

Unified Champion School Model

What is a Unified Champion School?

The **Unified Champions School Program (UCS)** creates a sustainable, inclusive school environment by promoting social inclusion in intentionally planned and implemented activities affecting systems-wide change in schools across Ontario at the elementary, secondary, college, & University levels.

With sports as the foundation, the three-component model offers a unique combination of effective activities that equip young people with tools and training to create sports, classroom and school climates of acceptance. These are school climates where students with disabilities feel welcome and are routinely included in and feel a part of all activities, opportunities and functions.

This is accomplished by implementing the three pillars of the Unified program: **inclusive sports and health, youth leadership opportunities, and whole-school engagement**. The program is designed to be **woven into the fabric of the school culture**, providing opportunities that lead to meaningful change in creating a socially inclusive school that supports and engages all learners.

What a Unified Champion School "looks like" can vary greatly from school to school, based on the needs, goals, schedules and other factors unique to each school, but the basic building blocks remain the same. Special Olympics Ontario is committed to supporting each school.

Unified Champion Schools Eligibility

To be eligible, your school must be located in Ontario and can be part of the public, private, or Catholic school systems. Additionally, your school must be registered with Special Olympics Ontario by completing the 2024/2025 school year intake registration. Finally, your school should have students who can benefit from this program, including those with intellectual, developmental, or learning challenges or disabilities.

How to Apply

If you are an existing Special Olympics school, please follow the orientation steps in the next section. **If you are a new school**, please [click here fill out the intake](#) form and our team will be in touch:

Play Unified. Live Unified. Teach Unified.



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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. (Optional) Attend a one-on-one 15-minute phone call with SOO staff (only required for new schools) - [click here to indicate your availability](#)
4. Complete the UCS application Form: Forms can be found on each schools individual intake registration spreadsheets that are emailed to you directly
5. 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 each year. The reporting form can be found on each school's individual registration spreadsheet.

Please note that schools do not need to reapply annually to retain their UCS banner status—only the ongoing yearly report submitted by the end of April is required to maintain it.

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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:** 4-6 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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Inclusive Sports & Health

- Have a Unified team participate in a local qualifier or sports festival
- 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
- Unified Leadership training completion by all registered Unified Partners
- Organize a SOO Unified Club (of any kind)
- Present on Special Olympics to other schools, school boards, etc.
- Participate in the elementary-secondary mentorship pathway program
- Create a Unified Partner training/mentorship program
- Have youth leadership clubs present and attend school board 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: _____