

## National Recognition Program Elementary School Application Review Rubric

Please use this rubric when reviewing each National Recognition Program application. The school must **meet all 12 standards to receive recognition as a Banner School**. If the school exceeds many of the standards, they will be considered for a national banner presentation by one of our sponsors and other opportunities to highlight their work. If their response indicates that they are below or approaching the standard, that information can be used for feedback to help them improve.

### 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 Unified PE, Unified Fitness, Interscholastic or intramural Unified Sports.

<p>1. Special Unified Sports and/or Young Athletes are available for students across multiple grade levels of the school. (For instance, Young Athletes for PK-2 and Junior Athletes for grades 3-5, and/or Unified PE for all grade levels. <i>If the school only serves one grade band, Unified Sports must be available for all students.</i>)</p>			
Below Standard	Approaching Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
No evidence is provided of how or for whom Special Olympics Unified Sports or Young Athletes is offered.	Evidence is provided that Special Olympics Unified Sports activities are offered for only one grade level/band (For instance, Young Athletes for early childhood grades only.)	Evidence is provided that Special Olympics Unified Sports activities are offered for multiple grade levels.	Evidence is provided that students in all grade levels have multiple opportunities to participate in Special Olympics Unified Sports. Unified Sports are a norm for the school and reflected in all sports and fitness opportunities.
<p>2. Unified Sports and/or Young Athletes activities <b>occur regularly</b> over the course of the school year and <b>include a culminating event or competition</b> (For instance, weekly training in lead-up to an event; Unified PE throughout the year with a culminating Unified Field Day; or quarterly Junior Athletes offerings with a culminating exhibition.)</p>			
Below Standard	Approaching Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
Unified Sports are offered as one-time events without training or practice	Evidence is provided that Unified Sports and/or activities occur regularly	Evidence is provided that Unified Sports and/or activities occur regularly over the course of the school	Evidence is provided that multiple Unified Sports and/or activities occur throughout the

sessions.	over the course of the school year, but there is no evidence of competition or culminating event.	year and include competitions and/or culminating events.	school year, like any other sport/activity the school offers and include competitions/ culminating events that engage the whole school.
<p>3. Each sport/activity has an adult coach who has received <b>state and/or National training</b> on Unified Sports, Young Athletes, and/or Junior Athletes (For instance, in-person training the with Special Olympics state Program, or courses taken on the <a href="#">Special Olympics LMS</a> or <a href="#">NFHS Learn site</a>.)</p>			
<b>Below Standard</b>	<b>Approaching Standard</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Exceeds Standard</b>
No evidence is provided of adult coach(s) receiving any training on Special Olympics Unified Sports.	Evidence is provided that some, but not all, coaches have received training on Special Olympics Unified Sports.	Evidence is provided that each coach of each sport has received state and/or National training on Special Olympics Unified Sports. (For instance, the Junior Athletes coach completed the NFHS Coaching Unified course in Fall 2025).	Evidence is provided that each coach of each sport/activity has received state and/or National training on Special Olympics Unified Sports and has taken additional training at the local, state, or national level.
<p>4. Special Olympics Unified Sports programming is <b>officially recognized</b> by the school in a <b>similar style</b> as other sports/activities. (For instance, games/events are featured on the morning announcements; students/teams are recognized in the yearbook; fans are invited to culminating events.)</p>			
<b>Below Standard</b>	<b>Approaching Standard</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Exceeds Standard</b>
No evidence is provided of official recognition of Special Olympics Unified Sports by the school.	Evidence is provided that Special Olympics Unified Sports programming is acknowledged by the school, but not on the same level as other sports/activities. (For example, Unified Sports is the only sport in the school not recognized at school assemblies.)	Evidence is provided that Special Olympics Unified Sports programming is officially recognized by the school in a similar style as other sports/activities.	Evidence is provided that Special Olympics programming is officially recognized by the school and the school district in a similar style as other sports/activities.

