



## **Unified Champion Schools Memorandum of Understanding**

### **Special Olympics Pennsylvania and Warren County School District**

This Memorandum of Understanding summarizes the partnership being created between Special Olympics Pennsylvania (SOPA) and Warren County School District for the development of a Unified Champion Schools (UCS) program designed to lead to more inclusive and accepting school environments. The three components are Interscholastic Unified Sports, inclusive youth leadership, and whole school engagement.

These programs will be offered in Warren Area High School, and the length of the agreement is from the date of the signing of this MOU through June 30, 2025. If needed, a new Memorandum of Understanding will be updated for each subsequent year of the partnership.

#### **Special Olympics Pennsylvania**

During the 2024-25 school year, Special Olympics Pennsylvania will provide funding support, technical guidance through dedicated staff, and resources to Warren Area High School. These will support the Unified Champion Schools program which consists of Interscholastic Unified Indoor Bocce, inclusive youth leadership, and whole school engagement activities.

- Expenditures covered include:
  - Unified Indoor Bocce coach stipend of \$1,000 payable to the school district to be distributed among one or more coaches
  - One portable bocce court, one set of indoor bocce balls, a bocce equipment bag with six cones and measuring tape, and up to 16 Unified Indoor Bocce competition polo shirts and two coaches' shirts with the high school's name and colors. The school is responsible for the secure storage of these items for use in future years, and agrees to replace any missing equipment or uniforms.
  - Training and resource materials on youth leadership, whole school engagement activities, and Unified Sports
  - Spread the Word Inclusion awareness campaign promotional materials and supplies
  - If the school's team advances to the Interscholastic Unified Indoor Bocce State Championships, all housing, meals, and onsite costs are paid by SOPA. The school district is responsible for providing bus transportation.
- SOPA will provide technical guidance and resource support to ensure the successful implementation of the Unified Champion Schools program components. These include:
  - Unified Sports® training courses conducted for coaches and other interested personnel, as well as resource guides and access to free online instructional materials and videos.
  - A SOPA staff liaison assigned to your high school to support Unified Sports coaches, faculty advisors, and youth leaders.
  - How to conduct a minimum of three whole school engagement activities during the year aimed at promoting inclusion, raising awareness, and improving overall school climate. This includes materials and guidance on conducting a student-driven respect and awareness campaign entitled "Spread the Word Inclusion."
  - Strategies and resources for creating an inclusive youth leadership Unified Club or, if one already exists, information and guidance provided on how to promote co-leadership.
  - A regional youth summit for student leaders and faculty advisors will be conducted which focuses on inclusive leadership, organization, and effective communication.
  - Access to extensive online videos, instructional materials, and best practices from schools around the country and in Pennsylvania.

## Warren County School District and Warren Area High School

Warren County School District and Warren Area High School agree to the following in support of the Unified Champion Schools (UCS) program:

- Abide by the requirements outlined in this Memorandum of Understanding and any applicable Special Olympics Pennsylvania policies, sports rules, and program deadlines.
- Ensure the school's teacher/chaperone to student ratio policies are adhered to at all times. If the school decides to participate in an overnight travel event, there is a required 4:1 student to chaperone ratio. Additionally, any overnight events will follow SOPA's Housing Policy governing room assignments (available at [www.specialolympicspa.org](http://www.specialolympicspa.org)).
- Ensure background checks are completed for all coaches and volunteers in accordance with Pennsylvania's state legal requirements. School will provide a copy of its background check policy to SOPA if requested. The head Unified Indoor Bocce coach is hired before October 1.
- **Interscholastic Unified Sports:** Have a high school Interscholastic Unified Indoor Bocce team which has a proportional number of Special Olympics-eligible athletes (defined as students with an intellectual disability or developmental disability including autism with a cognitive delay) and students without an intellectual disability. Only students enrolled in the 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades are eligible, including any up to the age of 21 receiving services from the school district.
  - The team practices after school a minimum of twice a week for 11-12 weeks. First practices begin the week of November 25 and the regular season ends by the first week of March (depending on the date of the regional championships). This aligns with the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association winter sports season.
  - Additionally, the high school's Unified Indoor Bocce team participates in a minimum of four regular season competitions as well as any playoffs. The school district is responsible for providing transportation for the competitions.
  - Coaches are required to complete the free Special Olympics Unified Sports online course and attend the Unified Indoor Bocce in-person training. They also agree to fulfill the responsibilities in the SOPA coach's job description.
- **Inclusive Youth Leadership:** There is a structured inclusive youth leadership club led by students with and without intellectual disabilities. It may be a new Unified Club or an existing group. This club meets at least once or twice per month and organizes activities to improve school climate, and promote the values of inclusion, respect, and understanding in their school community. Additionally, four students and a teacher attend a five hour Youth Summit conducted by SOPA on a school day to learn about inclusive leadership.
- **Whole School Engagement:** The inclusive youth leadership club plans and conducts a minimum of three whole school engagement activities which focus on inclusion, respect, and improved school climate. Technical support will be provided by SOPA staff, as well as funding resources for materials as defined in the previous section.
- Ensure success through the involvement and support of the high school's principal, athletic director, special education director, teachers, and staff for the UCS program.
- Complete and submit short mid-term and year-end reporting requirements for a United States Department of Education Unified Champion Schools grant that provides partial funding support.



7/17/2024

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Matt Aaron  
President and CEO  
Special Olympics Pennsylvania

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Date

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Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

For Warren County School District

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Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Warren County SD Board of Education