

Welcome to the Unified Champion Schools® (UCS) 26-27 Liaison Guide!

Special Olympics
New Hampshire



Your guide to all things UCS—made for you, your students, and your school!

We're so glad you're here! As a UCS Liaison, you play a key role in creating schools where *everyone belongs*—and this guide is designed to help you every step of the way. Inside, you'll find everything from quick-start ideas and ready-to-use activities to leadership tips, family resources, and monthly challenges to keep the energy going all year long. Think of this as your playbook for building an inclusive school community where students of all abilities can learn, lead, and shine together. Let's dive in and make this year amazing!!



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Welcome to the Unified Champion Schools Team!

Dear UCS Liaison,

Welcome—and thank you for stepping into this vital role within the Unified Champion Schools (UCS) movement in New Hampshire! We're excited to partner with you as we work together to build more inclusive school communities where all students feel seen, supported, and celebrated.

As a UCS Liaison, you play a key role in bringing our mission to life by connecting students of all abilities through inclusive sports, leadership opportunities, and whole-school engagement. Your passion and commitment help create schools where respect and belonging are not just goals—but daily experiences.

Inside this welcome pack, you'll find tools and resources to support your work, spark new ideas, and get your school year off to a strong start. Whether you're new to UCS or have been championing inclusion for years, we're here to support you every step of the way.

Here's what to expect this year:

- Ongoing support and check-ins from the SONH Schools team
- Opportunities for professional development and resource sharing
- Student challenges, events, and campaigns to keep your momentum strong
- A growing community of educators, students, and leaders committed to inclusion

Together, we're building a culture where every student is valued and every voice matters. We can't wait to see the impact you and your students will make this year.

With gratitude,

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Unified Champion Schools® Program

Special Olympics New Hampshire aims to build a society of acceptance and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities and, by extension, everyone. We know that sports training and competition can help achieve that goal. And we know that students – with their energy, idealism, intelligence and creativity – can be not only participants but also leaders in our mission.

Special Olympics New Hampshire's Unified Champion Schools® (UCS) Program consists of four interrelated parts:

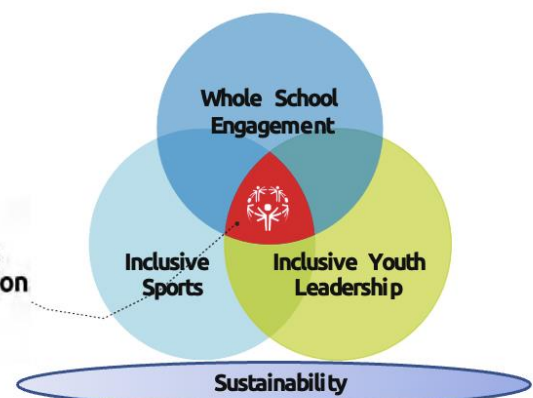
- 1) **INCLUSIVE SPORTS AND FITNESS** – Unified Sports® combines an approximately equal number of students with ID (athletes) and without ID (partners) to participate together as teammates. The Unified sports offered at the high school level include basketball, soccer, track and field and volleyball. Additional opportunities for inclusion include Unified fitness.
- 2) **INCLUSIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP** – provides opportunities for students with and without ID to take on leadership roles in promoting UCS in their schools and communities. Examples include Unified Clubs, leadership classes, inclusive Student Councils, National Honor Society, or similar types of inclusive student groups. The student-led clubs are supported by an adult liaison and offer leadership opportunities or training for students with and without intellectual disabilities.
- 3) **WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT** – provides opportunities for ALL students in their schools to participate in UCS activities. Examples include Spread the Word to End the Word Campaigns, pep rallies or Fans in the Stands for Unified Sports® teams, or a Unified Sports® Festival.
- 4) **SUSTAINABILITY** – provides opportunities for long-term programming. We want the Unified Champion Schools Program to become an integral part of the school's programming and continue forever.

When each component is integrated with the others, social inclusion is increased throughout the school.

There are additional opportunities as well. Athletes may be involved in both Special Olympics New Hampshire's Unified Champion Schools® Program and their Local Program.



Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools**





Meet the SONH UCS Team



Leisa – Director, Schools

I am a proud wife and the mother of two remarkable sons. I am a former elementary school teacher with 14 years of experience teaching. In 2022, I transitioned from teaching to become the SONH Unified Champion Schools Manager. Today, I serve as the SONH Unified Champion Schools Director where I collaborate with schools across the state to implement Unified programming. This includes Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership and Whole School Engagement activities that help engage the entire school community and support students of all abilities. I am a huge sports fan and enjoy attending all sporting events, especially Boston Bruins games.



MJ – Manager, Schools

I have been involved in SONH off and on since around 1990. My first involvement was as a Local Program volunteer when I was a physical education teacher at Winnacunnet High School. In 2008 while I was teaching at Dover High School, I developed and began teaching a class we called Unified PE/Wellness. In 2010, SONH asked me to attend a National Education conference in Nebraska where I learned the wonderful world of Unified Champion Schools and could not get enough. I am currently a school's manager at SONH and the Local Program Coordinator for Dover Area Special Olympics. I love living in the seacoast of NH (I am originally from NY). My husband and I love fixing up our 1780's house and lake house. And always spending time with our two grown children and two grandchildren.



Why reinvent the wheel. Look at what other Unified schools across NH are doing.

If an activity or class looks interesting and you want more information, just ask,

we will connect you! 📞 📧



Whole School Engagement Activities



Faculty vs. Unified Games	Pep Rallies	School Dances/Proms/Balls
Penguin Plunge/Dip/DIY	Spread the Word Campaign	Fans in the Stands
Similarity Awareness	Autism Awareness Fundraiser	Unified Sports Day
Unified Field Day	Unified Ball vs. Fire/Police	Announcement TVs
Instagram Highlights	8th Grade Step-Up Day	Walk for Change
In-School Unified Basketball Game	NHIAA Scholar Athlete Awards	MS – KIDS Initiative
Sensory-Friendly Dance	Banner Celebrations	Diversity Curriculum in Advisory
Kindness Week	Law Enforcement Torch Run	



Unified Sports Participation



NHIAA Unified Basketball	NHIAA Unified Soccer	NHIAA Unified Volleyball
NHIAA Unified Track & Field	Unified Cheer	Unified Middle School Basketball
Unified Middle School Cornhole		



Inclusive Classes Offered



Unified Art	Unified Wellness	Unified PE
Unified Health	Unified Science	Unified Social Studies
Unified Global Studies	Unified Reading	Unified Spanish
Unified Math	Unified Life Skills	Unified Literacy
Unified Drama	Unified Greenhouse	Collaborative Sewing
Unified FCS	Unified Music	Unified Floral
Unified Culinary	Unified Civics	Unified Nutrition



Inclusive Youth Leadership Initiatives



Youth Summit	Peer Mentorship	Best Buddies
Unified Club	WATS Club	Be The Change Club
Just Like Us	ASPIRE Club	Inclusive Mindfulness
Unified Gaming	Unified Chess	SALC/SALT Unified Pairs
Coffee Cart	School Board Liaison	Lunch Buddies
Unified Move-Up Night	Unified Open House	PIE Drive
Friendsgiving Lunch	Greenhouse w/ Solar Grant	HS-MS Presentations
Student-Made Unified Video	UCS Networking Events	



Sustainability & Community Impact



School Board Support	Staff vs. Unified Games	Faculty vs. Students/Schools
Penguin Plunge/Dip/DIY	Wheelchair Basketball Games	Swag Distribution
Autism Fundraiser (Buttons)	5K Road Race	Silent Disco
Coffee Cart	Golf Tournament	