## Inclusive Youth Leadership

Inclusive Youth Leadership programming develops leadership skills\* in youth with and without intellectual disabilities (ID) preparing them to be champions of inclusion in their schools, communities, workplaces, and in the broader Special Olympics movement throughout a lifetime of inclusion. Students with and without ID work with adult guidance and support to learn about inclusion and to lead advocacy, awareness, inclusion and other Unified Champion Schools activities throughout the school year.

*\*IYL leadership skills are those that develop students' innovation, openness, empathy, bravery, accountability, and ability to lead collaboratively.*

<p>5. A Unified Club or other inclusive student group made up of students with and without intellectual disabilities meets <b>at least monthly</b> throughout the school year for social <b>and</b> leadership activities. These can be classroom-based, during the school day, or extra-curricular. (For instance, a group of students with and without intellectual disabilities meet for lunch every Friday to learn about leadership and to help plan school wide events; an inclusive student announcements group that shares responsibilities for morning announcements; a Unified reading club that helps plan and lead the Young Readers activities. Importantly, a club in which students without intellectual disabilities are the only leaders or function as “helpers” does not meet this standard.)</p>			
Below Standard	Approaching Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
No evidence is provided of reoccurring Unified Club (or other) meetings throughout the school year.	Evidence is provided that Unified Club (or other) meetings occur occasionally over the course of the school year or are for social or sports purposes only.	Evidence is provided that Unified Club (or other) meetings occur at least monthly over the course of the school year and include social leadership opportunities/training for students with and without intellectual disabilities.	Evidence is provided that Unified Club (or other) meetings occur regularly over the course of the school year and include leadership training with specific opportunities to apply and practice new skills (e.g. practicing the skill of accountability by taking on leadership roles in the classroom;)
<p>6. Students with and without intellectual disabilities have opportunities to <b>build leadership skills and take leadership roles</b> during Unified Club (or other) meetings and events, sports/activity training sessions, planning of awareness activities, or while promoting inclusion throughout the school. The youth are all <b>valuable contributors</b> to the group and work collaboratively. One group of youth is not there to help the other group. (Examples include students with and without intellectual disabilities doing morning announcements together, hosting assemblies, serving as safety patrols, and leading Unified Sports activities.)</p>			
Below Standard	Approaching Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
No evidence is provided of students with or without ID having leadership roles or training;	Evidence is provided that students without ID are given more leadership training and opportunities to lead	Evidence is provided that both students with and students without ID are given leadership training and	Students with and without ID are given frequent, varied opportunities to lead in meaningful ways (For

	than their peers with ID.	opportunities to lead.	instance, Unified Pairs serve in all student leadership opportunities available to other students.)
7. The inclusive club/group has an <b>adult liaison</b> who helps the group provide input to the school's UCS leadership team and other school leaders on school wide activities. (For instance, the liaison meets with the club/group prior to leadership team meetings to provide input on upcoming events; the club/group members work with the liaison to share their ideas for a school-wide Spirit Week.)			
<b>Below Standard</b>	<b>Approaching Standard</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Exceeds Standard</b>
No evidence is provided of the adult liaison's support or recognition of the club by the school.	Evidence is provided that there is an adult liaison, but the club is not formally recognized by the school or included in the UCS leadership team's decision making.	Evidence is provided that there is an adult liaison who supports the club's interactions with the UCS leadership team, and the club has full recognition by the school	There is an adult liaison who has received training through Special Olympics (such as the UCS Elementary Implementation course), club members regularly engage with the UCS leadership team, and the club has full recognition by the school.

### Whole School Engagement

Whole-School Engagement: Awareness and education activities that promote inclusion and reach the majority of the school population. Examples include such things as a Spread the Word Campaign, Pep Rallies or "Fans in the Stands" for Unified Sports teams, Respect Campaigns or student fundraising.

