

Unified Physical Education



Unified PE provides a unique opportunity for students with and without disabilities to come together through ongoing educational and physical activities, using the power of Special Olympics. The Unified Physical Education course is structured around the national physical education standards and grade-level outcomes. Additionally, the class supports the development of leadership skills for all students as well as the empowerment of ALL students to foster an inclusive class and school-wide environment. Students in Unified Physical Education courses may have the opportunity to participate in competitions with other schools or attend Special Olympics events.

Special Olympics Mission

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

Special Olympics Unified Sports®

Unified Sport® takes the great thrill of sports training and competition that has fueled Special Olympics for many years and allows students of different abilities to compete on the same field together.

Unified Sports® combines an approximately equal number of people with and without intellectual disabilities (ID) for training and competition. This Special Olympics program is offered in schools and communities for both youth and adults.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is an education and sports-based strategy powered by an engaged youth community that increases athletic and leadership opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities, while creating communities of acceptance for all. Unified Champion Schools programming includes three main education components in schools:

- Unified Sports®
- Inclusive Youth Leadership
- Whole-School Engagement



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Schools**

Unified Physical Education OVERVIEW & PHILOSOPHY:

This is not your typical physical education course! Unified Physical Education is a unique opportunity for students of varying ability levels and backgrounds to come together on equal terms through ongoing fitness, sports, leadership, and wellness activities. This course focuses on the physical, intellectual, and social growth of all participants. Engaging in physical activity and sport alongside peers with and without disabilities helps to foster important social relationships.

Numerous studies have been conducted ***linking social connections and involvement in school activities with better performance for students of all abilities***. One example includes research by Overton (2001)¹, in collaboration with the North Carolina High School Athletic Association. Overton looked at the academic performance of high-school student-athletes in North Carolina and revealed significant differences between athletes and non-athletes. Some of the major findings included improved GPA (grade point average) for athletes versus non-athletes; significantly better school attendance rates; fewer discipline referrals, and overall, a dramatically lower dropout rate among athletes.

The Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston conducted a program evaluation on the impact of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools on social outcomes. The program evaluation found students who participated in Unified Champion Schools were twice as likely to invite a student with ID (intellectual disabilities) to go out with friends or spend time together outside of school. Additionally, students who were more involved in Unified Champion Schools activities had more positive experiences in school.

Students can apply the skills learned and bonds created during Unified Physical Education courses, such as becoming more active and working together as a team to the broader arena of Special Olympics. Students participating in Unified Physical Education courses may have the opportunity to attend Special Olympics competitions and/or leagues with surrounding schools.

In addition to serving as a unique opportunity for physical education, sports and recreation activities, Unified Physical Education also supports student leadership, provides a whole-school impact, and promotes social justice, health, and wellness.

Special Olympics believes that youth are the future, but also that they can be leaders right now if given the opportunity and support. Unified Physical Education courses can be the foundation for creating more inclusive school environments where individual differences are embraced, and ALL students are accepted.



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Unified Physical Education: RATIONALE:

Unified Physical Education provides a proven strategy for schools engaged as Unified Champion Schools to implement the main education components of Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and Whole-School Engagement in an intentional, sustainable, collaborative, and consistent way.

1. Educational benefits for class member & school community:

- Increase in physical fitness and sport-specific skills (SHAPE National Standards 1 & 3)
- Foster new friendships and social inclusion amongst classmates (SHAPE National Standard 4)
- Reinforce positive habits and reasoning to make better health & lifestyle choices (SHAPE National Standard 5)
- Advance social and leadership competencies (SHAPE National Standard 4)
- Deepen understanding of activity/game/sport rules and strategies (SHAPE National Standard 2)
- Opportunities to develop movement confidence and competence in a variety of physical activities/activity settings (SHAPE National Standard 5)

2. Inclusive Youth Leadership is based on the premise that all students have the ability to be leaders. Activities that foster inclusive youth leadership skills help students with and without disabilities find their voices by teaching them to become change agents striving for respect and inclusion. Students of all ability levels are empowered to create a socially welcoming and inclusive environment that allows them to meaningfully contribute to their school community. This concept encourages co-leadership opportunities amongst inclusive pairs/groups to promote a deeper understanding of the strengths, gifts, and skills of all students.

3. Career Readiness: Unified Physical Education environments also present a unique opportunity to increase college and career readiness. Students can increase the communication and social skills that are necessary to gain employment. All students gain valuable hands-on experience in working with each other.

Unified Sports and Physical Education allow all students, regardless of their ability level, the opportunity to develop and share their skills and talents with the school and surrounding community. On the playing field, the partners and athletes learn the value of teamwork and the importance of inclusion in all aspects of life. Of the field, the students build life-long friendships and serve as advocates for inclusion.



