

UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS

2025-2026
Program Booklet

Special
Olympics
Ontario



Special Olympics
Unified Champion
Schools®



Welcome to a new year of competition and life-changing opportunities.

Our Highlights from Last Year:

12,000

Participating students from across Ontario

55

School boards

450

Participating schools from across Ontario

165

In-person and virtual events

3,601

Unified Participants

1,200

Athletes, coaches and volunteers attended the 2025 Chatham School Championships



THE NEW VISION: UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS

We are not just a sport; Special Olympics Ontario is excited to continue offering the Unified Champion Schools (UCS) inclusive school strategy, creating a foundation for inclusive school cultures and communities across the province.


Unified Champion Schools is revolutionizing the school experience by fostering environments of inclusion and acceptance for all students. Our program integrates three key pillars that work to create a culture where every student is valued and included:

- 1. Inclusive Sport and Health:** This program promotes social engagement and development by integrating students with and without intellectual disabilities into sports.
- 2. Youth Leadership:** UCS also works to develop youth leadership by empowering students to advocate for inclusion and change within their communities.
- 3. Whole-School Engagement:** Through activities and initiatives involving the entire school, we ensure that inclusion is a core value embedded in the school's daily life.

Join us to create lasting change and foster a Unified, accepting, and positive school community. Click the button to become a Unified Champion School today!

APPLY NOW





2025-2026

What's New!

Regional Inclusive Schools Conference Series – Coming This Fall, October 18th – November 1st

Special Olympics Ontario is launching the **UCS Regional Inclusive Conference Saturday Series**—a FREE, one-day professional development event designed for educators who are passionate about inclusion.

Hosted at Champion Schools across Ontario, the conference offers hands-on learning and practical strategies to help teachers foster inclusive classrooms and school communities. Connect with fellow educators, student leaders, and SOO staff while gaining tools to support student well-being, leadership, and equity through Unified programming.

Click the button to register!

APPLY NOW »

Regional Youth Leadership Conferences

A one-day event that brings together high school Unified Partners and Athletes for **interactive workshops, team-building, and leadership training**. Students build skills, connect with peers, and leave ready to lead inclusive initiatives in their schools. It's a key step toward deeper involvement, including the Youth Leadership Summit. Note: Transportation funding support will be available to all participating schools

Regional Handball Pilots

Special Olympics Ontario is launching a new and free regional Handball pilot series in each district! Participating schools will receive:

- Training resources & rules
- 50% transportation coverage
- Medals and more!

Interested in hosting? Click the button and fill out the Host Request Form

APPLY NOW »

Cool Schools - Whole School Engagement Meets Fundraising for Inclusion

Cool Schools is a province-wide challenge and fundraiser that brings the entire school community together to support Unified Champion Schools. Through fun, inclusive activities and school spirit, students and staff unite to raise awareness and funds that directly support athletes across Ontario.

This year, we're launching **Cool Schools Day** on **May 1st**— a celebration to wrap up Inclusion Week and showcase your school's commitment to inclusion, leadership, and community impact.



OUR CORE PROGRAMMING: UNIFIED SPORTS

Qualifiers

Get ready for an action-packed school year! With a record number of events on the horizon, there's something for everyone. SOO is excited to add a new developmental division to its soccer and basketball events, allowing students new to the sport to learn, practice & play at our events, creating a more inclusive space for all skill levels. Explore the full range of opportunities on our [Events Calendar](#) and start planning your participation today!

Unified Track & Field

New & Improved – SOO will offer Unified Track & Field this year, as a two-by-two relay concept for all running events and a combined score for all field events. Unified partners will run with their SO Athletes to achieve their best score as a team for the event. Don't miss out on your opportunity to participate this year. The deadline to submit scores for School Champs consideration is **April 1st**.

The Athlete Showcase Series

The SOO Athlete Showcase Series is launching across the province, featuring events in every corner of Ontario. Open to all schools, individual participants, and athletes **ages 16-30**, these events will include an SOO-style basketball or bocce tournament, with food, medals, prizes, and more. Parents and Guardians, don't miss the chance to watch your children compete!



OUR CORE PROGRAMMING: YOUTH LEADERSHIP

One Year Unified Journey To Leadership

a) Unified Orientation Workshop Series

New schools can kickstart their journey with an in-person interactive workshop that introduces students to the Unified movement and keys to leadership.

b) Student/School-Driven Leadership Initiatives

Students take the lead in implementing inclusive activities tailored to their school culture — building lasting impact and sustainability.



OUR CORE PROGRAMMING: YOUTH LEADERSHIP

c) Unified Leadership Council (ULC)

Accepting new members. Our provincial council of student leaders, comprising athletes and partners, is excited for another year. This group works to collaborate and develop skills to drive awareness, lead initiatives like our Inclusion Week, and represent youth voice across Ontario.

Express your interest and join today by clicking the button below:

APPLY NOW



d) Youth Leadership Summit

Held as part of School Championships, the Unified Leadership Summit is a two-day experience for high school Unified Partners and Special Olympics Athletes, taking place **May 26th - 28th**. Through workshops, peer connections, and guest speakers, students explore how to lead inclusion and strengthen school culture. Participants apply as Unified pairs and attend with a teacher representative.