8. At least two whole-school engagement activities are implemented per school year. (For instance, a Spread the Word campaign is held during the month of March; Unified Pairs from the club lead a school wide reading activity; a Junior Athletes exhibition includes the student body as Fans in the Stands.)			
<b>Below Standard</b>	<b>Approaching Standard</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Exceeds Standard</b>
No evidence is provided of whole-school engagement activities in the school year.	Evidence is provided of one whole-school engagement activity in the school year.	Evidence is provided that two or more whole-school engagement activities took place in the school year.	Evidence is provided that multiple whole-school engagement activities took place during the school year that integrated into related school priorities and supported inclusion as a norm for the school.
9. The Unified Club or inclusive student group works alongside school staff to <b>plan and lead</b>			

the awareness activities. (For instance, students with and without intellectual disabilities develop promotion announcements during Spread the Word week; Unified Pairs from the Unified PE class lead stations during Field Day.)			
Below Standard	Approaching Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
No evidence is provided that students were engaged with adults in planning or leading awareness activities.	Evidence is provided that students had roles in whole school engagement activities (e.g. acting as hosts) but were not included in the planning process.	Evidence is provided that members of the Unified Club (or other) worked with adults to plan and lead awareness activities.	Evidence is provided that members of the Unified Club (or other) planned and lead multiple awareness building activities for their peers. Older students mentored younger students to prepare them to lead in future activities.

## Sustainability

Sustainability: Strategies and plans which ensure the 3 Unified Champion School components (Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership and Whole School Engagement) will continue and are part of the school culture. Examples include such things as fundraising, an active UCS leadership team, professional development, integration with other school priorities, and family/community engagement.

10 The school is currently <b>financially self-sustainable</b> or has a <b>financial plan</b> in place to sustain the 3 components (Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership and Whole School Engagement) into the future. (For instance, the UCS school liaison is a designated staff position; costs for Unified Champion Schools activities are included in the annual budget; after-school activity coaches and sponsors receive stipends.)			
Below Standard	Approaching Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
No evidence is provided of financial sustainability.	Evidence is provided of financial sustainability for some, but not all, components.	Evidence is provided of future financial sustainability for each component.	Evidence is provided of future financial sustainability through school, community and district level financial planning.
11 The <b>UCS leadership team (roster required)</b> regularly monitors and reports on social inclusion and plans for strategic improvement by completing all Special Olympics state Program and <b>national reports and surveys</b> . (For instance, using the <a href="#">Social Inclusion Scale</a> as part of school climate assessments; completing and returning the school liaison report)			
Below Standard	Approaching Standard	Meets Standard	Exceeds Standard
No evidence is provided of a school leadership team	Evidence is provided that the school leadership team	Evidence is provided that the school leadership team	Evidence is provided that the school leadership team shares



<p>engaged in planning, monitoring and assessing the Unified Champion Schools strategy.</p>	<p>coordinates implementation of the Unified Champion Schools strategy, but does not monitor results for improvement</p>	<p>evaluates its strategies and activities and reports results to the school, state Program, and National communities.</p>	<p>its results to advocate adoption of the Unified Champion Schools strategy by other schools.</p>
<p>12 Unified Champion Schools is <b>integrated into the culture</b> of the school and <b>supported</b> by a wide range of staff and community members including a certified liaison. (For instance, general and special education teachers lead or participate in UCS opportunities; social inclusion is included in the school improvement plan; students with and without intellectual disabilities have numerous opportunities to connect socially and academically (lunch, advisory, electives); training and resources are available for adults; community partnerships are established.)</p>			
<p><b>Below Standard</b></p>	<p><b>Approaching Standard</b></p>	<p><b>Meets Standard</b></p>	<p><b>Exceeds Standard</b></p>
<p>No evidence is provided that the Unified Champion Schools strategy extends beyond a limited number of participating students and adults.</p>	<p>Evidence is provided of a certified school liaison and broad awareness of the Unified activities.</p>	<p>Evidence is provided that the Unified Champion Schools strategy is embedded in the school culture and sustainable through adult and student commitment.</p>	<p>Evidence is provided that social inclusion is a school and community norm supported by implementation of the Unified Champion Schools strategy and other inclusion efforts.</p>



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