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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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# Executive Summary

*Implementation*

* + This year, a total of <<liason\_count>>liaisons (<<liason\_percentage>) completed the <<completed\_year>> UCS Liaison Survey in <<state>>.
  + Within <<state>>, <<full\_implemantation\_percent> of schools reported the Full-implementation model, <<developing\_model\_percent>> the Developing model, and <<emerging\_model\_percent>> the Emerging model.
  + Schools in <<state> most frequently reported implementing <<highest\_implementing\_core\_experience>>.

*~~COVID-19~~*

* + ~~Despite the ongoing effects of COVID-19, most liaisons reported a return to an in-person modality in <<state>>.~~
  + ~~With this return to in-person education, liaisons also felt that UCS experiences were beginning to rebound. Liaisons in <<state>> reported that implementation had rebounded an average of 75% for Unified Sports, 59% for Inclusive Youth Leadership experiences, and 62% for Whole School Engagement experiences.~~

*Leadership and sustainability*

* + In <<completed\_year>>, <<leadership\_team\_support\_UCS\_percent>> of responding liaisons in <<state>> reported that their school had a Leadership Team to support UCS.
  + Overall, <<percentage\_think\_UCS\_is\_selfsustainable>>% of responding liaisons reported that they considered UCS self-sustainable at their school.
  + As one measure of perceived sustainability, liaisons rated the likelihood that UCS would continue at their school without the involvement of themselves or their State Program. In <<state>>, nearly <<percentage\_in\_fractions>> of liaisons felt that UCS would be “very” or “somewhat” likely to continue at their school without their direct involvement (<<program\_continue\_without\_their\_direct\_involvement\_percent>> %) or without the involvement of Special Olympics <<state>> (<<program\_continue\_without\_involvement\_of\_special\_olympics\_percent>> %).

*Implementation Support*

* + In <<state>>, the majority of liaisons reported that administrators and general education teachers were involved in UCS implementation (<<school\_administrators\_percent\_involved>> % and <<general\_education\_teacher\_percent\_involved>> % respectively), implementation support which they were very or somewhat satisfied with.
  + In <<state>>, <<percentage\_in\_fractions>>reported using at least one implementation resource developed by Special Olympics North America. Of the liaisons that used these implementation resources, an overwhelming majority found them somewhat or very useful.

*Impact*

* + In <<state>>, liaisons had <<fraction\_of\_positive\_perception>> perceptions of UCS for students with ID, without ID, and the school as a whole. Of all liaisons in <<state>>, 86% or more rated UCS as “very valuable” to all three groups.
  + Liaisons likewise reported largely positive perceptions of UCS influence between specific impact areas, with approximately <<fraction\_of\_positive\_perception>> or more of liaisons in <<state>> reporting that UCS made a difference or a big difference in each measured area.

# 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.

# Completion Rate

This year, a total of <<total\_no\_of\_schools\_in\_special\_olympics\_for\_state>>liaisons (<<percent\_of\_survey\_taken\_schools\_in\_special\_olympics\_for\_state>>%) completed the <<completed\_year>> UCS Liaison Survey in <<state>>. This is an average completion rate compared to the national response. See Figure 1 for the UCS Liaison Survey completion rate in <<state>>. The following figure is based on the liaisons that fully completed the survey in <<state>>.

**Figure 1**. UCS Liaison Survey completion rates in <<state>>

### <<state>>

### National

37%

63%

 Not Completed  Completed

29%

71%

 Not Completed  Completed

# School Characteristics

UCS is implemented at a range of schools across different school levels, sizes, and locations. Table 1 displays the school characteristics of UCS schools as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for all responding UCS schools in <<state>> and nationally.

**Table 1**. Characteristics of responding UCS schools in 2021-22.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Characteristic | <<state>>  (*n* = 581) | National  (*n* = 42421) |
| School Level |  |  |
| Elementary | 10% | 33% |
| Middle | 47% | 19% |
| High | 41% | 46% |
| Other | 2% | 2% |
| School locale |  |  |
| Rural | 19% | 23% |
| Town | 3% | 12% |
| Suburban | 75% | 37% |
| Urban | 3% | 28% |
| Student Enrollment |  |  |
| < 500 | 33% | 30% |
| 501-1,000 | 43% | 38% |
| 1,001-1,500 | 19% | 15% |
| More than 1,500 | 5% | 17% |
| Students receiving free/reduced lunch |  |  |
| 0%-25% | 48% | 23% |
| 26%-50% | 28% | 34% |
| 51%-75% | 17% | 23% |
| 76%-100% | 7% | 20% |
| Students of racial/ethnic minority |  |  |
| 0%-25% | 58% | 34% |
| 26%-50% | 25% | 28% |
| 51%-75% | 4% | 19% |
| 76%-100% | 13% | 19% |

