

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 Intercollegiate Unified Sports, Unified Sports Clubs 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 including competition.
- 3 Participating students have received training on Special Olympics Unified Sports.
- 4 Unified Sports is officially recognized by the campus in a similar style as other campus intramural or club sports (i.e. recreation department or athletic department).

Inclusive Youth Leadership: Students (with and without intellectual disabilities) and local Special Olympics athletes work to lead advocacy, awareness, inclusion and other Special Olympics activities throughout the school year. For example, an official Special Olympics College Club.

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

- 5 A Special Olympics College Club which is student led and student driven.
- 6 The Special Olympics College Club meets at least once per month throughout the school year.
- 7 The Special Olympics College Club has a faculty advisor and is officially recognized by the school in a similar style as other student led clubs/Registered Student Organization.

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 and local community individuals with intellectual disabilities (ID) 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, Registered Student Organization (RSO) funding, or Unified Sports/Club expenses included in school budgets. A national banner school has achieved the following standards:

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- 10 The school is currently self-sustainable or has a plan in place to sustain the three components into the future as well as has on-going communication with the area or state Program.