

# Unified Champion Schools



# Special Olympics New Mexico



## ***Mission***

Special Olympics New Mexico provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with mental challenges (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.

***Let me win. But if I cannot win,  
Let me be brave in the attempt.***

## **Goal**

The ultimate goal of Special Olympics is to help people with intellectual disabilities participate as productive and respected members of society at large, by offering them a fair opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills and talents through sports training and competition, increasing the public's awareness of their capabilities and needs.

# About Special Olympics New Mexico

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## Our History

Special Olympics New Mexico (SONM) was incorporated in 1977 and is authorized and accredited by Special Olympics Incorporated, head-quartered in Washington, D.C. Special Olympics was created by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation and is authorized by the International Olympic Committee to use the word “Olympics.” Mrs. Eunice Kennedy Shriver was the founder of Special Olympics Inc.

## Our Future

Special Olympics New Mexico looks to the future as a time for change and growth. SONM’s organizational strategic plan for 2012-2015 outlines key priorities to serve more athletes with quality opportunities. In 2013 we touched on the following pillars of the strategic plan:

- Advance Quality Sports and Competition
- Build Inclusive Communities
- Connect Fans and Funds
- Improve Athlete Quality of Life

By developing and fulfilling these priorities, we hope to expand the capacity of our organization and bring more people to our playing fields.



## Core Values

Special Olympics New Mexico prides itself on five Core Values—**Unquestionable Integrity, Unwavering Excellence, Unbelievable Fun, Undeniable Respect, and Unlimited Family.**

In 2011, in partnership with the New Mexico Ethics Alliance, Special Olympics New Mexico designated these five core values as a set of ideals and actions that Special Olympics New Mexico athletes, families, community and corporate partners, donors, volunteers, and staff should uphold with pride and dignity in order to stay true to the Special Olympics Movement.

# About Special Olympics New Mexico

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## By the Numbers

- 3,302** SONM Athletes
- 328** Young Athletes and Partners
- 1,225** Coaches
- 6,173** Volunteers
- 58** Family Members in Leadership Roles
- 13** Sports Offered
- 65** Competition Opportunities
- 110** Communities Served
- 76** Registered Local Programs



## State Competitions

- State Poly Hockey Championships**—Farmington, February
- Unified Team Bowling Tournament**—Santa Ana, March
- State Summer Games**—Albuquerque, May
- Four Corners Invitational**—Farmington, August
- State Equestrian**—Clovis, September
- Holiday Classic**—Las Cruces, October
- North Regional Bowling Tournament**—Santa Ana, November



**Unified Champion  
Schools Works in 3 ways:**

**INCLUSIVE SPORTS pg8**—  
Providing students with  
and without intellectual  
disabilities opportunities  
to participate in sports  
activities alongside one  
another.

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP &  
ACTIVATION pg11**—  
Providing students with  
and without intellectual  
disabilities opportunities  
to take on leadership  
roles in promoting Unified  
Champion Schools activi-  
ties in the school and in  
the community

**WHOLE SCHOOL  
ENGAGEMENT pg13**—  
Providing opportunities  
for *all* students in the  
school to participate in  
Project UNIFY through  
school-wide activities.

Together all three  
components help in  
creating and sustaining  
relationships and a  
commitment to bring  
youth with and without  
intellectual disabilities  
together through  
programs that allow them  
to form lasting  
relationships and friend-  
ships while contributing to  
their school.

**What is Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools?**

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is a school-based program that uses sports and leadership programs to activate young people to develop school communities where all youth are agents of change – fostering respect, dignity and advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities.

Schools participate in 3 components of Unified Champion Schools: Inclusive Sports, Youth Leadership & Advocacy and Whole School Engagement.

**Who can participate in Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools?**

Entire schools can get involved – students with & without intellectual disabilities, teachers, administrators and volunteers. Typically developing students, called “partners,” are an integral piece of the Unified Champion Schools model. Unified Champion Schools is designed to change perspectives, enhance relationships, and boost acceptance among students with and without intellectual disabilities.

**Why should your school get involved with Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools?**

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools provides a framework, philosophy and set of practices that engage all students in activities that improve achievement and lead to lifelong success. Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools is proven to enhance school climates. In a 2011-12 survey, our program’s results showed that 74% of our participating athletes and Unified partners felt that Unified Champion Schools was a life-changing and positive turning point in their lives.





**Unified Sports®:** Unified Sports combine approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities (partners) on sports teams for training and competition.

