



**Special  
Olympics**



# Ignite with Project UNIFY

An Interactive Game for  
Fun and Learning



Special Olympics  
**Project UNIFY®**





# Special Olympics Project UNIFY®

Special Olympics Project UNIFY® is an education and sports based program started by Special Olympics in 2008 designed to build an inclusive environment among youth with and without intellectual disabilities, as well as empower them to become youth leaders and speak up for change in their community.

Project UNIFY works in three ways:

- 1. Inclusive Sports** – provide students with and without intellectual disabilities opportunities to participate in sports activities alongside one another;
- 2. Youth Leadership & Advocacy** – provide students with and without intellectual disabilities opportunities to take on leadership roles to promote Project UNIFY activities in the school and in the community; and
- 3. Whole-School Engagement** – provide opportunities for all students in the school to participate in Project UNIFY through sustained school-wide activities.

For more information about Project UNIFY, visit [specialolympics.org/putoolkit](https://specialolympics.org/putoolkit). In the Project UNIFY toolkit, there are many great resources on how to get Project UNIFY into your school or better an existing program.

## Inclusive Sports

- *Outcome:* Students without intellectual disabilities hold more positive attitudes toward their peers with intellectual disabilities.

## Youth Leadership & Advocacy

- *Outcome:* Youth are given the opportunity to voice their opinions, share their ideas and be a part of a larger inclusion movement.

## Whole-School Engagement

- *Outcome:* School communities of acceptance are created, where students of all abilities can feel welcomed and included.



# Getting Started

## Instructions for Participants

- 1 - Break into groups of 6 – 10 participants. Make sure your teams have a good distribution of youth, athletes, partners, and adults.
- 2 - Within your newly formed teams, complete the Pre-Activity Reflection Quiz shared by the facilitators. Discuss the results.
- 3 - *Now you are ready to Ignite with Project UNIFY!*
- 4 - Read through each activity presented in the game booklet and decide as a group which activity you'd like to complete first. You do not need to go in order, so look for open activity stations around the room.
- 5 - Each activity should take approximately 5 – 10 minutes to complete, but spend as much time as your team needs to successfully complete the activity.
- 6 - After finishing the activity, make sure to complete the reflection questions and mark the check box (☐) before moving on.
- 7 - Once every activity is complete, find space as a team and spend approximately 10 – 15 minutes discussing the post-reflection questions at the end of the game booklet.



### Tip for Organizers

If you're facilitating the *Ignite with Project UNIFY Game*, make sure to set up all your activity stations before participants arrive.

# Inclusive Leadership & Collaboration

## Goals:

- Enhance active listening skills.
- Focus on collaboration and taking directions from different styles of leaders.
- Hone personal style of leadership and working with others.
- Enhance teamwork and team-building skills.

## Materials Required:

- 2 Small Tables
- 1 Plastic Cup for Each Group
- 1 Pitcher Full of Water
- 1 Chair
- Blindfolds (optional)

**ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE:** Working through the imposed challenges, serve one member of your team a glass of water.

1. Within your team, identify:
  - a. One person who cannot **speak** throughout activity.
  - b. One person who cannot **move** throughout activity.
  - c. All remaining team members will be blindfolded and unable to **see** throughout activity.
2. The team member who cannot speak throughout the activity will start by sitting in the chair provide at the activity station.
3. The team member that cannot move will stand directly behind the chair and face forward throughout activity.
4. The remaining team members, who are blindfolded, will stand in front of the chair.
5. The individual who cannot **move** will need to provide the following directions to the team members who cannot **see**, so they can complete following tasks:
  - a. *Person 1:* Retrieve the water pitcher from table #1 and bring it to table #2.
  - b. *Person 2:* Fill the cup with water from the pitcher.
  - c. *Person 3:* Deliver the cup of water to the person who cannot speak and help him/her take a drink from the cup. (Note team member in chair CANNOT touch the cup during this step.)
  - d. *Person 4:* Retrieve the cup of water from person 3 and return the cup to table #1.
6. Activity is complete when every step is successfully performed. Discuss the reflection question below before moving on to the next activity.