1 Exact sample sizes may vary based on data availability

# Program Implementation

UCS can be implemented at a variety of levels to best suit individual school and student needs and maximize the potential for sustainable participation. Special Olympics categorizes the levels as follows: **Full-implementation** Unified Champion Schools are those that implement at least one activity from all three core experiences, **Developing** Unified Schools implement activities from Unified Sports and one other core experiences, and **Emerging** Unified Schools implement activities from some other combination of core experiences (i.e., two core experiences but not Unified Sports, or fewer than two core experience). While there are benefits for schools and students at all implementation levels, the most impactful model is Full-implementation (Siperstein et al., 2017; Siperstein et al., 2019). Table 2. illustrates implementation levels among UCS schools in <<state>> and nationally across the past three years of the liaison survey.

**Table 2.** Implementation levels across time.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **<<state>>** | | | **National** | | |
| **Year 14 (*n*=58)** | **Year 13**  **(*n* = 60)** | **Year 12**  **(*n* = 64)** | **Year 14 (*n=4242)*** | **Year 13**  **(*n* =3586)** | **Year 12**  **(*n* = 4073)** |
| Full | 66% | 34% | 56% | 51% | 31% | 48% |
| Emerging | 10% | 33% | 19% | 24% | 43% | 23% |
| Developing | 24% | 33% | 25% | 25% | 26% | 29% |

Nationally, implementation level is strongly associated with school level, with Full- implementation reported at the highest rate among high schools and lower rates among elementary and middle schools. This pattern is not seen in <<state>>. See Figure 2 for full implementation status by school level.

**Figure 2.** Percent of liaisons reporting Full-implementation status, by school level, 2020-21 (Y13) vs. 2021-22 (Y14).

100%

71%

61%

40%

40%

42% 43%

30%

Y13

Y14

Y13

Y14

Y13

Y14

Elementary Middle High

16%

30%

23%

59%

90%

80%

70%

60%

50%

40%

30%

20%

10%

0%

100%

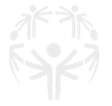
 <<state>> (N=58)  National (N=4242)

UCS activities are grouped into three core experiences: Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and Whole School Engagement. School staff and youth leaders implementing UCS have the flexibility to choose which core experiences to implement and can therefore design a program that best fits their school’s unique context and needs. See Figure 3 for a diagram of the core experiences and their associated activities (based on Special Olympics North America groupings) included in the 2021-22 evaluation. Table 3 illustrates the percentage of schools implementing each core experience, by school level.

**Figure 3**. UCS core experiences and activities evaluated in 2021-22.

Unified Sports

* Unified Sports teams
* Unified PE



* Unified Fitness
* Unified eSports
* Young Athletes
* Unified Developmental Sports

Whole School Engagement

Inclusive Youth Leadership

* + Spread the Word/Respect Campaign
  + Fans in the Stands/Unified Sports Pep Rally
  + Unified Sports Day/Festival
  + Fundraising events and activities
  + SO Play/Performance
  + Unified Fitness Challenges
  + Unified Club
  + Inclusive Leadership Training/Class
  + Young Athletes Volunteers
  + SO Youth Summit
  + SO Youth Activation Committee

**Table 3.** Percentage of schools implementing each core UCS experience in <<state>>, by school level.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Core Experience*** | **<<state>>** | | | **National** | | |
| **Elementary (*n* = 6)** | **Middle (*n* =27)** | **High (*n* =24)** | **Elementary (*n* = 1120)** | **Middle (*n* = 669)** | **High (*n* = 1580)** |
| Unified Sports | 100% | 100% | 96% | 79% | 82% | 88% |
| Inclusive Youth Leadership | 100% | 67% | 79% | 49% | 62% | 71% |
| Whole School Engagement | 100% | 82% | 92% | 77% | 80% | 86% |

## 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.

Unified Sports Teams

49%

61%

52%

17%

20%

5%

5%

9%

18%

10%

15%

Unified PE

Unified Fitness

90%

Unified esports

Young Athletes (participants)\*

Unified Developmental Sports\*

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

 <<state>> (N = 59)  National (N = 4242)

*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.