**Traditional Special Olympics Sport:** Sport where participants are all individuals with disabilities. Not a unified sport

**Athlete:** An individual identified by an agency or professional as having one of the following conditions: intellectual disabilities, cognitive delays as measured by formal assessment, or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delay that require or have required specially designed instruction (to include Autism)

**Partner:** An individual receiving general education services who pairs up with an athlete to form a partnership while participating in SONM's Inclusive School Programs.

**School Coordinator:** A school district personnel, preferably a teacher, that assumes the role as "sponsor" of the school based program by coordinating with the school district and Special Olympics New Mexico.

**Inclusive School Programs:** Programs conducted in school, with school personnel supervising and coordinating and consisting of students with and without disabilities participating a long side one another.

**Local Program:** Community based Special Olympics team that trains and competes outside of school hours.

**Individual Skills:** Sports skills training and competition for athletes whose ability level is not conducive for team competition . This could be a physical, developmental or behavioral ability level.

**Meaningful Involvement:** All individuals have the opportunity and ability to contribute to the program. Abilities are assessed to blend skills of all participants resulting in improved performance.



<b>Play Unified Clubs</b>	<b>SONM Training &amp; Competition</b>
Club/Rec league structure	Travel league sport structure
Schools participate in school-based activities organized through the Unified Champion School Program	Teams register to form a Local Program with SONM for athletes 8 years old and older
Unified only: all teams consist of students with and without disabilities playing on the same teams.	Offers two types of competition: sport events where only athletes with intellectual disabilities train and compete together, and Unified teams of athletes with and without disabilities.
Students play against teams from other schools in their area that are of similar age.	Teams play against teams from around the state that are divisioned by skill level. Students may compete against teams or athletes of different ages, but similar skill level.
Teams practice a minimum of three times to prepare for competitions.	Athletes/Teams participating in SONM Training and competition train a minimum of once a week for a minimum of 8 weeks prior to competitions.
Play Unified Clubs choose from the approved sports to train in and this may include a camp, in-school competition, or inter-school competition. Sport selection and time of year are flexible.	Sports seasons are established with a start and end date.
Regional interscholastic events are organized among local schools, but not required	Teams/athletes are eligible to compete in area and state competitions. Teams are not obligated to advance beyond area competitions, if they prefer. Some state and area tournaments require travel and overnight stays.
A roster and photo release form is necessary for participation.	Official SONM Medical is needed for participation.
Coaches are designated and approved by school administrators	SONM coaches must be certified, taking General Orientation and Protective Behaviors course as well as the SONM background check



## Unified Sports™

Special Olympics Unified Sports is an inclusive sports Program that combines an approximately equal number individuals with intellectual disabilities (athletes) and individuals without disabilities (partners) on teams for training and competition. Athletes and partners compete alongside one another, each in a meaningful and integral role on the Unified Sports team.

Special Olympics New Mexico currently offers competitive Unified Sports in several sports. Traditional Competitive Special Olympics teams train and compete in area and state competitions, during the designated SONM sports seasons. If you are interested in Competitive Special Olympics sports programming, please contact SONM Sports Director, Chris Page [chrispage@sonm.org](mailto:chrispage@sonm.org).

### Inclusive Sports Activities

Inclusive Sports Activities follows the Unified Sports Recreation model by allowing youth with and without intellectual disabilities the opportunity to fully participate in sports, becoming physically active and socializing with team dynamics while placing a spotlight on individual's abilities. Youth learn how to work together accomplishing team as well as individual goals all the while gaining an understanding for each others differences while having fun.



### Activity Ideas

Inclusive Sports activities can be done in a class lesson, physical education classes, a one day event, after school, or during recess. Partnering classes within allotted PE times has been extremely successful, and PE units can be adapted to include a Unified aspect. Having students partner and train for 6-8 weeks allows for greater skill development, but we realize that each school will have different scheduling needs.

A few idea of successful inclusive sports activities include:

- ◆ Unified Sports (list of Sports on page 9)
- ◆ Sports Camps - one day event where school sports team works with athletes on sports skills development
- ◆ Inclusive PE– A physical education class includes students with and without intellectual disabilities, training in basketball every class period for a season.
- ◆ Exhibitions/Demonstrations– One day events, including Unified Sports Experiences, are held with a school, or community partners that feature individuals with and without disabilities as teammates for the purpose of awareness, exposure and/or fundraising.

