

UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS

Building on Special Olympics' values, principles, practices and impacts, the Unified Champion Schools® (UCS) program promotes social inclusion through intentionally planned and implemented activities affecting systems-wide change. Our goal is to engage students of all ages and abilities and to help shape a Unified Generation that Chooses to Include.

With sports as the foundation, the UCS 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 climates where students with disabilities feel welcome and are routinely included in, and feel a part of, all activities, opportunities and functions.

This is accomplished by implementing the program's four pillars: inclusive youth leadership opportunities, Unified Sports®, whole school engagement and collaborative fundraising. 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 students, teachers, and administrators.

WHAT MAKES A UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOL?

<p>Inclusive Youth Leadership Opportunities for youth with and without intellectual disabilities to become agents of change within their school, community, and state.</p>	<p>Special Olympics Unified Sports® Students develop athletic skills while forming friendships, fostering respect for each other, and becoming leaders on and off the playing field.</p>	<p>Whole School Engagement An important feature of creating a socially inclusive school climate is engaging the entire school community in the process.</p>	<p>Collaborative Fundraising School communities work together to raise the money needed to ensure that the UCS program is self-sustaining and can continue to grow.</p>
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CHAMPIONS AT EVERY LEVEL

As a global leader in the implementation of UCS programming, Special Olympics Indiana works with partners including the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA), the Indiana Middle Level Education Association (IMLEA), the Indiana Council of Administrators of Special Education (ICASE), and Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) to reach more than 260,000 students in over 650 Indiana schools each year.



Participating schools are challenged to engage their entire school community in inclusive activities and to achieve certain goals related to each of the four pillars of the UCS program. Schools that meet or exceed each of these milestones in a given school year are awarded a recognition banner, while those that go above and beyond may be eligible for national recognition by Special Olympics North America.

STATE OFFICE CONTACTS

Unified Champion Schools
Collegiate
High School
Middle School
Preschool and Elementary
City Schools (Indianapolis & Fort Wayne)
School Assemblies

Mike Hasch (mhasch@soindiana.org)
Matt Jones (mjones@soindiana.org)
Brian Avery (bavery@ihsaa.org)
Tori Batson (tbatson@soindiana.org)
Lisa Graham (lgraham@soindiana.org)
Chris Akers (cakers@soindiana.org)
Craig Tornquist (ctornquist@soindiana.org)

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BANNER PROGRAM

The Unified Champion School partnerships with the Indiana High School Athletic Association (Champions Together), Indiana Middle Level Education Association (Champions Together in the Middle), and Indiana Council of Administrators of Special Education (Young Champions) will provide a Unified Champion School banner to all partnership member schools that meet all of the following UCS goals:

1. All school sponsored activities must be planned, organized and administered by an Inclusive Student Leadership team that strives to do things WITH students with intellectual disabilities NOT FOR them.
2. The school must participate in at least one activity designed around Whole School Engagement that promotes and encourages awareness, respect and inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities.
3. The school must organize and participate in at least one Unified Sports® activity, such as IHSAA Unified Track & Field or Unified Flag Football, Unified Bocce or Unified Bowling, Unified Robotics, Unified eSports, a Unified practice or clinic, or Unified competition with students with intellectual disabilities OR Special Olympics athletes.
4. Fundraising: a school must raise a minimum of \$1,500 (high school), \$750 (middle school), or \$250 (elementary) for the support and expansion of Unified Champion Schools programs.

UCS FUNDRAISERS

Please contact Mike Hasch (mhasch@soindiana.org) or Tori Batson (tbatson@soindiana.org) when you begin planning a fundraising event so they can establish a UCS fundraising page to monitor your donations and credit your school toward the Unified Champion Schools banner award.

UNIFIED CHAMPION CITY SCHOOLS

Special Olympics North America Unified Champion City Schools (UCCS) is a new initiative that began in the fall of 2021. UCCS is a focused approach to amplify the essential elements of Unified Champion Schools within city school districts. UCCS utilizes three interconnected components for social inclusion in schools:

- Inclusive Youth Leadership: when young people of all abilities are given opportunities to be leaders in their schools and communities.
- Whole-school engagement: creates a school climate that fosters understanding and respect for all and can influence how students think and act within and beyond the school.
- Unified Sports®: brings together people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team.

SOIN is one of the few state programs to implement the UCCS initiative, which focuses on expanding inclusive



SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

Hosted by comedian Craig Tornquist, our high-energy school assemblies are a fun and uplifting way to engage students while learning about Champions Together and Unified Champion Schools. Best known for his love of audience participation, Craig has delighted more than 3,000 school assembly crowds across the country and is joined by Special Olympics Indiana staff and student ambassadors in providing an overview of our program.

YOUTH AMBASSADORS

The Special Olympics U.S. Youth Ambassadors include 30 youth leaders with and without intellectual disabilities striving to make the nation a more inclusive place for all. They act as advocates, share stories and demonstrate the values of Inclusive Youth Leadership across the country. Indiana is represented in this elite group by athlete Liam Price (University of Indianapolis) and partner Elizabeth Price (Elon University).

programming within city school districts. Contact Chris Akers (cakers@soindiana.org) for more details.