

# NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HIGH SCHOOLS & MIDDLE SCHOOLS



Special Olympics  
**Unified Champion  
Schools**

## 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®, 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®:** A fully-inclusive sports or fitness program that combines an approximately equal number of students with and without intellectual disabilities. Examples include such things as Interscholastic Unified Sports, Unified PE or Unified Intramurals.

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

- 1 Unified Sports is offered in at least 2 seasons throughout the school year.
- 2 Unified Sports participation occurs regularly over the course of each sport season or school term and includes competition.
- 3 An adult coach for each sport who has received training on Special Olympics Unified Sports.
- 4 Unified Sports is officially recognized by the school in a similar style as other athletics/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 Unified Clubs, inclusive student councils or similar types of inclusive student groups.

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

- 5 A Unified Club or student group offers leadership opportunities/training for students with and without intellectual disabilities.
- 6 The inclusive club/group meets at least once per month throughout the school year.
- 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 Spread the Word to End the Word (R-Word) Campaign, Pep Rallies or “Fans in the Stands” for Unified Sports teams, Respect Campaigns 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 Students with and without disabilities are involved with planning and leading 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.