OUR CORE PROGRAMMING: WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT - IN ACTION

Donut Day – January 30th - February 1st

Donut Day is a powerful **Whole School Engagement initiative** designed to unite students, staff, and families in a shared challenge to promote inclusion and raise awareness for Special Olympics Ontario. Through creative activities and school-wide participation, Donut Day encourages meaningful conversations and celebrates the power of inclusive communities.

Inclusion Week - Coming This April

Inclusion Week a dynamic **initiative created by students, for students**. Developed by the Unified Leadership Council, it empowers schools to come together through student-led activities that celebrate diversity, promote acceptance, and build inclusive school communities.

With ready-to-use resources and flexible ideas, schools can activate Inclusion Week in their own way at any time during the month of April—sparking awareness, connection, and school-wide impact.

[Learn more and access resources here](#)

OUR CORE PROGRAMMING: HEALTHY SCHOOLS



Our expanded Health programs and resources are designed to enhance the physical health, social skills, and emotional well-being of Special Olympics athletes. The SOFitNow app allows athletes to engage in fun challenges, track their progress, and work towards personalized fitness goals.

Access the App Here: [SOFitNow Information Package and User Guide](#)

Program Highlights:

- **Physical Health:** Focus on nutritious eating, improving fitness, and adopting an active lifestyle.
- **Social & Emotional Well-being:** Strengthen social skills and overall mental health.
- **Challenges:** Participate in exciting challenges like the Fit5 and Step Challenges, designed to keep athletes motivated.
- **Events:** Stay tuned to our events calendar for FREE health screenings and healthy schools events throughout the year
- **Click Here for more information:** [Healthy Athletes Info Booklet](#)

Healthy Schools Series

Special Olympics Ontario is excited to **re-launch our live, virtual, and free weekly dance and fitness series**, starting **September 18th**.

- **Dance Wednesdays:** Join us every Wednesday from **1:00–1:30 PM** for high-energy dance sessions that are fun, inclusive, and perfect for all skill levels.
- **Fitness Thursdays:** Every Thursday from **1:00–1:30 PM**, build strength, boost energy with our guided fitness classes.
 - All sessions, live links and recordings will be available through the [Secondary Hub Events section](#)

OUR CORE PROGRAMMING: HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Virtual Programming Is Back

SOO will launch 2-week-long virtual events open province-wide! These programs offer sport-based programming online to engage students across Ontario, teaching them skills and educating them on the origins of sport and the importance of health. Don't miss out on:

- **Welcome Week** – Secondary: September 22nd – 26th
- **Fun Fitness Week** – Secondary: February 2nd – 6th

2026 Provincial School Championships



Mark your calendars! From **May 26th–28th**, Special Olympics Ontario is bringing the excitement back to London with the revamped 3-day Provincial School Championships at Western University. This year's event promises more athletes, more action, and more unforgettable moments, as over 1,000 student athletes from across Ontario and Canada come together to compete, connect, and celebrate inclusion.

With competitions in basketball, bocce, floorball, track and field, and soccer across both Traditional and Unified divisions, the Championships showcase the power of inclusive sport and youth leadership.

London Police Service is proud to host the 2026 Games, reflecting their commitment to inclusion, youth empowerment, and community spirit. Don't miss this incredible celebration of sports, leadership, and unity in the Forest City!

[Learn more and access resources here](#)



Key Updates & Resources

New All-In-One Registration & Payment System

All schools will continue to use **individual Google Sheets** as the registration platform for all events.

- **Returning schools:** You'll use the same form as last year. All event sheets have been cleared for new registrations. Your School Year tab information has been retained. Please ensure this tab is updated for the current school year and that your school re-signs the Code of Conduct.
- **New to the process?** Visit our new School Hubs to learn how to register and access your [**school's form**](#).

Payments— There are no fees to join Special Olympics Ontario. Schools will only be charged a fee of \$5 per athlete for each qualifier event they take participate in per semester. This fee is seamlessly integrated into your registration Google form. To support new participants, all first-time Special Olympics and Unified athletes will have their fees waived for their first semester.

Your Go-To Resource: The Secondary Hub

Everything you need —resources, updates, communications, and event info— all in one place. [**The Secondary Hub**](#) remains your central platform for all things Special Olympics Ontario Schools, and it's updated regularly with the latest tools, news, and program developments.

WhatsApp Groups

Join our official WhatsApp group for educators to connect with teachers across the province. This platform promotes collaboration, engagement, and communication within the Special Olympics community. It's where SOO shares updates, resources, and news, and gathers feedback.

[**Click here**](#) to join the Special Olympics Educator WhatsApp Community
The Community Includes:

- **General Announcements (One-Way)** – Key updates from SOO.
- **Province-Wide & Regional/District Chats (Two-Way)** – Connect with fellow teachers in specific areas; check descriptions for city details.

