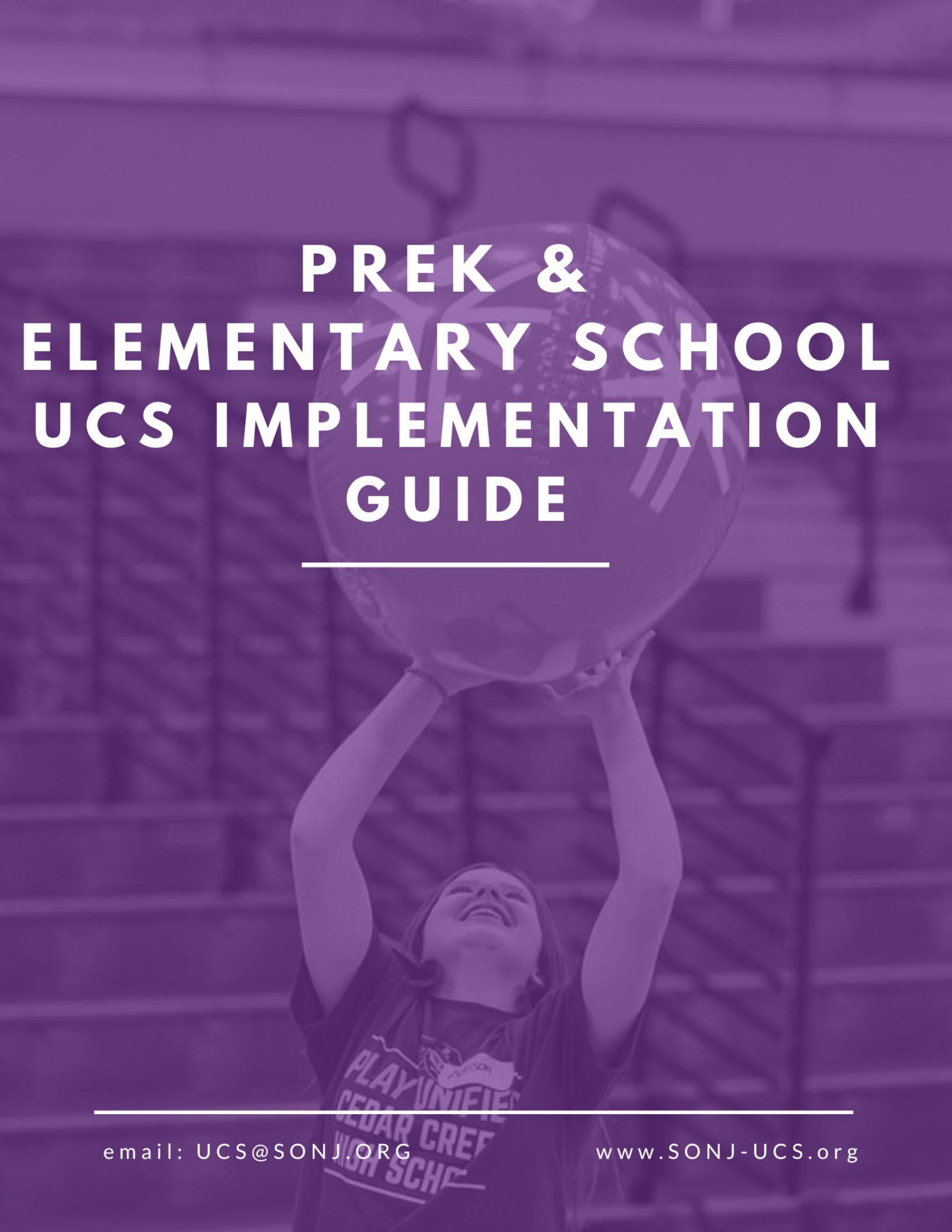


A young girl with long brown hair, wearing a black t-shirt with a graphic, is reaching up with both hands to hold a large, transparent globe. She is looking up at the globe with a joyful expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a chain-link fence and some foliage. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

PREK & ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UCS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

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UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS OVERVIEW

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS) is a strategy that aims to promote social inclusion in schools through sports and education. The program is available for schools from pre-K through college.

UCS uses three main components to achieve its goals:

- **Special Olympics Unified Sports:** Unified gross motor education and sports provide students with and without intellectual disabilities opportunities to meaningfully participate in fitness activities alongside one another in a variety of settings.
- **Inclusive youth leadership:** Inclusive youth leadership provides students with and without intellectual disabilities leading roles as they work with adults in the school to create a socially-inclusive environment.
- **Whole school engagement:** The entire school community hears messages of inclusion. This can look like pep rallies where Unified Sports teams are recognized, banner signing events, respect weeks, and more!