**Figure 5.** Percentage of schools implementing each Inclusive Youth Leadership activity.

Unified/Inclusive Club

56%

Inclusive Youth Leadership Training/Class

Young Athletes Volunteers

Youth Summit

Youth Activation Committee

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

43%

27%

26%

20%

36%

12%

7%

6%

9%

 <<state>> (N = 59)  National (N = 4242)

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.

Spread the Word Inclusion/Respect/Disability

Awareness Campaign

Fans in the Stands/Unified Sports Pep Rally

Unified Sports Day/Festival

Fundraining events/activities

Special Olympics play/performance

63%

64%

48%

31%

29%

28%

46%

31%

10%

9%

19%

16%

Unified Fitness Challenge

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

 <<state>> (N = 59)  National (N = 4242)

## COVID-19 Rebounding

Although COVID-19 has continued to impact school programming, the majority of UCS schools nationally (88%) reported returning to an entirely in-person modality for the 2021-2022, with none reporting a fully remote model. This is lower than <<state>>, where 97% reported fully in-person programming. See Table 5 for a comparison of reported education modalities in <<state>> and nationally.

**Table 5.** Education Modalities in <<state>> and nationally for the 2021-22 school year.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Characteristic | <<state>> (*n* = 58) | National (*n* = 4236) |
| Education Model |  |  |
| In-person | 97% | 88% |
| Hybrid | 3% | 12% |
| Virtual | 0% | 0% |

With a return to in-person learning, Unified Champion School experiences also began rebounding to pre-pandemic functioning. Liaisons were asked to report to what extent they felt their UCS activities within each of the core experiences had recovered or rebounded from COVID-19 impacts over the last two years. See Figure 7 for <<state>> and national averages of the extent to which liaisons reported implementation of each core activity has rebounded.

Additionally, 95% of liaisons in <<state>> felt that a return to pre-pandemic implementation would be possible within the next two years, a rate comparable to that reported nationally (87%).

**Figure 7.** Extent to which each core experience implementation has rebounded since COVID-19 began.

100%

90%

80%

70%

60%

50%

40%

30%

20%

10%

0%

75%

70%

66%

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | 59% | | | 63% 62% |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Unified Sports Inclusive Youth Leadership Whole School Engagement  <<state>> Average (N = 58)  National Average (N = 4157)

Over the past several years, some UCS programs have noted that COVID-19 modifications had the unexpected benefit of increasing access to programming and forming partnerships with communities and families. Given that, liaisons were asked to share any modifications made during COVID-19 that they planned on keeping in the future. See Figure 8 for the percentage of liaisons reporting that they will continue certain modifications in the future in <<state>> and nationally.

**Figure 8.** Intent to continue popular COVID-19 modifications.

5%

24%

28%

27%

26%

24%

36

30%

26%

21%

3%

23%

2%

3

Implementing virtual or hybrid activities

Using additional technology

Providing activities/tasks for student to do on their

own time

%

Conducting activities in smaller groups

Working more closely with families

Other

None

37%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

 <<state>> (N = 57)  National (N = 3919)

# Leadership and sustainability

## Leadership Teams

Leadership Teams are a primary method of support and sustainability for UCS implementation. Past annual evaluations have documented a positive association between having a Leadership Team and reaching the Full-implementation level as well as having a Leadership Team and liaisons’ perceptions of program sustainability. In 2021-22, 24% of responding liaisons in <<state>>, and 28% nationally, reported that their school had a Leadership Team to support UCS. Of those schools with a leadership team, 69% of leadership teams nationally had been formed within the past five years, compared to 57% in <<state>>. See Table 6 for a full list of common participants and the percent of liaisons that reported each group as a part of their school’s Leadership Team in <<state>> and nationally.

**Table 6.** Frequency of Leadership Team membership among common types of participants.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Participant | <<state>> (*n* =58) | National (*n* = 1164) |
| Special Education Teachers | 79% | 88% |
| Students without IDD | 64% | 64% |
| Student with IDD | 64% | 61% |
| School Administrators | 50% | 47% |
| General Education Teachers | 57% | 51% |
| Physical Education (PE) Teachers | 29% | 41% |
| Athletic Director | 21% | 22% |
| Adapted PE teachers | 14% | 24% |
| Parents of Students with IDD | 14% | 26% |
| Parents of Students without IDD | 7% | 12% |
| School Psychologist/  Counselor/Social Worker | 36% | 18% |
| Special Olympics State Program Staff | 7% | 18% |

Nationally, liaisons reported that they themselves were most often the person who started the Leadership Team (86%), relatively consistent with <<state>> (92%). The most common tactic for forming the initial Leadership Team in <<state>> was asking for volunteers/people volunteered (83%). Liaisons in <<state>> most commonly reported that barriers to forming Leadership Teams included difficulty finding time for the Leadership Team to meet (46%).

