

# Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools



## A PARTNERSHIP FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Special Olympics is a trusted education partner of the **U.S. Government**, delivering cost effective, quality education programming that makes schools across the country more welcoming and accepting of those with differences, creating a better learning climate for all children.



## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION LEADS TO BETTER ATTENDANCE AND PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOLS

### The Issue

- Studies indicate that **young people with intellectual disabilities are almost 3x more likely to be bullied** than their typically developing peers (10% report being bullied once a week or more).
- They also **face extreme social isolation**, with youth attitude surveys indicating that less than 30% of students say they would be comfortable even speaking to a classmates with intellectual disabilities.
- Such treatment and attitudes **create negativity that impacts the learning environment.**



### Our Role

- ✓ Working with the **Department of Education**, **Special Olympics** has taken a stand to say that schools cannot tolerate hostile school cultures where children with disabilities are targets of isolation or abuse.
- ✓ The **Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools equips young people** with tools and training to:
  - **Create sports, classroom and community experiences** that reduce bullying and aggression;
  - **Promote healthy activity and interactions**, combat stereotypes and stigma;
  - **Eliminate hurtful language** and;
  - **Engage young people in pro-social activities** that lead to improved behavior and school climate.

### Success of the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools

- ✓ Pre-schoolers participating in the **Young Athletes program** (a childhood development program for children 2 to 7 years old) achieve critical development goals at 3 times the rate of those not participating.
- ✓ 93% of students exposed to the Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools and campaigns such as **Spread the Word to End the Word** day have improved their behavior and attitudes toward people with intellectual differences.
- ✓ 89% of advisors for the **Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools** report an increase in participation by students with intellectual disabilities in school activities.
- ✓ Through **Special Olympics Unified Sports®**, 93% of young people with intellectual disabilities reported significant change in self-esteem/self-confidence. 91% of youth without intellectual disabilities reported a significant change in their social skills.
- ✓ These benefits of involvement in Special Olympics extend far beyond school years – adults who have been **athletes in Special Olympics are 100% more likely to be employed than peers who have not been involved.**

WITH SUPPORT OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT



Nearly 13 Million Inclusive Experiences for Youth



4,451 Schools



46 States & DC

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools are changing youth attitudes and creating inclusive school environments where all students feel welcomed and connected. There is a strong correlation between school connectedness and educational outcomes such as school attendance, staying in school longer, and higher grades and classroom test scores.

(CDC, School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth, 2009).