The program aims to create school environments where all students feel accepted, respected, and included.

With the exception of Young Athletes, all activities and events are Unified, meaning that approximately equal numbers of students with ID (athletes) and students without ID (partners) participate. Regardless of their role, all individuals participate meaningfully and to the best of their ability.

Schools, regardless of sustainability status, must be registered with SONJ UCS in order to offer Unified in any capacity.

UNIFIED SPORTS

Unified gross motor education and sports provide students with and without intellectual disabilities opportunities to meaningfully participate in fitness activities alongside one another in a variety of settings.

Goals:

- **Friendship and socialization:** Students with and without intellectual disabilities will have opportunities for positive social interactions and the development of long-lasting friendships.
- **Meaningful inclusion:** Each student will be an active participant and have a valued role on a team or in a sport or fitness activity.
- **Skill development:** Students will enhance their overall physical fitness and develop specific sports skills that enable them to participate in the sport with greater proficiency.
- **Personal growth:** Students with and without intellectual disabilities will benefit from physical and mental challenges by participating in a variety of sports activities.

Choose at least one:

- **Unified Game Day:** Organize or participate in at least one Unified Game Day per marking period.
- **Unified PE:** Provide Unified Physical Education classes at least once per week for one marking period.
- **Unified Recess:** Conduct structured Unified Recess at least once per week for one marking period.
- **Young Athletes:** Offer Young Athletes for students up to grade 2 for at least one marking period.

INCLUSIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Inclusive youth leadership provides students with and without intellectual disabilities leading roles as they work with adults in the school to create a socially inclusive environment.

Goals:

- **Everyone leads:** Students representing the diversity of the student body will be engaged in leadership roles.
- **Everyone contributes:** All students will have equitable opportunities to contribute to the school community in meaningful ways.
- **Everyone has a voice:** Administrators and teachers will value the insight of all students as they develop a socially inclusive school environment.
- **Everyone is a champion for themselves and others:** Students with and without disabilities will gain the skills, knowledge, and disposition to become advocates for themselves and their peers.

What does inclusive youth leadership look like?

- Students with and without ID leading warm-up drills for Unified PE classes together
- Older students with and without ID acting as mentors for younger students
- Students with and without ID planning and completing a community service project with adult assistance
- Students with and without ID brainstorming socially inclusive activities and getting feedback from their peers

Choose at least two:

- **Leadership Lunches:** Establish regular meetings where students watch a movie with a leadership theme. Afterwards, discuss what they learned, how the plot relates to real life, and how they might have behaved differently than the main character.
- **Promotional Activities:** Have students create invitations or design flyers to promote Unified initiatives throughout the school year.
- **Student Council or Principal's Roundtable:** Either group will include students with and without intellectual disabilities; the group should meet at least once per marking period.
- **Unified Leadership Club:** Hold meetings at least once a month, providing opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities to voice their opinions and plan activities.
- **Unified Planning Committee:** Students with and without intellectual disabilities are involved in planning Unified initiatives
- **Unified Young Readers:** Offer Unified Young Readers for a minimum of 10 weeks throughout the school year.
- **Young Athletes:** Offer Young Athletes for students up to grade 2 for at least one marking period.

WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Whole school engagement opportunities are awareness and educational activities that promote social inclusion and reach the majority of students and school staff members.

Goals

- **Positive interactions:** Students with and without intellectual disabilities will interact socially and develop mutually beneficial friendships.
- **Respectful attitudes:** All students will have a greater understanding of each other and will hold more positive attitudes toward each other.
- **Engagement:** The school will be a community of acceptance where students with and without intellectual disabilities feel welcome and contribute meaningfully to all school activities.
- **Connections:** The school will be an inviting environment where students, staff members, and community members feel connected. It models inclusion as a community norm.

Choose at least three:

- **Cool Schools Challenge:** Participate in one Cool Schools Challenge.
- **Dress-Up Day:** Encourage students to wear a particular color or outfit to show their dedication to inclusion.
- **Fundraiser:** Organize a fundraiser open to the entire school community to support your Unified initiatives
- **Morning Announcements:** Include a message of inclusion in morning announcements once a week for a month.
- **Poster Contest:** Organize a contest where all posters are displayed for the entire student body to see.
- **Social Media:** Include Unified initiatives in school social media posts throughout the school year.
- **SONJ UCS Banner:** Invite all students to sign a banner promoting inclusion.
- **Welcoming Club:** Station students with and without disabilities at the entryway to welcome students, parents, and visitors in the morning, once a week for a month.
- **Welcoming Display:** Have all students contribute to a hallway display about inclusion and welcoming differences, which can be completed during art class or character education.