## Sustainability

Within <<state>>, 79% of responding liaisons reported that they considered UCS self- sustainable at their school, with 83% having a concrete plan in place for sustainability next year. This is a relatively higher percentage than the national level (63%). As one measure of perceived sustainability, liaisons rated the likelihood that UCS would continue at their school without their direct involvement or without the involvement of Special Olympics <<state>>. See Figure 9 and Figure 10 for a comparison of these reports to the national averages.

**Figure 9.** Reported likelihood of UCS continuation without the responding liaison’s direct involvement.

<<state>> (N = 58)

Very unlikely , 14%

Somewhat unlikely, 17%

Very likely, 37%

Somewhat likely, 32%

National (N = 4135)

Not likely at all, 7%

Not very likely, 19%

Very likely, 41%

Somewhat likely, 33%

**Figure 10.** Reported likelihood of UCS continuation without involvement from the State Program.

<<state>> (N = 58)

National (N = 4113)

Not likely at all, 9%

Not very likely, 26%

Very likely, 36%

Somewhat likely, 29%

Very Very unlikely ,… likely,

23%

Somewhat unlikely, 25%

Somewhat likely, 32%

# Implementation Support

## School Personnel

The support of school staff is instrumental to the sustainability and effective implementation of UCS experiences. As part of the Y14 survey, liaisons rated the level of support they received from internal sources, such as administrators and general education teachers, and the degree to which they felt satisfied with these supports. In <<state>>, 81% of liaisons reported that administrators at the school contributed to UCS implementation, compared to 66% nationally. Of those whose administrators contributed, 83% were satisfied or very satisfied with the contributions, comparable to the national average (81%). Furthermore, in <<state>>, 75% of liaisons reported that general education teachers were involved in implementation, compared to 65% of liaisons nationally. Of those who indicated yes in <<state>>, 76% reported being somewhat or very satisfied with their contributions (76% nationally).

## Funding

Sufficient funding is critical to the sustainable implementation of UCS in schools. This year, the most frequent source of funding nationally was Special Olympics State Programs, with 64% of liaisons indicating they received funding for UCS from their Special Olympics State Program. In <<state>>, 29% of liaisons reported receiving funding from Special Olympics <<state>>, with an average of 57% of overall funding coming from Special Olympics <<state>>. 91% of liaisons in <<state>> felt somewhat or very satisfied with the level of funding received from Special Olympics <<state>>, compared to the national average of 89%. See Table 7 for other sources of funding in <<state>> and nationally.

**Table 7.** Sources of funding for UCS implementation in <<state>>.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Funding Source | <<state>>  (*n* = 58) | National  (*n* = 4128) |
| Special Olympics State Program | 29% | 64% |
| Fundraising activities | 28% | 26% |
| Personal Donations | 19% | 20% |
| Partner/Community Organizations | 7% | 9% |
| School Budget | 72% | 36% |
| Other | 16% | 8% |
| None of the above | 9% | 13% |

## 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.

**Figure 11.** Percentage of liaisons who found SONA resources useful.

Elementary School Playbook: A Guide for Grades K-5

80%

67%

20%

32% 1%

Middle Level Playbook: A Guide for Grades 5-8

55%

60%

46%

40%

High School Playbook

50%

58%

42%

Special Olympics State Playbook

68%

100%

31% 1%

Special Olympics Fitness Guide for Schools

71%

100%

28% 1%

Unified Physical Education Resource

60%

73%

40%

26% 1%

Special Olympics Young Athletes Activity Guide

77%

100%

22% 1%

Inclusive Youth Leadership Training: Faciliatator Guide

69%

100%

30% 1%

Planning and Hosting a Youth Leadership Experience

100%

87%

13%

Unified Classoom lessons and activities

75%

73%

25%

27%

Generation Unified Youtube channel or videos

75%

74%

25%

25% 1%

Inclusion Tiles game or facilitator guide

60%

67%

40%

30% 3%

 Very useful (<<state>>)  Somewhat useful (<<state>>)  Not useful (<<state>>)  Very useful (National  Somewhat Useful (National)  Not useful (National)

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.