Special Olympics New Hampshire



Month	Theme	Focus Event or Campaign	Suggested Activities
August	Welcome & Belonging	Back-to-School Kickoff	Meet & greet, poster-making, scavenger hunt
September	Connection & Kindness	Start With Hello Week (Sept 21-25)	Compliment wall, mix-it-up lunch, buddy challenges
October	Respect & Unity	Unity Day (Oct 21) / Bullying Prevention Month	Orange-out, pledge banners, anti-bullying skits
November	Gratitude & Giving	Thanksgiving Inclusion Campaign	Gratitude cards, service project, club celebration
December	Disability Awareness	Int'l Day of Persons with Disabilities (Dec 3)	Inclusion trivia, storytelling, inclusive art
January	Leadership & Goals	Mid-Year Reflection + Kindness Challenge	Vision board, random acts of kindness board
February	Unified Sports & Friendship	Unified Games or Spirit Week	Pep rally, unified basketball, friendship bracelets
March	Inclusion Matters	Spread the Word: Inclusion (Mar 4)	Pledge drive, social media campaign, assembly
April	Autism Acceptance	Autism Acceptance Month	Neurodiversity celebration, red-out day, art project
May	Recognition & Celebration	UCS Celebration Week (May 4-8)	Awards, slideshow, ice cream social or field day
June	Reflection & Farewell	End-of-Year Celebration	Memory wall, thank-you notes, club picnic



Special Olympics
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Schools

UCS Liaison: Your First 5 Steps

1. 🖐️ **CONNECT** - Connect with your school team and identify the staff and students who will help bring UCS to life.
2. 📞 **CHECK IN** - Connect with your SONH staff contact for a beginning-of-year check-in and support.
3. 🏆 **MAKE A PLAN** - Think about the four UCS components:
Unified Sports & Fitness • Inclusive Youth Leadership
Whole-School Engagement • Sustainability
What will your school focus on this year?
4. 🗣️ **GET PEOPLE EXCITED** - Share the vision of inclusion, belonging, and Unified with students and staff. Start recruiting leaders and participants!
5. 🚀 **TAKE ACTION** - Pick one thing and get started! Plan an activity, hold a meeting, connect with students, or try this month's Whole-School Engagement Challenge.

You don't have to do it alone! ❤️

Your SONH UCS team is here to help you every step of the way.

LET'S GET UNIFIED!





Unified Champion Schools: Inspiration & Motivation - Why We Do This

We believe every student deserves to feel included, valued, and empowered. Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools bring together students with and without intellectual disabilities to learn, lead, and play as equals. Through sports, youth leadership, and whole-school engagement, we break down barriers and build a culture of respect where everyone belongs.

We do this because inclusion is not just a program—it's a movement. It transforms schools into communities where differences are celebrated, friendships are formed, and every student has the chance to reach their full potential. Together, we are creating a generation that chooses unity over division, and kindness over exclusion—every day, in every school.

From Exeter Unified Partner Caroline

"I participate in Unified Sports to celebrate the strengths that makes us unique and the goals that bring us together."

From Merrimack Unified Partner Elias

"I do Unified sports because I love the friendships, I make with everyone. I think that it's great to because some of my closest friends with IDD I've made through Unified, and I wouldn't have met all these friends if it weren't for Unified."

From Merrimack Unified Partner Elysia

"I used to hate sports, but Unified is different. It's more than just winning or losing. It's about building friends, being a good team member, and building confidence in yourself. Most of my best friends are on the team and always there when I need a helping hand."

From Unified Athlete – Steven

"I participate in Unified Sports and activities because I enjoy knowing people from other schools and being friends with them. I also enjoy being part of the Youth Activation Committee."





From Dover Principal Mr. Driscoll

"Unified is our school community's commitment to 'All means All.'"

From Dover Unified Parent Peggy

"What is amazing is each year Caleb has participated, he has developed skills, like any kid would. He has friends supporting him and his confidence has blossomed—it's been amazing. And I don't have to pick him up from practice—he gets rides home from friends. He has typical relationships with peers he met through these programs. In fact, Caleb and a former teammate recently moved into an apartment together. The Unified connections continued into adulthood."

From Winnacunnet Unified Teacher/Coach Brandon

"For me, the most rewarding part of being involved with Unified Sports is witnessing the growth of student-athletes in both skills and confidence, which translates into all aspects of their daily lives. The impact of Unified Sports on our school culture has been nothing short of transformative. It has broken down barriers, forged meaningful partnerships, and helped students find common ground, leading to lasting connections that extend well beyond the field not just within school but with other Unified programs as well."