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UNIFIED PHYSICAL EDUCATION COURSE SYLLABUS

Special
Olympics
South Carolina



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SAMPLES of Course Description

This course combines students of all abilities to participate in developmentally appropriate activities including lifetime activities, physical fitness, and Special Olympics Unified Sports. Students will work together to increase competence and confidence in a variety of physical activities. Through ongoing leadership opportunities, members of this course will be empowered to help create a more inclusive and accepting school environment for all students.

Student Learning Outcomes/Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will....

1. Increase their physical fitness
2. Improve their activity-specific skills
3. Cooperate and work together with classmates
4. Describe how to make better health & lifestyle choices
5. Increase their understanding of sports rules and strategies

Grading

- Participation: Daily grades are given for being on time, participating in class and completing daily activities.
- Reflection: Teacher will provide opportunities for students to reflect on their unique journey and growth as a leader and Unified Sports athlete or unified partner.
- Final Exam or Project

Tentative Schedule

The teacher will include the schedule of units specific to her/his curriculum for this course. It is recommended that the schedule reflect ample opportunities for deliberate practice that will enhance student learning.

SAMPLE

Physical Education 2 344201CW

Unified Sports or Unified PE

Grades 10–12 1 unit

Prerequisite: Physical Education 1 or JROTC I

This course may be used in lieu of Physical Education 1 to satisfy the graduation requirement. This course combines students of all abilities, from general and special education, to participate in inclusive activities including physical fitness and Unified Sports. This course is a training course for Special Olympics, with a focus on preparation for competition in Unified Sports while providing ongoing leadership opportunities. An application is required and may be picked up in the School Counseling and Advisement Office.

Student Participation:

Unified Physical Education is a fully inclusive program. Whenever possible, approximately half of the students in this course should be students with a disability; the other half should be students without a disability. A Unified Physical Education course should never be comprised solely of individuals with disabilities, nor should the course be comprised of primarily individuals without disabilities.

An important underpinning of Unified Physical Education is that all students enter the class on an equitable social footing. Students without disabilities are not meant to serve as helpers or mentors, but to be equitable classmates. All students should be encouraged to use their unique skills to support each other.

What is a Unified Partner?

A Unified partner is a student without an intellectual disability, who actively participates with the athletes in a fun and meaningful way for training and competition.

A valuable outcome of Unified Sports® is that people with disabilities are given the chance to interact with their peers who do not have a disability. Unified Sports® does however allow students with other types of disabilities (such as a physical or learning disability) to participate as Unified partners as long as it does not pose a health or safety risk.

Who is a Special Olympics Athlete?

Athletes are the heart of Special Olympics Unified Sports! A Special Olympics athlete can be a student or a member of the community.

To qualify as a Special Olympics athlete, an individual must meet one of the following criteria:

1. The individual has been diagnosed with an intellectual disability by a medical professional or as determined by a government agency;
2. The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measures, including an intelligent quotient or "IQ" of 75 or lower;
3. The person has a significant developmental delay, as determined by standardized measures, including a minimum of a 2-year development delay.
4. The person has a closely related developmental disability. A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as in recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care).

Persons whose functional limitations are based solely on a physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as Special Olympics athletes, but may be eligible to volunteer for Special Olympics.

The Foundation of Unified Sports: Principle of Meaningful Involvement



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For successful Unified Physical Education programs, the coach and all players must understand and support meaningful involvement. Fundamentally, the principle of meaningful involvement ensures that every player is given an opportunity to contribute to the success of his or her team through their unique skills and qualities.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement:

- ✓ Teammates train and compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
- ✓ Teammates participate according to the rules of competition.
- ✓ Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team.

Meaningful involvement is NOT achieved when certain team members:

- × Display superior sports skills without involving their teammates.
- × Serve predominantly as on-field coaches rather than teammates or mentors, except on more developmental teams.
- × Control most aspects of the game, especially during the most critical periods.
- × Do not train or practice regularly and only show up on the day of competition.

Unified Physical Education Unit Schedule:

A well-rounded variety of physical education, fitness, sport, wellness, and leadership activities should be integrated throughout the course. This Unified Physical Education resource provides some recommended sport/activity units; however, the instructor is encouraged to integrate course content that will best meet the national physical education standards and grade-level outcomes as well as to suit the needs and goals of the students registered for this course.

SAMPLE: Unit Schedule may include a combination of activities and themes.

Physical Education	Leadership Themes	Wellness Topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special Olympics Sports (i.e. basketball, bocce, soccer, volleyball)• Fitness Activities• Inclusive Games• Outdoor Pursuits• Dance & Rhythmic Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Orientation• Inclusive Youth Leadership• Inclusion• Co-Leadership• Teamwork• Advocacy• Empowerment through Health & Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal Fitness Goals• Exercise & Injury Prevention• Physical & Mental Well-Being• Sports Nutrition & Hydration• Healthy Lifestyles