

Three Unified Sports Options of models exist under the umbrella of Unified Sports (All PU Schools must agree to partake in one of these options throughout the school year):

1. Unified Sports

Unified Sports is a competitive model that combines Special Olympics athletes and partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities) as teammates on sport teams for training and competition. All athletes and partners on a Unified Sports team must have attained the necessary sport specific skills and tactics to compete without modification of the current Special Olympics Official Sports Rules. A Unified Sports team is an inclusive sports program with an approximately equal numbers of athletes and partners. Unified Sports teams should never be comprised solely of people with disabilities. Athletes and partners should be of similar age and ability. Age and ability-level matching of athletes and partners are defined on a sport-by-sport basis as set forth in Article 1 of the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules.

The following two models, Unified Sports Player Development and Unified Sports Recreation, allow for modifications to the Special Olympics Official Sports Rules. These models will not be conducted as official events at international Regional and World Games. Additional guidelines for these models will be provided in the Unified Sports Handbook.

2. Unified Sports Player Development

The Unified Sports Player Development model combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and partners (individuals without intellectual disabilities) as teammates on sports teams for training and competition. In Unified Sports Player Development, teammates are not required to be of similar abilities. Players of higher abilities will assist teammates of lower abilities in developing sport-specific skills and tactics in successfully participating in a team environment. Age matching of athletes and partners is defined on a sport-by-sport basis as set forth in Article 1 of the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. Therefore, Unified Sports Player Development teams must follow Unified Sports rules with the exception of those rules referring to teammates being of similar ability. Rules and modifications should ensure the meaningful involvement of all teammates.

- Utilized when teammates of higher ability are involved in assisting those of lower ability to improve their sport-specific skills and tactics. Rules are modified to prevent the dominance of higher ability players as well as to help define their role as mentors
- Has higher ability players mentoring lower ability players
- Has modified training and competition rules to prevent player dominance and ensure health and safety, to define the roles of all players and to foster meaningful involvement.

3. Unified Sports Recreation

Unified Sports Recreation consists of inclusive recreational sports opportunities for Special Olympics athletes and partners without intellectual disabilities. This model promotes social inclusion and increases sport-specific skills and knowledge. However, the composition of Unified Sports Recreation teams is less structured than Unified Sports and Unified Sports Player Development teams. Unified Sports Recreation teams do not meet the minimum training,

competition and/or team composition requirements as set forth in Article 1 of the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules. These opportunities may take place in schools. Clubs. Community and or private or public organizations.

- Currently not an official competition opportunity but is an approved exhibition or demonstration at Special Olympics. In schools, it fulfills the Project UNIFY criteria of inclusive sports
- Includes training (like physical education class) or competition (like intramural sports) in which athletes and partners take part together over the course of a season or a semester
- Includes sports and other physical activities ranging from basketball to yoga. Activities that qualify for Unified Sports Recreation must be physical, not cerebral or artistic (such as chess or painting).
- Does not require teams to be composed of athletes and partners of similar age and ability.

Examples:

- Physical Education Class: A high school physical education class includes students with and without intellectual disabilities who play basketball every day for a semester
- Partners Club: A group of soccer club members with and without intellectual disabilities decide as a regular part of their club activity to go bowling on Saturday afternoons
- Intramural Team: A group of university students invite local Special Olympics athletes to play volleyball on Sunday evenings
- Exhibition/Demonstrations: a one-day recreational competition is held with a school, mainstream sports club, or community sports program that features individuals with and without intellectual disabilities.