## Reflection

How did this activity demonstrate inclusive leadership while showing how to effectively collaborate with adults?

## Tip for Organizers

You can add or combine steps in this process depending on the number of members on your teams.

# Inclusive School Environment & Advocacy

## Goals:

- Become an advocate and learn about promoting inclusive school environments.
- Develop problem solving skills to help better your Project UNIFY events.
- Gather ideas about how to get schools and communities involved in Project UNIFY initiatives.
- Educate participants, build confidence and help develop speaking skills to better promote Project UNIFY.

**ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE:** Address the obstacles in front of you to state a Unified Sports team in your school.

1. Imagine you are a student at your local high school. You are advocating for your school to start a Special Olympics Unified Sports team.
2. Using the *Quest for Social Justice* board game, talk through each obstacle with team and determine the best solutions for overcoming this issue.
3. Develop a brief plan of action (about 2-4 sentences) that details how you plan to overcome the obstacle. Record your ideas in the *Overcoming Obstacles Planning Sheet*.
4. Once you have developed your first plan of action, move on to the next obstacle. Continue through each obstacle until you reach the end and have successfully started a Unified Sports team at your school.
5. Discuss the reflection questions below before moving on to the next activity in the *Ignite with Project UNIFY* game booklet.

## Materials Required:

- Quest for Social Justice Board Game, one per team
- Overcoming Obstacles Planning Sheet, one per team



- How did all of your team contribute to overcoming the obstacles you faced when starting your team?
- Was it beneficial to have a variety of individuals (i.e., adults, youth, those with and without disabilities, etc.) all working together on the same problems?

# Quest for Social Justice

*Tackle the obstacles to plan a Special Olympics Unified Sports® team at your school.*

START

1. No one at your school has heard of Unified Sports.

3. School staff are worried the program won't be successful.

2. Your school is interested but there is a lack of support.

4. There is a lack of student interest to join the team.

5. There is a lack of financial support for uniforms and equipment.

FINISH

6. Your first game is finally here! Now time to find Fans in the Stands.

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# Overcoming Obstacles

*Tackle the obstacles to plan a Special Olympics Unified Sports® team at your school.*

Obstacle #1 Plan of Action

Obstacle #2 Plan of Action

Obstacle #3 Plan of Action

Obstacle #4 Plan of Action

Obstacle #5 Plan of Action

Obstacle #6 Plan of Action





# Unified Sports & Partner's Club

## Goals:

- Better understand the value and experience of Unified Sports.
- Experience the relationship shared between Special Olympics athletes and Unified Sports partners.
- Have some FUN!!

## Materials Required:

- Two hula hoops
- Two bed sheets, flat (secured around the hula-hoops with tape)
- Two beach balls

## Reflection:

What are the benefits of having a Unified Sports team at your school?

How does Unified Sports promote inclusion and acceptance?

**ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE:** As a team, pass the ball between hula-hoops 10 times without dropping the ball.

1. Arrange team members with two to three people per hula hoop.
2. Stand in a semi-circle around the hula hoop and have the two groups stand across from each other about 5-feet apart.
3. Practice passing the ball back and forth to get the hang of the activity.
4. To successfully complete the challenge, pass the ball from one hula hoop to the other 10 times without dropping the beach ball.
5. Once your activity is complete, discuss the reflection questions with your group before moving on.



## Tip for Organizers

If you don't have bed sheets – trash bags will work too!

# Youth Leadership

## Goals:

- Demonstrate the power of Youth Leadership.
- Highlight the opportunities available when young people and adults work together.

## Materials Required:

- One box of uncooked spaghetti noodles per team
- One package of marshmallows per team
- Timer
- Measuring tape/stick

**ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE:** Using *only* the pasta and marshmallows provided, build the tallest structure you can possibly build.

