary and co-liaison) to support student leaders and serve as the primary contacts for SONC communication. Staff liaisons engage and empower youth leaders to implement the 3 components of a Unified Champion School.
- The staff liaisons can be EC teachers/assistants, traditional education teachers, P.E. teachers, school counselors, administrators, etc.
- The primary liaison is responsible for completing the mandatory mid-term (December) and final (June) reporting.

Student Leaders (2)

- Student leaders are the key in the success of a Unified Champion School. Please identify one (1) traditional education student and one (1) EC student to help promote inclusive youth leadership.
- Student leaders are responsible for the planning and implementation of Unified Champion School activities.

Administrator (1)

- Administrator approval is required to participate in Unified Champion Schools. All schools must provide the contact for a school administrator (i.e. Principal, Assistant Principal, etc.) to support the Unified Champion School efforts.
- The Administrator is responsible for supporting the staff liaisons and student leaders in Unified Champion School activities.

Other (optional)

- Non-school staff (i.e. parents, volunteers, community partners, etc.) can be involved with Unified Champion Schools, however, the primary liaisons must be official staff of the school.

UCS FUNDING AND FUNDRAISING

The Unified Champion Schools program is funded through the US Office of Special Education Programs at the US Department of Education (OSEP). The use of federal funding must be pre-approved, requested, and then exclusively used for inclusive activities that are budget reducing for your school, club, center, etc. Every school is given a set amount of funding that can be used to enhance their programs.

Steps to request funding:

1. Make a list of anticipated expenses at the beginning of the school year.
2. Contact the appropriate staff member on the Youth Initiatives team with a list of expenses to be **pre-approved**. No expenses will be reimbursed or funded without pre-approval from an SONC staff member.

Examples of ALLOWABLE expenses:	Examples of NON-ALLOWABLE expenses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Cost of bus travel to and from Special Olympics/Unified competitions✓ Sports equipment✓ Uniforms✓ Coach stipends✓ Substitute teacher reimbursements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Inclusive trips (ex: museums, conferences, social gatherings)✗ Food for club gatherings✗ Clothing (except shirts/uniforms for competitions)✗ Entertainment✗ Computers, iPads, or other electronic equipment✗ Gifts/Souvenirs

Fundraising within Unified Champion Schools:

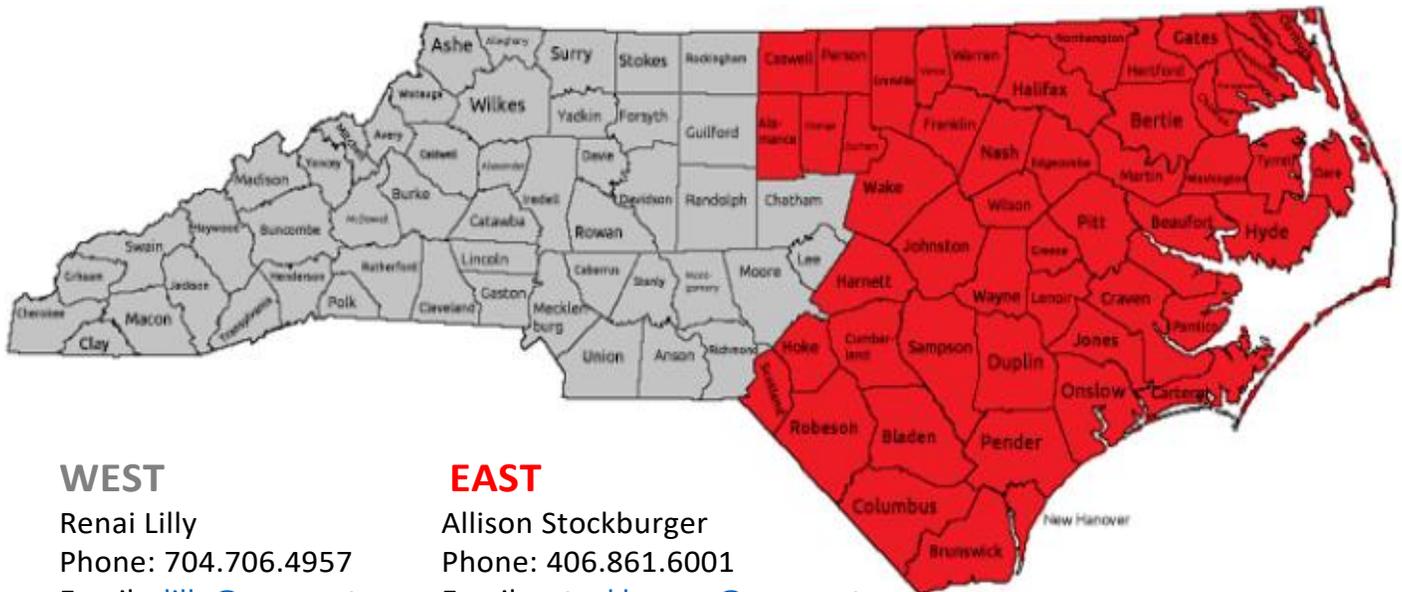
Schools are encouraged to fundraise for their Unified Clubs/school related expenses, local program opportunities, and/or SONC. The fundraising toolkit is [available here](#) to prepare Unified Champion Schools for fundraising endeavors. The toolkit includes a planning sheet, tips, and several fundraising ideas.

WORKING WITH SONC

The Youth Initiatives staff at SONC is committed to the success of all Unified Champion Schools. We are committed to providing ongoing support and assistance to you and your school. You can count on the Youth Initiatives staff to:

- Provide orientation/training and ongoing support to Unified Champion Schools
- Act as the primary liaison between SONC headquarters and Unified Champion Schools
- Answer all Unified Champion School related questions
- Process all Unified Champion School finance paperwork, including reimbursements for approved expenses

Refer to the map below and contact the appropriate staff member for the county in which your school is located in.



WEST

Renai Lilly
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*Assistant Director
of Youth Initiatives*

EAST

Allison Stockburger
Phone: 406.861.6001
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Youth Initiatives Director

General questions can be emailed to unifiedschools@sonc.net.

OUR SCHOOL: UCS PLANNING SHEET

Our School Leadership Team Members:

Student Leader:

Student Leader:

Primary Staff Liaison:

Co-Staff Liaison:

School Administrator:

Other (optional):

SONC Staff Contact:

Our goals for this school year...

Goal #1:

Goal #2:

Goal #3:

Unified/Inclusive Sports Ideas:

Inclusive Youth Leadership Ideas:

Whole School Engagement Ideas:

RESOURCE GUIDE

Special Olympics North Carolina Unified Champion Schools

<http://sonc.net/unified-champion-schools/ucs-overview/>

Special Olympics North Carolina Young Athletes

<http://sonc.net/become-an-athlete/young-athletes/>

Special Olympics North Carolina Unified Sports

<http://sonc.net/sports-competitions/unified-sports/>

Special Olympics International Unified Champion Schools Resources

<http://www.specialolympics.org/unified-champion-schools/>

Generation Unified

Interactive site for youth leaders and educators to explore the Unified movement in depth:

<https://www.generationunified.org/>

Coaching Unified Sports Online Certification

A free online certification course to become a Unified Sports coach:

<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/36000/coaching-unified-sports>

Get Into It Curriculum

K-12 Curriculum for educators to teach lessons around respect, inclusion, and school climate:

<https://getintoit.specialolympics.org/educators/>

Spread the Word

The official Spread the Word website with resources, videos, online pledge signing, online Play Unified stores, etc.:

<https://www.spreadtheword.global/>