Schools can also team up together for friendly competition and skill advancement. Inclusive sports are a great way for older students to display leadership in schools and help younger students learn by inclusive examples



# Unified Sports Events

## Athletics

### Track:

- ◆ Unified 4 x 50M Relay-  
Two Athletes and two Unified Partners
- ◆ Unified 4 x 100M Relay -  
Two Athletes and two Unified Partners
- ◆ Unified 2 x 50M Unified Relay  
One Athlete and one Unified Partner

### Field:

- ◆ Unified Turbojav-  
One Athlete and one Unified Partner
- ◆ 2 x Unified Shot Put  
One Athlete and one Unified Partner
- ◆ 2 x Unified Standing Long Jump  
One Athlete and one Unified Partner
- ◆ 2 x Unified Running Long Jump  
One Athlete and one Unified Partner

## Basketball

- ◆ Unified Basketball  
12 people on a team  
Unified – five persons on the court, 3 Athletes and two Unified Partners
- ◆ Unified 3 on 3  
Three persons on the court  
Two Athletes and one Unified Partner

## Bocce

- ◆ Unified Doubles  
One Athlete and one Unified Partner
- ◆ Unified Team  
Two Athletes and two Unified Partners

## Bowling

- ◆ Unified Doubles  
One Athlete and one Unified Partner
- ◆ Unified Team  
Two Athletes and two Unified Partners

## Flag Football

- ◆ 12 people on a team  
Unified – five persons on field,  
Three Athletes and two Unified Partners  
If a partner is QB, other partner cannot receive a pass

## Soccer

- ◆ 12 people on a team  
Unified – five persons on field,  
Three Athletes and two Unified Partners

## Softball

- ◆ Unified Team  
12 people on a team  
Ten on the field  
- Five Athletes and Five Unified Partners on field  
- Catcher is an Athlete & Pitcher is a Partner  
- 2 Athletes and 2 Partners in the infield

## Volleyball

- ◆ Unified Team  
10 people on a team  
Three Athletes and three Unified Partners on court



## Young Athletes Program

The Young Athletes Program (YAP) is an early childhood sports play and educational program for children aged 2 to 7 years old that includes games, songs, educational and other fun physical activities.

The YAP Curriculum focuses on sports skill development, enhancing gross motor skills as they play. The curriculum can be implemented for 8 weeks to an entire year! Lessons are designed to help children improve fundamental skills such as:

- Walking
- Balancing
- Trapping
- Throwing
- Catching
- Jumping

These building blocks result in notable improvements in a child's motor skills, cognitive development, communication skills and school readiness.



The Young Athletes Program is ideally for special education students in pre-school through 1st grade, partnering with older regular education students (3rd grade and above) that act as coaches or mentors in the program. Each lesson is approximately 30 minutes and activities can be performed indoors or outdoors.



## Partner Clubs

Partner Clubs are unique school-based concepts designed to offer students without intellectual disabilities ways to build relationships and support others with intellectual disabilities through a variety of athletic, social and educational projects and activities. Partner Clubs are encouraged to devise and implement their own projects involving Spread the Word to End the Word activities, Fans in the Stands activities, Unified Champion Schools events and games, fundraising opportunities, and help spread Special Olympics message of inclusion and celebrating one's best!



### Activity Ideas:

- Make a video about Special Olympics, SO athletes and PU activities in your school
- Disability Awareness campaign such as Spread the Word to End the Word or Autism Awareness
- Pep Rally for SO/ PU competitors
- Youth/Peer Volunteers, organize students to volunteer for state SO events
- Special Olympics Fundraisers, organize students to raise funds and awareness for SONM



## Youth Activation Council

The Youth Activation Council (YAC) is an inclusive group of Unified Champion Schools youth leaders that embodies the leadership of young people in the Special Olympics movement at the local, state and national level.

YAC members are leaders in their schools who promote respect and acceptance for all students. They are ambassadors for Special Olympics and challenge peers to create a healthier, more tolerant school environment.

Any youth interested in being a part of state YAC should contact Victoria Gonzales at [victoriagonzaless@sonm.org](mailto:victoriagonzaless@sonm.org) for more information.



### Best Buddies International

Best Buddies® is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Founded in 1989 by Anthony K. Shriver, Best Buddies is a vibrant, international organization that has grown from one original chapter to almost 1,900 middle school, high school, and college chapters worldwide. Best Buddies programs engage participants in each of the 50 United States, and over 50 countries around the world.



