

Overview:

A Special Olympics Unified Champion School has an inclusive school climate and exudes a sense of collaboration, engagement and respect for all members of the student body and staff. A Unified Champion School receiving national banner recognition is one that has demonstrated commitment to inclusion by achieving the ten standards described below. These standards are based upon the three over-arching components that include Special Olympics Unified Sports®/Young Athletes, Inclusive Youth Leadership and Whole-School Engagement. National banner schools should also be able to demonstrate they are self-sustainable or have a plan in place to sustain these activities into the future.

While the components are listed individually, they should be implemented in coordination with each other and supported by a leadership team composed of representatives from all areas of the school, including students, teachers, administrators and parents. Research has proven that when all three components are incorporated, there is a deeper impact on the individual participants as well as the overall culture and climate of the school.

National Banner School Components & Achievement Standards:

The ten standards of excellence listed below were developed by a national panel of leaders in education and Special Olympics. When the standards have been met by a school, it is eligible to receive national banner recognition.

Special Olympics Unified Sports® and Young Athletes: A fully-inclusive sport/activity program that combines students with and without intellectual disabilities. Examples include such things as school-based Unified Sports teams, Unified PE, developmental sports activities or Young Athletes.

A *national banner school* has achieved the following standards:

- 1 Unified Sports and/or Young Athletes are available for students across multiple grade levels of the school.
- 2 Unified Sports and/or Young Athletes occur regularly over the course of the school year and includes a culminating event or competition (i.e.; continuous weekly training in lead-up to an event).
- 3 Each sport/activity has an adult coach who has received training on Unified Sports or Young Athletes.
- 4 Special Olympics programming is officially recognized by the school in a similar style as other sports/activities.

Inclusive Youth Leadership: Students with and without intellectual disabilities work to lead advocacy, awareness, inclusion and other Special Olympics activities throughout the school year. Examples include such things as a Unified Club, inclusive leadership training for students, “Get Into It” lessons, students helping to lead school inclusion projects or students from higher grades coaching those in lower grades.

A *national banner school* has achieved the following standards:

- 5 A Unified Club or inclusive student group which meets regularly throughout the school year for social and/or leadership activities (can be classroom-based, during the school day, or extra-curricular).
- 6 Students of all abilities are given opportunities to take leadership roles during sports/activity training sessions.
- 7 The inclusive club/group has an adult liaison and is officially recognized by the school in a similar style as other clubs/activities.

Whole-School Engagement: Awareness and education activities that promote inclusion and reach the majority of the school population. Examples include such things as “Fans in the Stands” or cheer teams for culminating events, poster contests, essay contests, Respect Campaigns, “Get Into It” lessons, school assembly with an inclusion theme, bus “send-offs” for Unified teams, or student fundraising.

A *national banner school* has achieved the following standards:

- 8 At least two whole-school engagement activities are implemented per school year.
- 9 The Unified Club or inclusive student group works alongside school staff to lead the awareness activities.

Sustainability: Strategies and plans which help ensure the three Unified Champion School components will continue into the future and truly become part of the school culture. Examples include such things as student fundraising, Unified Booster Clubs or Unified Sports/Club expenses included in school budgets.

A *national banner school* has achieved the following standards:

- 10 The school is currently self-sustainable or has a plan in place to sustain the three components into the future.