

Unified Sports®

Athlete:

“We would never have met and become such great friends if my school did not have Unified Sports® teams.”

Unified Partner:

“Unified Sports® has changed the way students with disabilities are viewed at our school. They are treated with more respect and seen as individuals with amazing personalities and talents.”



Special Olympics





Section 1:

Foundation

*Establishing the Base to Support Success ...
Transforming Lives*

Special Olympics Mission



- Year-round program
- Training and competition for children and adults
- Olympic-type sports
- Individuals with intellectual disabilities
- With families, other athletes, and the *community*





Unified Champion Schools ...



- Is a strategy for engaging schools and using tools & sports programs of Special Olympics like Unified Sports®
- Is **youth-centered, school focused**
- Encourages youth to be **agents of** fostering inclusion, acceptance, respect and human dignity for all students with and without intellectual disabilities
- Utilizes Unified Sports® and other activities as a **deliberate catalyst** to **transform** a school or community



3 Components of Unified Champion Schools



- Unified Sports®
- Inclusive leadership
- Whole school involvement



Evolution

Social Inclusion

1960s & '70s ~

People with intellectual disabilities housed in institutions; viewed as different, feared, could be rehabilitated, inhuman, burden to society and eternal children; beginning of living at home

1980s & '90s ~

Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger Social Role Valorization (changing attitudes toward undervalued people)

Today ~

Push for inclusion, acceptance & respect across everything – a focus in all communities

Special Olympics

1960s & '70s ~

Special Olympics care provider; little or no coaching; didn't officiate by rules; huggers and clowns at finish line; poor uniforms; lack of good equipment

1980s & '90s ~

Eunice Kennedy Shriver wanted sports not field days; athletes became coached, played by rules, left institutions but still islands unto selves

Today ~

Beyond physical inclusion to social inclusion via Unified Sports®... positive impact to athletes, partners and community



2-Minute Drill with Groups of 4 or 5

- Form groups; **designate a presenter**
- Discuss topic within group for **2 minutes**
- Each group's designee has **30 seconds** present **one key point**



Topic 1: What does **Social Inclusion** mean?

Social Inclusion ~



What it means:

- Feeling a sense of belonging
- Having access to community support
- Having choices to pursue relationships
- Being a contributing member in/with the community

Best achieved: ongoing mutual social relationships

Impact: Adjustment in everyone's attitudes & treatment

~ Brian Abery, Institute on Community Integration

Play Unified: Unified Sports & Physical Education



Click picture to link to video, or: <https://vimeo.com/274405929>



Research Findings



Unified Sports® ...

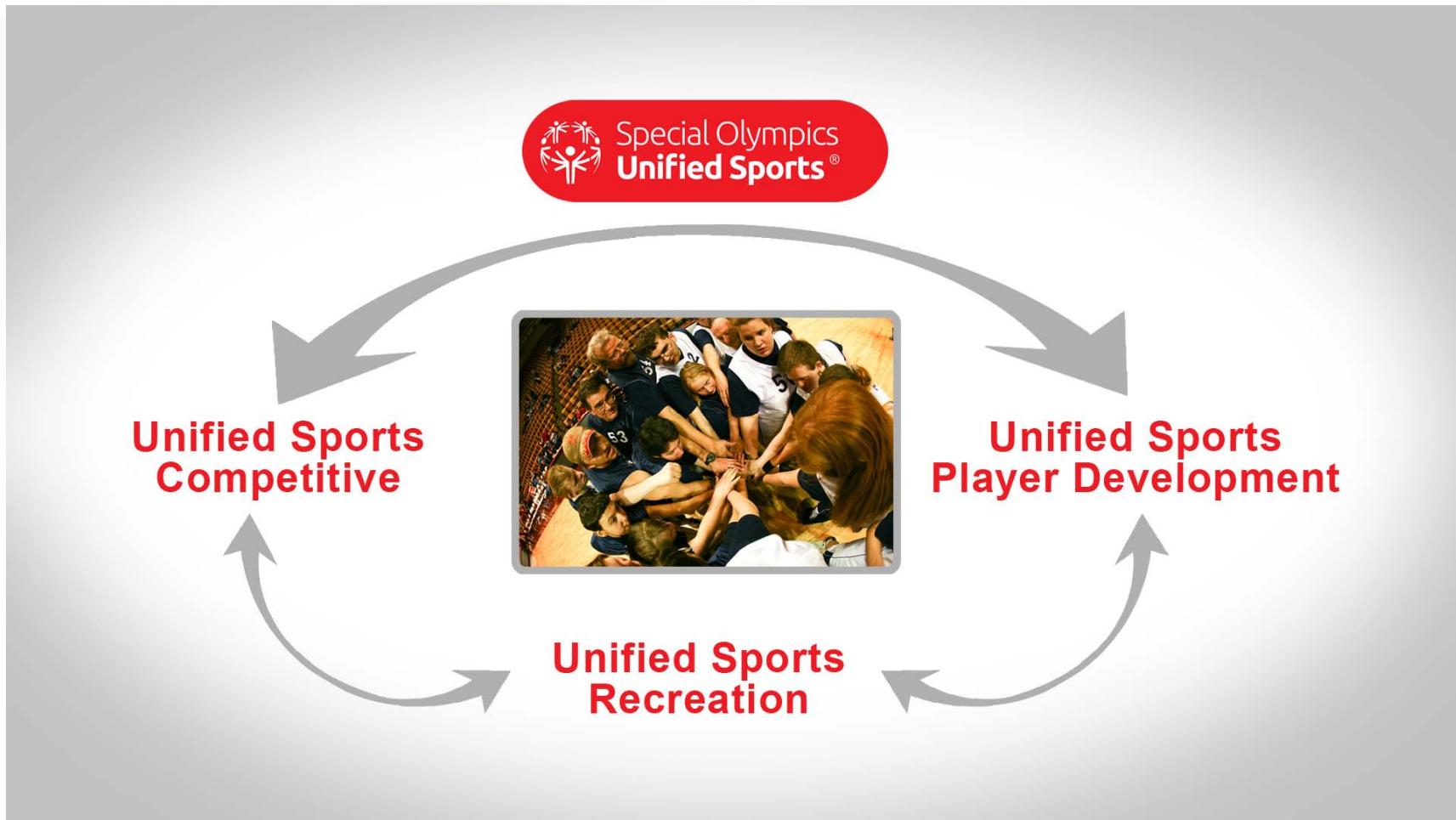
- Has a **positive impact** on all participants
- Improves **understanding** of people with intellectual disabilities
- Complements **social inclusion**
- Is significantly influenced by **commitment and attitude of staff**

