

# Unified Champion School Model

## *What is a Unified Champion School?*

The Unified Champion Schools (UCS) program **fosters sustainable, inclusive school environments** by promoting social inclusion through intentionally designed activities that drive system-wide change. UCS is implemented across Ontario at the elementary, secondary, college, and university levels.

Rooted in sport, the UCS model is built on three key components that empower students to create inclusive climates in classrooms, sports, and throughout the school community. These are environments where students with intellectual disabilities and learning challenges feel welcomed, included, and actively engaged in all aspects of school life. The program **brings together students with and without disabilities** to build meaningful relationships and shared experiences.

The three foundational pillars of UCS are:

- **Inclusive Sports & Health**
- **Youth Leadership Opportunities**
- **Whole-School Engagement**

These pillars are designed to be **embedded into the fabric of school culture**, leading to meaningful and lasting change. UCS supports the development of socially inclusive schools that engage and empower all learners.

Each Unified Champion School may look different depending on its unique needs, goals, and schedules. However, the core building blocks remain consistent. Special Olympics Ontario is committed to supporting every school on its journey toward inclusion.

## *Unified Champion Schools Eligibility*

To participate, your school must be located in Ontario and part of the public, private, or Catholic school system. Schools must **complete the onboarding process and school year intake registration** with Special Olympics Ontario. Eligible schools **should include students** who would benefit from the program, including those **with intellectual, developmental, or learning challenges or disabilities**.

*Play Unified. Live Unified. Teach Unified.*

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## How to Apply

**Existing Special Olympics schools:** please follow steps 3 and 4 in the orientation below

**If you are a new school,** please [Click Here](#) to fill out our intake form and we will be in touch, after a short call you will begin the orientation process.

## Orientation for Current SOO Schools

1. Review our **Unified 101 document** - [click here to view](#)
2. Complete the **Unified Coaching Course** (Pick 1 of the 2 options): [SO Canada Course](#) or [NFHS Learning Centre](#)
3. Attend a **one-on-one 15-minute phone call** with SOO staff (only required for new schools) - [click here to indicate your availability](#). **(Optional for active schools)**
4. Complete the **one-time UCS application Form**: Forms can be found on each schools individual intake registration spreadsheets that are emailed to you directly
5. **(Optional)** Sign up to be paired with a mentor teacher in your area as part of our mentorship program (Interest can be indicated on the registration intake form)
6. **(Optional)** Watch our unified awareness video to learn more: <https://youtu.be/dpXczJsA4Ng>

## Next Steps

1. Use the information on our Unified webpages and our resources on the Schools Hub to get started on the path to full school engagement and inclusion. Our team is here to help!
2. Form your leadership team
3. Complete your chosen milestones for our three pillars: inclusive sports and health, youth leadership, and whole school engagement.
4. To be officially recognized as an Ontario Unified Champion School, the **final step** is to share the progress, stories, and content from the initiatives launched at your school. **Each school must submit one summary report every school year to attain and maintain their UCS status.** This report is due by **April 30th annually**. The reporting form can be found on each school's individual google registration spreadsheet.

Play Unified. Live Unified. Teach Unified.

# Unified Champion Schools Recognition Levels & Incentives

Across the province, each respective school will receive a level of recognition for its achievements along with applicable incentives. Unified Champion School classification and incentives are solely based on the number of initiatives achieved per pillar.

## Achievement Levels

- **Unified Champion School:** 1 initiative achieved per pillar (3 total)
- **UCS Bronze:** 2-3 initiatives achieved per pillar
- **UCS Silver:** 5-6 initiatives achieved per pillar
- **UCS Gold:** 6-7 initiatives achieved per pillar
- **UCS All-Province:** 8+ initiatives achieved per pillar & Unified Programming Sustainability achieved and built into the school curriculum

## Recognition & Awards

### Unified Champion School

- Recognition on the Special Olympics Ontario website
- \$100 Registration fee credit per school
- Eligibility to compete at Provincial School Championships (travel and accommodations covered) –  
*Secondary Schools Only*

### Bronze Unified Champion School

- Recognition on the Special Olympics Ontario website
- \$100 Registration fee credit per school
- Eligibility to compete at Provincial School Championships (travel and accommodations covered) –  
*Secondary Schools Only*
- Bronze Unified Champion Status

### Silver Unified Champion School

- Recognition on the Special Olympics Ontario website
- \$100 Registration fee credit per school
- Eligibility to compete at Provincial School Championships (travel and accommodations covered) –  
*Secondary Schools Only*
- Silver Unified Champion Status
- SOO Unified Welcome Pack