From Portsmouth Unified Teacher & Coach Bryan

"PHS Unified has brought our school together as one team—students, staff, and community—celebrating every ability and proving we are stronger when we include everyone."

From Hanover Teacher and Coach Missy

"Unified is awesome. It has meant meeting new friends, developing lifelong friendships in and out of school, developing meaningful social outings, understanding differences among everyone, empowering kindness and acceptance. We all love Unified. Live, Love, Laugh with Unified."





COURSES FOR EDUCATORS

<https://elearn.specialolympics.org/learn/signin>

Introduction to Unified Champion Schools for Educators

30 minutes

Provides a general overview of the UCS strategy, including its positive impact on students with and without disabilities, the ways the UCS strategy fosters socially inclusive school communities and positive school climate and how UCS aligns with education goals. Learners explore real-life implementation examples of each of the UCS components and gain resources for building Unified Champion Schools.

Unified Champion Schools® Elementary School Implementation for Educators

50 minutes

Provides information, skills and resources specifically focused on Unified Champions Schools (UCS) implementation at the elementary school level. The course covers how the UCS strategy aligns with elementary school goals, best practices and real-life examples of implementation of each of the 3 components, such as Young Athletes, Respect Weeks and Unified Sports Days, and resources to start and grow UCS programming in an elementary school.

Unified Champion Schools® Middle School Implementation Training for Educators

50 minutes

Provides information, skills and resources specifically focused on Unified Champions Schools (UCS) implementation in middle level schools. It includes how the UCS strategy aligns with the unique goals for education and young adolescent development at the middle school level, best practices and real-life examples of implementation of each of the 3 components, such as Unified PE, and resources to start and grow UCS programming in middle schools.

Unified Champion Schools® High School Implementation Training for Educators

50 minutes

Provides information, skills and resources specifically focused on Unified Champions Schools (UCS) implementation at the high school level. The course includes how the UCS strategy aligns with high school education, youth development and leadership goals, best practices and real-life examples of implementation of each of the 3 components including Unified PE, Interscholastic Sports and Unified Clubs and resources to start and grow UCS programming in high schools.



**Building Inclusive Communities Through
Unified Champion Schools®**

20 minutes

An interactive presentation of the fundamentals and spirit of Unified Champion Schools. Course emphasizes how Unified Champion School implementation spills over from the schools to create inclusion in communities.

Building Effective Leadership Teams

30 minutes

Provides a concise overview of strategies and talking points to guide schools in establishing and engaging diverse leadership teams to guide high quality UCS implementation in schools and districts.

**Why Special Olympics Unified Champion
Schools? Why Not!**

25 minutes

This edumercial provides a turnkey educational resource that can be utilized prior to meetings, during presentations, or even for promotional campaigns. It's designed to make a strong case to educational decision makers for Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® (UCS).

Mentoring for Inclusive Youth Leadership

50 minutes

This course focuses on the purpose, strategies, and approaches that are unique to mentoring Inclusive Youth Leaders. The content provides knowledge, tips, and inspiration to educators and all adults who mentor, support, or collaborate with inclusive youth leaders.

Be An Inclusive Leader

This web-based training resource for educators is designed to support their students' skills and knowledge to learn grow and lead as includers. It is quick and easy to use in classroom and Unified Clubs and includes videos, downloadable checklists and activity sheets.



COURSES FOR COACHES

Identifying Qualities of Special Olympics Unified Sports®

This course looks at the unique characteristics and guidelines that determine if a sport or activity meets the qualifications for a Special Olympics Unified Sports®. Learners explore the definition, philosophy, rules, and spirit of Unified and criteria for deciding, "Inclusive" or "Unified" for their school programming.

Coaching Special Olympics Athletes

This course prepares coaches to effectively support and develop Special Olympics athletes through inclusive, athlete-centered coaching practices. Participants will learn strategies for skill development, safety, communication, and fostering confidence while promoting sportsmanship and respect.

