

NHIAA Unified Sports

A Collaboration Between Two Organizations

Special Olympics was created in 1968 and added Unified Sports® in 1987. Unified Sports® allows students with and without intellectual disabilities (ID) to train and compete together.

The New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA) was created in 1947. The NHIAA is the state governing body for high school sports.

It is understandable that with similar goals, the NHIAA and SONH collaborated to start NHIAA Unified Sports at the high school level in 2011.

The vision of the NHIAA/SONH Unified Sports program is to provide high school students with and without ID (partners) the opportunity to represent their high schools by participating on a Unified Sports® team. The focus of NHIAA Unified Sports is competition (not simply participation). Sports teaches so many life lessons: to work as a team, to follow rules and to be committed. Through sports, students can find shared interests that allow friendships to form.

Through the NHIAA/Special Olympics Unified Sports program, we have an opportunity to make real positive changes in the lives of students with and without intellectual disabilities. There are rules in sports and rules in life. We must have high expectations for students with intellectual disabilities because if we do not, we are teaching another generation of regular education students that people with intellectual disabilities can't follow rules, be held accountable or become productive citizens.

Unified Sports® is a big part of the Unified Champion Schools® program. While the NHIAA governs high school Unified Sports®, Special Olympics supports schools in fostering more inclusive communities and the other areas of whole school engagement, inclusive youth leadership, and sustainability.

The sports offered at the high school level include soccer, basketball, track and field and volleyball. Unified Sports® competition consists of the Player Development Model or the Recreational Model; a school selects the model that better meets their needs.

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF NHIAA UNIFIED SPORTS

- Participants
 - Unified Student Athletes
 - A student with an intellectual disability (ID) who, based on his/her IEP, is expected to be in school until he/she is 21.
 - Unified Student Partners
 - Students playing the same sport for their high school will be prohibited from competing as a Unified partner in Unified Sports® that season.
- Coaches must review a PowerPoint on the NHIAA Unified Sports program and sport-specific rules.
- Unified teams have fewer games than other school teams and typically do not meet 5 days a week.
- Unified teams in basketball, soccer and volleyball shall be aligned in two divisions as co-ed sports. Unified track shall be aligned in one division as a co-ed sport.

- Differences between the two Special Olympics Unified Sports® Models that the NHIAA Unified Sports program offers

<p>Basketball – Player Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Legal line-up: at least three (3) Unified Student Athletes and no more than two (2) Unified Student Partners on the floor at all times. 2) A women's regulation basketball (28.5) will be used. 3) A regulation game will consist of four (4) quarters of eight (8) minutes. Each overtime will be four (4) minutes until a winner is decided. 4) Only athletes can score. Should a team be in the bonus situation and a partner is fouled, the partner can take the foul shot(s). 5) A team cannot play defense in their back court. 6) Travelling and double dribble is called if a player has gained a clear advantage because of it. 7) Athletes and partners who use wheelchairs or walkers may participate to the extent to which it does not pose a safety risk to themselves or other competitors. 	<p>Basketball – Recreational</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Player Development rules 1), 2), 3), 4), and 5) apply to this level, too. 2) Wheelchairs and walkers are allowed on the court. 3) Travelling and double dribble are allowed. 4) One-on-one para or aids are allowed on the court to assist those who are using wheelchairs or walkers. 5) Coaches are allowed to coach from the court. 6) The game is running time. 7) Modifications of court and or basket are allowed. 8) Teams do not switch goals/baskets at halftime.
<p>Soccer – Player Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Legal line-up: at least four (4) Unified Student Athletes and no more than three (3) Unified Student Partners on the field at all times. 2) Only athletes can score. 3) The goalie must be an athlete. 	<p>Soccer – Recreational</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Player Development rules 1), 2), and 3) apply to this level, too. 2) Coaches meet prior to the game to share specific athlete's needs. 3) The game is running time. 4) Modifications of field and or goal are allowed. 5) There is no offside.
<p>Track – Player Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Unified events include 100m, 200m, 4x100m Relay, Long jump and Shot Put. 2) Schools cannot enter more partners than athletes in any event. 3) Athletes and partners who use wheelchairs and walkers will compete against other athletes and partners in wheelchair-only heats and walker-only races. 4) The assistance by a partner should be for balance only. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A partner cannot provide forward momentum to an athlete using a wheelchair. Examples: pushing a chair in a race, throwing or jumping in a field event. ▪ Lanes for wheelchair races shall be two track lanes wide. ▪ Wheelchair-only races should be no longer than 100m. 5) Shot Put: 4 lb. shot put may be used for athletes and partners who use wheelchairs. 6) Long Jump: The take-off point may be adjusted closer to the pit from the standard 1m mark. 	<p>Track – Recreational</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) No junior varsity division is necessary. 2) All Player Development rules apply at this level, too.
<p>Volleyball – Player Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The serving order will alternate athletes and partners. 2) Once a server has scored three consecutive points, his/her team shall rotate to the next server and continue. 3) The net will be 7' 4 1/8". 4) The service line may be brought in to 14' 9". 5) The coach is permitted to help the athlete move in position for substitution. 	<p>Volleyball – Recreational</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All Player Development rules apply at this level. 2) There is no overhead serving. 3) There is no spiking. 4) Two service tries are allowed.