# Unified Champion Schools Recognition Levels & Incentives

## Recognition & Awards (continued)

### Gold Unified Champion School

- Recognition on the Special Olympics Ontario website
- \$100 Registration fee credit per school
- Eligibility to compete at Provincial School Championships travel and accommodations covered) – *Secondary Schools Only*
- Gold Unified Champion Status
- SOO Unified Welcome Pack
- Special Olympics Ontario Prize Pack
- Funding for new equipment or transportation grant (\$300)

### All-Ontario Unified Champion School

- Recognition on the Special Olympics Ontario website
- \$100 Registration fee credit per school
- Eligibility to compete at Provincial School Championships (travel and accommodations covered) – *Secondary Schools Only*
- All-Ontario Unified Champion Banner Status
- SOO Unified Welcome Pack
- Special Olympics Ontario Prize Pack
- Funding for new equipment or transportation grant (\$300)
- Secondary: 1 Free School Championships Team Registration for SO Athletes (if qualified)

*Note: Post 4 or more of your events on the school/club social media/website for a chance to win exclusive prizes. The top three most active schools will receive a Unified prize pack, while the rest will be entered to win a prize.*



# Unified Champion Schools Milestone Checklist

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## Achievement Levels

- **Unified Champion School:** 1 initiative achieved per pillar (3 total)
- **UCS Bronze:** 2-3 initiatives achieved per pillar
- **UCS Silver:** 4-5 initiatives achieved per pillar
- **UCS Gold:** 6-7 initiatives achieved per pillar
- **UCS All-Province:** 8+ initiatives achieved per pillar & Unified Programming Sustainability achieved and built into the school curriculum

## Inclusive Sports & Health

- ☐ Have a Unified team participate in a local qualifier
- ☐ Have a Unified team participate in an intermediate event, athlete showcase or pilot sport event
- ☐ Run Unified practices in more than one school sport season
- ☐ Implement SOO Unified Physical Education (UPE) in your school
- ☐ Host or volunteer at a school's Unified event (qualifier, festival, showcase, sport pilot, etc.)
- ☐ Organize a school-Unified intramural league
- ☐ Participate in a Unified home and home series game
- ☐ Have at least 1 coach complete SOO's Unified coach training
- ☐ Run a Unified after-school transition program
- ☐ Participate in the SOOs Health Week
- ☐ Participate in the SOOs virtual Unified health & fitness series
- ☐ Join the SOO monthly health and fitness challenge on the SOI Health App
- ☐ Attend one Healthy Athletes event, screening, or virtual session
- ☐ Download and register for the SOFitNow Health app
- ☐ Compete as a class in at least 3 SOFitNow Fitness Challenges
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# Youth Leadership

- ☐ Establish a Unified council or Unified integration/partnership with current councils.
- ☐ Implement a student coach program
- ☐ Participate in a Unified Leadership workshop
- ☐ Participate in a Regional Youth Leadership Conference
- ☐ Send representatives to the annual Provincial Youth Summit
- ☐ Unified Leadership training completion by all registered Unified Partners
- ☐ Organize a SOO Unified Club (of any kind)
- ☐ Participate in the elementary-secondary mentorship pathway program
- ☐ Create a Unified Partner training/mentorship program
- ☐ Have youth leadership group present and attend school board or school administration meetings
- ☐ Send delegates to the first SOO leadership youth summit (1 teacher, 1 student with, and 1 student without an intellectual disability)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# Whole School Engagement

- ☐ Run a non-sport-related social activity (e.g., movie night, game night, etc.)
- ☐ Organize a fundraising event for SOO (e.g., bake sale, penny auction, polar plunge, etc.)
- ☐ Run an academic-related event for Unified members at lunch or after school (e.g., homework/study time, reading/book club, etc.)
- ☐ Recognize your Unified members during an assembly
- ☐ Incorporate Unified sports into the school's athletic recognition awards
- ☐ Organize a social media or poster campaign promoting SOO
- ☐ Run a Spread the Word campaign, having students sign the #NoGoodWay pledge
- ☐ Participate in inclusion week
- ☐ Fans in the stands: have cheer sections come out and support a Special Olympics school event
- ☐ Organize a pep rally
- ☐ Have Unified members attend either a varsity game or an intramural game and cheer on their peers
- ☐ Collaborate with your local Law Enforcement Torch Run representatives
- ☐ Donate your school facilities (e.g., gym, fields, etc.) for an SOO event (e.g., practice, game, etc.)
- ☐ Connect with SOO community council to ensure a pathway for transitioning students after school
- ☐ Integrate Unified programs into school courses, curriculums
- ☐ Create a plan for program sustainability
- ☐ Unified School Dances
- ☐ Support efforts for your school board to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Special Olympics to support UCS programs in your community
- ☐ Organize a Unified Event Field Trip
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_