Definition of Unified Sports®



- An inclusive sport program of 3 models: competitive, player development and recreation
- Approximately equal numbers of athletes and partners without intellectual disabilities as teammates
- Not solely comprised of individuals with disabilities but still can be fully inclusive
- Athletes & partners: similar age & ability (*ideal*); matching age & ability level defined by sport

Special Olympics Unified Sports® Models





Model Profiles and Definitions

Competitive Model

- Similar ability and age
- Sufficient sport skills and tactics – contribute to the team (*generally cannot tell athletes from partners*)
- Different ability divisions – high & low
- No modifications of Official Sports Rules
- Meaningful involvement enforced
- Awards based on place of finish
- Eligible to advance to higher levels of competition

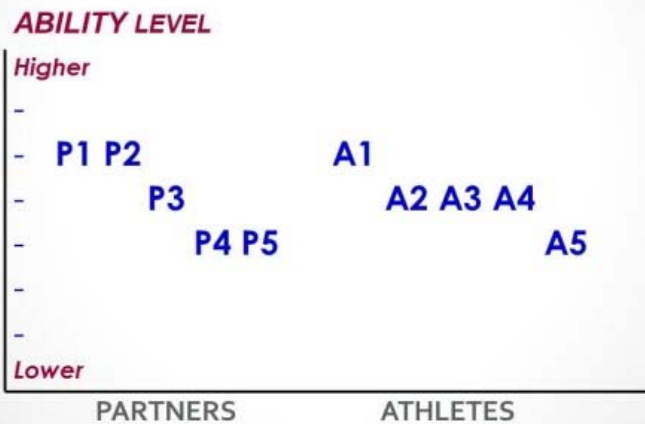
Player Development

- Similar age, not ability
- Teammates of higher ability serve as mentors to assist those of lower ability
- Rules modifications to define players' roles; meaningful involvement enforced; prevent player dominance
- Place of finish or participation award
- No advancement opportunity to higher levels of competition

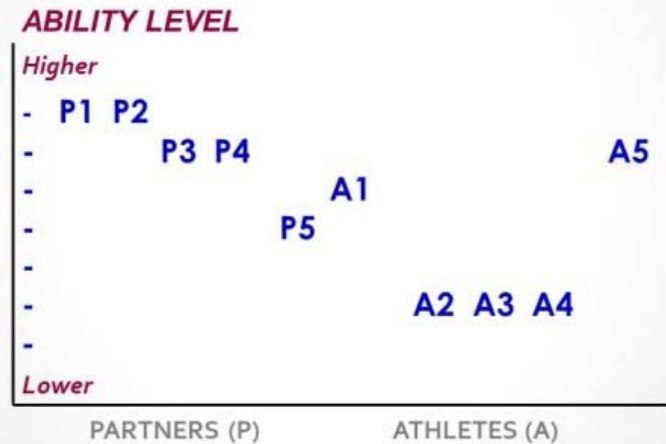


Model Profiles and Definitions

Profile of Unified Sports Team
Competitive Model



Profile of Unified Sports Team
Player Development Model





Recreation Model

Definition

Inclusive recreational sports opportunities for individuals with and without intellectual disabilities (*when possible, aspire to have at least 25% athletes involved with partners*)