Unified Fitness for Educators

This course provides an overview of Special Olympics Unified Fitness offerings in schools. It includes examples of ways Special Olympics Unified Fitness activities and resources can be integrated into the UCS strategy at all grade levels and data showing the benefits for students with and without disabilities.

Coaching Unified Sports *Offered on [NFHS](#)*

This flagship course provides the fundamentals needed to coach Special Olympics Unified Sports®. It includes the history, principles, guidelines for coaching a team, selecting your sport and ensuring meaningful involvement of every player. This course will help every coach and educator better understand and implement quality Unified Sports in your school.

Administering Interscholastic Unified Sports *Offered on [NFHS](#)*

To better understand how to implement a Unified Sports program at the interscholastic level, the National Federation of State High School Associations, in partnership with Special Olympics, has created the course Administering Interscholastic Unified Sports. This course is designed to assist and guide administrators in implementing a Unified Sports program by learning about various guidelines, strategies, components, and scenarios related to the program.

Build Your UCS Leadership Team

Special Olympics
New Hampshire



A strong UCS program is a **team effort!** Your school liaison doesn't have to do it all alone. Building a small leadership team with people from different areas of your school helps create shared ownership, stronger communication, and a more sustainable program.

Who Should Be on Your Team?

Consider inviting people who can bring different perspectives, connections, and expertise:

- 🏠 **Principal/Administrator** – Provides support, visibility, and helps make inclusion a schoolwide priority.
- 🏆 **Athletic Director** – Helps connect Unified Sports® with your school's athletic programs, coaches, facilities, and schedules.
- 💙 **Special Education Staff** – Brings expertise and connections to students with intellectual disabilities and their support teams.
- 🏃 **PE/Health Teacher** – Helps connect Unified activities to physical education, fitness, and student wellness.
- 🗨️ **Counselor/Social Worker** – Can help connect UCS with student well-being, belonging, leadership, and school culture.
- 🧑 **Unified Club Advisor** – Supports student leaders and helps keep Unified activities moving throughout the year.
- 🌟 **Student Leaders** – Students should have a voice in planning, promoting, and leading your UCS activities.
- 🛎️ **Other Staff & Community Partners** – Consider coaches, teachers, advisors, school nurses, communications staff, or others who are passionate about inclusion.

Start Small

You don't need a huge committee! Start with **3–5 people who are willing to help**, then grow your team as your program develops.

The goal isn't to add more meetings—it's to build a team that shares the work and helps make inclusion part of your school's culture.



Congratulations On Becoming a Part of the Inclusion Revolution and Welcome to the Special Olympics New Hampshire Family!!

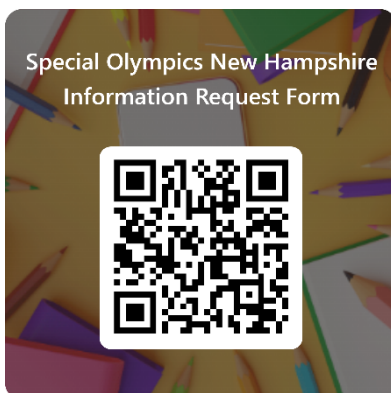
Wait....what?!?! Yes! 😊

As an athlete or a Unified Partner at a New Hampshire Unified Champion School that participates in Unified Sports® and Inclusive Youth Leadership opportunities, you are now a part of our Special Olympics New Hampshire family, so WELCOME!

We are very excited that your school is providing so many great opportunities within the school. Now, we want to let you know about the other amazing opportunities outside of the school setting including Special Olympics Sports, Athlete Leadership opportunities and volunteer opportunities. The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

Ultimately, we want to ensure that everyone who is part of our family is receiving information on what is happening and how they can get involved with any programming they are interested in. For athletes and Unified partners in the school, this could open up more opportunities for things happening during the summer as well as get you connected with programs while you are still in school so that when you graduate you already have established relationships with the Local Programs in your communities. In order for us to let you know about all the great opportunities, we need a way to contact you!

If you are interested in learning more, please contact us using the information below. You can also scan the QR code below to fill out an online form. We appreciate your support and look forward to sharing all of the Special Olympics opportunities available to athletes and Unified Partners, both in and out of school.



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