**Table 8.** Support from Special Olympics <<state>> for UCS implementation.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Support | <<state>> (*n* = 58) | National (*n* = 4052) |
| Funding for Unified Champion Schools | 33% | 41% |
| Equipment for Unified Champion Schools (e.g., fitness kits, sports equipment, inclusion tiles) | 39% | 44% |
| In-person visits to your school (from state staff  member) | 16% | 29% |
| Timely answers to questions (from state staff  members) | 56% | 55% |
| Training for coaches or teachers | 39% | 31% |
| Opportunity to network with teachers or staff at another Unified Champion School | 21% | 26% |
| Opportunity to participate in a virtual event plan or hosted by Special Olympics <<state>> | 25% | 26% |
| Opportunity to participate in an in-person event plan or hosted by Special Olympics <<state>> | 18% | 29% |
| Assistance holding a virtual school event or transforming an in-person event to be virtual | 4% | 3% |
| Assistance holding an in-person school event | 18% | 19% |
| Help generating ideas for an inclusive activity | 21% | 27% |
| Help recruiting or engaging students with IDD virtually/remotely | 0% | 5% |
| Help recruiting or engaging students without IDD virtually/remotely | 0% | 5% |
| Help getting families/parents more involved with Unified Champion Activities | 2% | 8% |
| None | 5% | 10% |
| Something else | 7% | 5% |

# Impact

To evaluate program impact, liaisons rated the value and influence they felt UCS had on their school and student body. In <<state>> and nationally, liaisons had overwhelmingly positive perceptions of UCS for students with and without ID, as well as the school as a whole. Figure 12 demonstrates how valuable liaisons felt the program was to each of these groups at the state and national levels.

**Figure 12.** Value to the school as reported by school liaison.

Students with intellectual disability 95% 5%

85% 13% 2%

Students without intellectual disability

86%

13% 2%

77% 19% 4%

The school as a whole

88%

9% 4%

82% 15% 3%

 Very valuable (<<state>>)  Somewhat valuable (<<state>>)  Little or no value (<<state>>)

 Very valuable (national)  Somewhat valuable (national)  Little or no value (national)

Liaisons likewise reported largely positive perceptions of UCS influence between specific impact areas, with approximately three-quarters or more of liaisons reporting that UCS made a difference or a big difference in each measured area. See Figure 13 for a full list of impact areas and liaisons’ perceptions of UCS for each.

**Figure 13.** Impact on the school as reported by school liaisons.

Increase students' and teachers' understanding of

appropriate language surrounding disability

56%

50%

42% 2%

41% 9%

Increasing confidence of students with IDD

Increasing opportunities for students with and without IDD to work together

78%

63%

79%

31%

20% 2%

6%

21% 0%

67% 28% 5%

Creating a more socially inclusive school environment

66%

57%

29% 5%

36% 7%

Raising awareness about students with IDD

56%

60%

40% 4%

33% 7%

Increasing participation of students with IDD

44%

66%

45%

30%

4%

11%

Reducing bullying, teasing, or use of offensive language

49%

43%

47%

45%

4%

12%

Increasing confidence of students without IDD

62%

50%

41%

34% 4%

9%

Increasing participation of students without IDD

50%

44%

43%

45%

7%

11%

Increasing attendance of students with IDD

43%

40%

37%

43%

20%

17%

Reducing disciplinary referrals for students with IDD

33%

34%

41%

43%

26%

23%

Increasing attendance of students without IDD

Reducing disciplinary referrals for students without IDD

33%

33%

30%

29%

44%

46%

46%

45%

Percent of liaisons

23%

22%

24%

26%

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Made a big difference (<<state>>) | Made a difference (Connectitut) | Made no difference (<<state>>) |
| Made a big difference (national) | Made a difference (national) | Made no difference (national) |

# Reflections

The activities are extremely beneficial and bring joy to the

school environment.

Our Unified programs are a HUGE part of the overall climate at our school. Our goal is always to create a kinder, more inclusive

school and community.

Thank you to SOCT and CAS/CIAC for supporting and encouraging this program. It has made noticeable positive changes to students with and without disabilities as well as to staff and community relationships with

our students.

The most insightful indications of success come from the liaisons themselves. Below is a short compilation of reflections about Unified Champion Schools in 2021-22 from liaisons in <<state>>.

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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