1. As a team, work together to build the tallest structure possible using the materials provided.
2. Here's the catch – young people in the group are the **directors** and adults are the **activators**.
  - a. Throughout the activity, only the youth participants can speak and give directions.
  - b. Adult participants will be the workers. Taking directions from the youth, adults will build the structure.
  - c. Youth should be determining what the structure should look like and sharing that vision with adults so they can successfully execute the building of the structure.
  - d. The structure must be able to stand on its own when complete without support for the team.
3. Once you've read through the directions and understand the activity, you have five minutes to build your structure.
4. When your time is up you cannot make any additional changes.
5. Share your structure with a facilitator and they will measure the total height of your structure.
6. Answer the reflection as a team before moving on.

## Tip for Organizers

Make sure to have facilitators set up at each station to help participants as they go through the activity. For the Youth Leadership station, you will need a facilitator to help time and measure.



## Reflection

What was hard about youth giving directions and adults being the “activators”? What was easy about it?

# Spreading the Word

## Goals:

- Learn more about attracting attention and soliciting support for events in your school.
- Brainstorm creative ways to promote and share Project UNIFY initiatives.

## Materials Required:

- *Spread the Word* Event Planning Activity Sheet

**ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE:** Develop a plan to host a Spread the Word to End the Word day event on your school campus or in your community.

1. Imagine you are a student at your local high school. You are planning to host an event on campus for this year's Spread the Word to End the Word annual day of awareness.
2. As a team, discuss the different types of events you could host and determine what you'd like to do. Come up with a brief description (3-4 sentences) about the event.
3. Now for the real planning fun!
  - a. Determine **one** problem that you might face when planning your event.
  - b. Determine **two** ways that you could overcome this obstacle.
  - c. Identify **three** ways you could advertise your event to ensure the maximum number of attendees participate in the event.
  - d. Define **three** call-to-action goals for the attendees following the event (i.e., what is there next step after attending the rally or event?)
4. Record your answers on the *Spread the Word* Event Planning activity sheet.
5. Once your activity sheet is complete, discuss the reflection questions below before moving on to the next activity.



- How can hosting an event such as this promote inclusion and acceptance for all?
- Why is it important to share these messages with people outside of the Special Olympics Movement?



# Spread the Word Event Planning Activity Sheet

Description of your Event

Problem You May Face

1.

Solutions for Overcoming the Problem

1.

2.

Ways to Advertise your Event

1.

2.

3.

Call-to-Action Goals for Attendees

1.

2.

3.



# Empowering Others for Social Justice

## Goals:

- Understand how to speak more clearly about Project UNIFY.
- Practice creative thinking skills.
- Learn to identify the strengths of others and how to use them to promote Project UNIFY components.
- Recognize the value of athletes as leaders.



## Materials Required:

- Creativity!

**ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE:** As a team, come up with a 30-second elevator pitch to educate someone about Special Olympics Project UNIFY®.

1. You have just met someone who has never heard of Special Olympics Project UNIFY!
2. Come up with a 30-second description, or elevator pitch, that will inform the individual about the amazing opportunities available through Project UNIFY.
  - a. Since the individual knows nothing about Project UNIFY, it will be important for your 30-second description to be clear and concise.
3. To complete the activity, have the athletes in your group deliver the elevator pitch to an activity facilitator. If one or more athletes are not comfortable speaking in front of the group, ensure they are able to share their unique talents and gifts in some other way (i.e., sharing a drawing of Project UNIFY).
4. Reflect on the final questions before moving on to the next activity

## Reflection

How did this activity help you learn more about Special Olympics Project UNIFY?

Why is it important to empower Special Olympics athletes to share their abilities and talents when talking about Project UNIFY?

# Ignite with Project UNIFY

## Final Reflection

Which components of Project UNIFY do you think would make a difference in your school and community?

What aspects of Project UNIFY would be most challenging to implement in your state? Why?

How could you overcome these challenges to ensure your school and community becomes more inclusive and accepting?





The U.S. Department of Education, through the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, is a major funding source for Special Olympics Project UNIFY®. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is dedicated to improving results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities ages birth through 21.

[\*www.SpecialOlympics.org\*](http://www.SpecialOlympics.org)



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