### One-to-One Friendship and Our Programs

Best Buddies began as one program to bring people with and without disabilities together in friendship and has since grown to provide opportunities for one-to-one friendships to youth and adults in communities around the world. Best Buddies has identified the population most in need of this service to be individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who do not have many opportunities to socialize and form relationships with their peers without IDD.

All one-to-one friendships formed are peer relationships in which both members commit to participate in age-appropriate activities. By participating in these activities, Best Buddies members are given the opportunity to develop social skills in a fun, safe environment.

Best Buddies' eight formal programs — *Middle Schools*, *High Schools*, *Colleges*, *Citizens*, *e-Buddies*®, *Jobs*, *Ambassadors*, and *Promoters* — positively impact nearly 900,000 individuals with and without disabilities worldwide.

Unified Champion Schools can be implemented through partnering any of the following Best Buddies programs by either hosting an event for another school without Best Buddies or for members of a Best Buddies program.



The goal of Unified Champion Schools is to engage youth with and without disabilities to build inclusive school environments. The more people who are exposed to the messages embodied in this program, the greater the impact! A successful program will have a noticeable Unified Champion School presence in their school.

### Activity Ideas:

- School Wide Disability Awareness Campaign
  - Youth organized rallies/ assemblies
  - Pledge Drive
  - Online/ Social Media activation
  - Spread the Word to End The Word campaign
- Pep Rally or Assembly
  - Students organize a pep rally before SO competition or PU Event
  - Host a contest where students submit essays, art work, or video with a theme of respect or inclusion
  - Have a guest speaker come present to your school. Special Olympics New Mexico has trained Global messengers who would love to visit with your students and share their story!

**SPREAD THE WORD  
TO END THE WORD**  
[www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org)

**ACCEPTANCE**  
**Be a fan of**  
**RESPECT**  
**HUMANITY**

**PASSION** **UNITY**



## So what's next?

If you are interested in becoming a Special Olympics New Mexico Unified Champion School, please fill out the SCHOOL ACTIVATION form and return to Victoria Gonzales: [victoriagonzales@sonm.org](mailto:victoriagonzales@sonm.org) or by fax (505) 856-0346 .

All Unified Champion Schools will be required to include:

- ◆ Unified youth leadership roles in carrying out the initiatives.
- ◆ At least one Inclusive Sports opportunity
- ◆ Project Request Form for any funds requested and Post Project Report after each activity
- ◆ SONM Unified Champion Schools logo on printed materials (including shirts)
- ◆ SONM approval of all Press Releases
- ◆ Completion of an online Survey at the end of the Unified Champion Schools program year

We are excited to partner with you in bringing new opportunities to your students!!

### Victoria Gonzales

[Special Olympics New Mexico](http://SpecialOlympicsNewMexico.org) · 6600 Palomas NE, Ste 207 · Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109

Office: 505.856.0342 · Cell: 505.269.0487 · [victoriagonzales@sonm.org](mailto:victoriagonzales@sonm.org) · [www.sonm.org](http://www.sonm.org)





Special Olympics  
**Unified Champion  
 Schools**

### School Activation Form

Please complete and return form to Special Olympics New Mexico:

Attn: Victoria Gonzales

Email: [victoriagonzales@sonm.org](mailto:victoriagonzales@sonm.org)

Fax: 505.856.0346

Tel: 505.856.0342 ext 1008

This form should be completed by a school representative. If you are new to Unified Champion Schools and have questions or need help filling out the form, please contact Victoria Gonzales. It is important that the person completing this form obtain school administration approval before returning the completed form to Special Olympics.

<b>Name of School District:</b>	
<b>Name of School:</b>	
Address:	
City/State/Zip:	
<b>School Liaison Contact:</b>	<b>Liaison's Position:</b>
Daytime phone:	
Email address:	
<b>Student Leader Contact:</b>	<b>Student Leader's Grade:</b>
Cell phone:	
Email address:	
<b>Name of Administrator:</b>	<b>Administrator's Position:</b>
Phone:	
Email Address:	
<b>Signature of Administrator:</b>	
Grade Level: (please circle one)	Pre-K      Elementary      Middle      High      K-12

To be a Unified Champion Schools school, you *must*:

- ◆ Unified youth leadership roles in carrying out the initiatives.
- ◆ At least one Inclusive Sports opportunity
- ◆ Project Request Form for any funds requested and Post Project Report after each activity
- ◆ Completion of an online Survey at the end of the Unified Champion Schools program year