UCS Grants

a) Host Gants

For the third year in a row, Special Olympics Ontario is offering a hosting grant for a school that chooses to host an unstaffed event (an event where staff are not on-site to support). Depending on the scale of the event, schools can expect to receive \$300- \$500 in funding.

Note: SOO is committed to touching every community; not all unstaffed requests will be granted.

If you are interested in hosting a staffed or unstaffed event this year, please fill out our [hosting form](#).

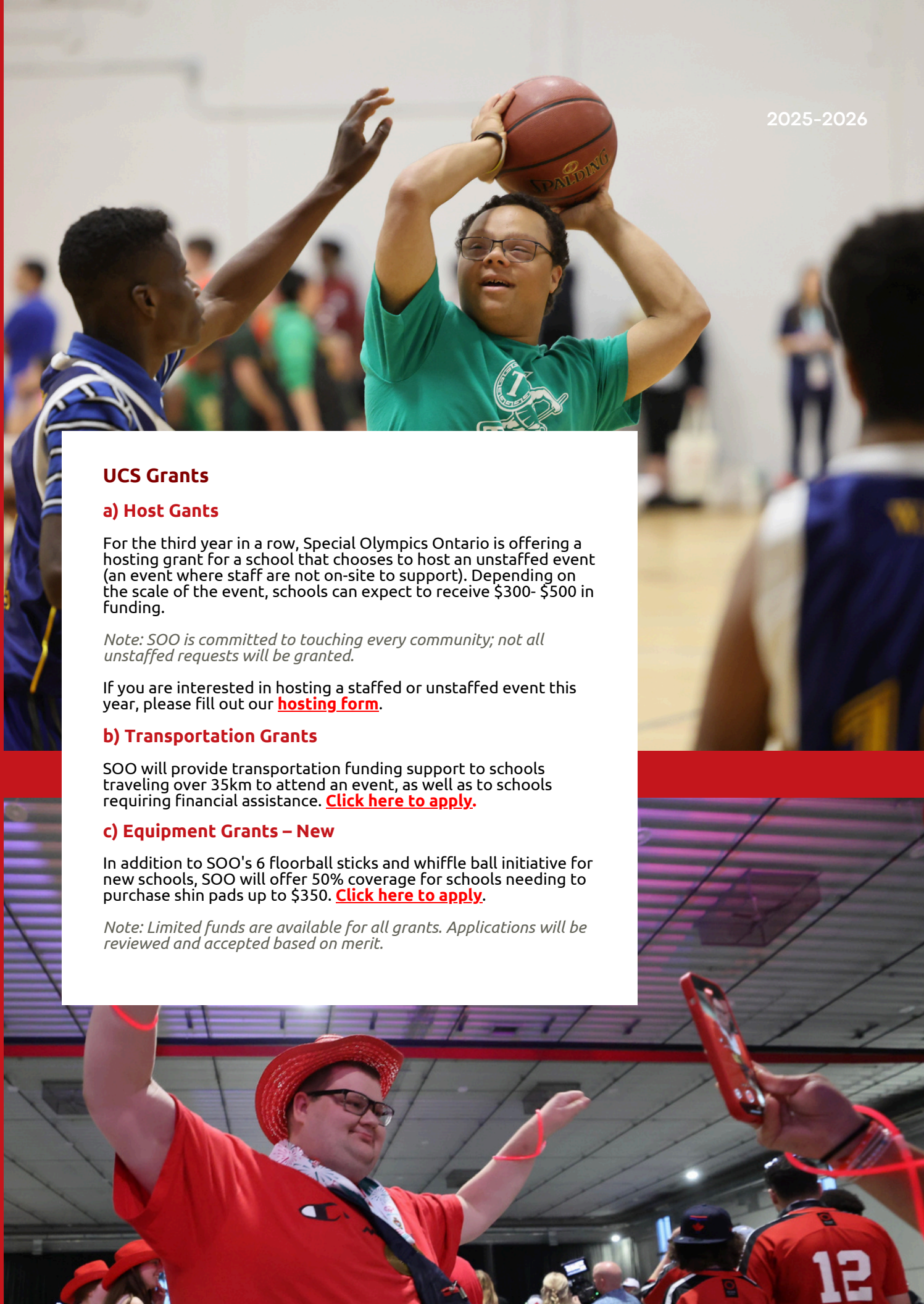
b) Transportation Grants

SOO will provide transportation funding support to schools traveling over 35km to attend an event, as well as to schools requiring financial assistance. [Click here to apply](#).

c) Equipment Grants – New

In addition to SOO's 6 floorball sticks and whiffle ball initiative for new schools, SOO will offer 50% coverage for schools needing to purchase shin pads up to \$350. [Click here to apply](#).

Note: Limited funds are available for all grants. Applications will be reviewed and accepted based on merit.



UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS

Please contact us for more information!

Are you a new school?
Click Here to get involved now!



schools@specialolympicsontario.com



specialolympicsontario.com/schools



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Special Olympics Ontario would like to acknowledge that with the funding support of the Ontario Ministry of Education, SOO has been able to bring this Inclusive Strategy to Ontario schools.

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