Goals: increasing sport skills & knowledge; promoting social inclusion

Less structured: does not meet the minimum training, competition and/or team composition requirements

Exposure or entry point: to the Player Development and/or Competitive Models

Sites: Schools, clubs, sports organizations and community



Special Olympics
Unified Sports®

Section 2:

Implementation

Seven Criteria for Success





1. Principle of ***meaningful involvement***
2. **Appropriate sport** selection
3. **Qualified** coaching staff
4. Recruitment /selection of **teammates**
5. Regular **training and competition**
6. **Compliance** with Official Rules,
including ability divisioning
7. Commitment of **resources**





1. Principle of Meaningful Involvement

- All participants ...
 - ✓ Demonstrate sufficient sport-specific skills and concepts
 - ✓ Contribute to the team through unique personal strengths
 - ✓ Play without significant health or safety risks
 - ✓ Play according to rules

2-Minute Drill

Topic 3: Give an example of when someone is and is not meaningfully involved in a sport.



- Same groups; designate new presenter
- 2 minutes discussing topic
- 30 seconds presenting key point



2. Factors in Sport Selection



- Athlete & partner interest
- Availability of facilities and equipment
- Availability of qualified coaches
- **Ability level** of potential athletes and partners
- Opportunities for competition



3. Qualified Unified Sports[®] Coaches

- Understand and promote **social inclusion**
- Ensure **all players** contribute to team
- Allow **teammates** to build connections through other activities
- Design drills to challenge all players
- Match player's ability to role on the team
- Use **team tactics** to maximize the strength of players with lower abilities



Special Olympics
Unified Sports[®]

Unified Sports Coach Recruitment
click on picture or: <https://youtu.be/gfzCjDpuKS4>





4. Recruitment & Selection of Team Members



- **What:** participant readiness
(mental; physical; social)
- **Where:** school leadership clubs, or Unified Sports clubs
- **How:** Skills Assessment Tests and game play evaluations to determine:
 - 1) Appropriateness of each player
 - 2) Unified Sports model for team

Teammate Guidelines

- Attend practice & competition regularly
- Know the rules
- Do your best
- Form social relationships with all team members
- Don't be a coach
- Travel and stay with the team
- Demonstrate sportsmanship





5. Training & Competition

(Competitive & Player Development Models)

- **Training**
 - ✓ Practice & compete together over a season
 - ✓ Athletes and partners submit to athletic clearance requirements
- **Competition**
 - ✓ Intra-District Leagues
 - ✓ Interscholastic Leagues
 - ✓ CIF sanctioned Competitions



6. Compliance with Official Rules, including ability divisioning

- **National Governing Body (NGB) Rules with minimal Special Olympics modifications**
- **Enforcing meaningful involvement**
- **Roster size based on sport**
- **Line-up based on sport**
- **Divisioned by ability**
- **Awards**
- **Non-playing coach**



7. Commitment of Support and Resources

- **Special Olympics Southern California**
 - ✓ Coaches Education and Training
 - NFHS course - <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/61127/coaching-unified-sports>
 - ✓ Funding available for start up
 - ✓ Support from SOSC staff

- **School Administration and Athletic Director:** Support of new sports program/teams and recognition as any other sports team on campus

- **Coach:** Have knowledge of sport, Special Olympics and Unified Sports, knowledge of players' abilities and personalities

- **School/Campus:** Everyone deserves an audience; gain and show respect for abilities

Fan Development



- The role of the spectator
- Engage entire school
- Recognize skills and abilities of all
- Gain and show respect and acceptance for abilities



“Everyone who plays sports deserves an audience. When I compete, I like it when people are cheering me on.”

-Special Olympics Athlete

Concluding Section



Wrap-Up & Review

Reinforcing Main Points



Review



1. How is **meaningful involvement** achieved when some players have lower abilities than their teammates?
2. When can individuals with disabilities be **partners** on a Unified Sports® team?
3. What **sports** require athletes and partners to be **matched by ability** and explain why?
4. What **outcomes** does Unified Champion Schools encourage?
5. How can a coach **develop cohesion** among team members?
6. What **outcomes** do models of **Unified Sports®** encourage?

Making It Happen ...



Transforming lives together,
every day!