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Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools: Year 14 <<state>>Program Report

2021-2022

*Special Olympics <<state>>*

Center for Social Development and Education University of Massachusetts Boston

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# Introduction

Each year, the Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston conducts an evaluation of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS), providing data to Special Olympics North America and the U. S. Department of Education. For over a decade, UCS has been assessed through a comprehensive annual survey of UCS school “liaisons,” the school staff person responsible for overseeing UCS implementation and reporting at each school. Liaisons provide key insights into the implementation and impact of UCS both nationally and on a state-by-state basis.

The following report synthesizes UCS Liaison Survey data from Unified Champion Schools across the <<no\_of\_survey\_taken\_schools\_in\_special\_olympics\_for\_state>> participating State Special Olympics Programs in the 2021-22 school year. The purpose of the following report is to provide insight into the implementation of Unified Champion Schools in each state and to provide each State Program with data that can be used to assess its own Unified Champion Schools programming, within the context of your State Program goals and the national context. To that end, this year’s report includes information about school demographics, program implementation, leadership and sustainability, COVID-19 rebounding, implementation support, and program impact.

## Unified Sports

Unified Sports is a key aspect of UCS implementation and impact. Within this core experience, schools can choose from a range of sport-based activities including Unified Sports teams, Unified PE, Unified Fitness, Unified eSports, Young Athletes, and Unified Developmental Sports. In <<state>>, 97% of liaisons reported implementing at least one Unified Sports activity as part of their UCS programming, relatively higher than the national average (84%). Figure 4 shows the Unified Sports activities that responding liaisons in <<state>> reported implementing at their schools in 2021-22, as well as the national numbers for those same activities.

**Figure 4.** Percentage of schools implementing each Unified Sports activity <<Figure4>>.

*Note*: \* Young Athletes (participants) and Unified Developmental Sports are only applicable to students and schools at the elementary level. Percentages calculated from this subsample.

## Inclusive Youth Leadership

The mission of Inclusive Youth Leadership within UCS is to provide all students with access to meaningful leadership opportunities. Similar to the flexible structure of Unified Sports, schools can choose from a range of Inclusive Youth Leadership activities including Unified Club, Inclusive Leadership training/classes, Young Athletes Volunteers, Special Olympics Youth Summit, and Youth Activation Committee. In <<state>>, 75% of liaisons reported implementing at least one Inclusive Youth Leadership activity, compared to 62% nationally.

Figure 5 demonstrates the percent of responding liaisons in <<state>> that reported implementing each Inclusive Youth Leadership experience in 2021-22 and the national numbers for those same experiences <<Figure5>>.

Liaisons who reported that their school implemented a particular activity were also asked to report on leadership opportunities for students with IDD embedded within each Unified Sports and Whole School Engagement activity. Table 4 notes the percentage of liaisons in <<state>> that indicated students with IDD took on leadership roles within specific activities.

**Table 4.** Leadership Opportunities for Students with IDD within UCS

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Characteristic | <<state>>  (n=58) | National  (*n* = 4242) |
| Unified Sports |  |  |
| Unified Sports Team | 91% | 75% |
| Unified PE | 58% | 51% |
| Unified Fitness | 70% | 39% |
| Unified esports | 0% | 33% |
| Young Athletes Participants | 40% | 45% |
| Unified Developmental Sports | 17% | 33% |
| Whole School Engagement |  |  |
| Spread the Word/Respect Campaign | 75% | 60% |
| Fans in the Stands/Unified Sports Pep Rally | 54% | 51% |
| Unified Sports Day/Festival | 50% | 50% |
| Fundraising Events and Activities | 56% | 58% |
| Special Olympics Play/Performance | 83% | 65% |
| Unified Fitness Challenge | 55% | 42% |

## Whole School Engagement

Whole School Engagement gives all students in a school the opportunity to participate in UCS and support a socially inclusive school culture. These events and activities are vital to the impact UCS has at the schoolwide level. Whole School Engagement experiences include a wide range of activities and events, including the Spread the Word/Respect Campaign, Fans in the Stands, and fundraising events, among others. In <<state>>, 85% of liaisons reported implementing at least one Whole School Engagement experience, compared to 81% nationally. Figure 6 demonstrates the percent of responding liaisons in <<state>> that reported implementing each Whole School Engagement experience in 2021-22 and the national numbers for those same activities.

**Figure 6.** Percentage of all schools implementing each Whole School Engagement activity<<Figure6>>.

## Implementation Support from Special Olympics

Special Olympics North America regularly develops and disseminates resources to help schools implement UCS. Overall, approximately half (47%) of liaisons in <<state>> indicated that they used at least one resource, consistent with liaisons nationwide (50%). Of those who reported using each specific resource, most liaisons nationally reported finding the resources useful. See Figure 11 for the percentage of liaisons in <<state>> and nationally that found each resource useful <<Figure11>>.

Liaisons also reported on the support received from their Special Olympics State Program. The most frequently reported supports utilized in <<state>> were getting questions answered, receiving equipment, and training. Table 8 describes the various types of support schools received from Special Olympics <<state>> and nationally. 43% of liaisons in <<state>> reported participating in specific trainings provided by Special Olympics <<state>>, compared to 39% nationally. 64% of liaisons in <<state>> reported feeling very satisfied with the level of support and contributions they received from Special Olympics <<state>>, compared to 65% of liaisons nationally who reported feeling very satisfied.

We hope that this report will be useful to your State Program as you continue to plan and implement the Unified Champion Schools program in the coming years. If you have any questions, comments, or requests for additional data, please contact the Unified Champion Schools Evaluation Team at the Center for Social Development and Education.

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