



Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools**

Back to School, Back to Unified!

September 15, 2026

Welcome!



- UCS team: Andrea, Katie, Jaclyn
 - Have a general question? Email UCS@SONJ.org
 - Emails get lost when we're all copied on an email
- Please bookmark www.SONJ-UCS.org or have it up on your screen as we move through these slides
 - General hub for everything – resources, registration forms, directories, trainings, etc.



Today's Goals

- What is Unified?
- Implementing the three components – separately and together
- Resources to help you build Unified up!
- Cool Schools Challenges
- Important updates and info for 2026-27

What is Unified?!



What does it mean to be **Unified**?

Approximately equal numbers of students with and without intellectual disabilities participating together in a meaningful way.

That definition applies to each of the three components of UCS – not just sports.



Three components. One school.



It works best *together!*



Unified Soccer Team



Student leaders, in Unified Pairs, plan a school-wide event to support the Unified Soccer team



Students and staff engage through that event



New students discover Unified and its message



New athletes, partners, and leaders get involved

Progress Checkpoint



- An application for your school, even if you're self-funded
- Executed award letter returned
- [Additional contacts added](#) to distribution lists
- Register for Unified Sports via [Interscholastic Unified Sports Form](#)
- Connect with other teams playing Fall sports via [Unified Sports Directory](#)
- [Register for Unified Cup Soccer](#) and begin compiling paperwork

Important Deadlines



- 10th of every month, beginning October – report due for previous month's activities
- December 15, 2026 – last day to order t-shirts
- January 20, 2027 – deadline to submit reimbursement requests for expenses incurred and paid September-December
- April 20, 2027 – deadline to order and receive physical supplies
- July 3, 2027 – deadline to submit reimbursement requests
- July 20, 2027 – deadline to notify UCS team of discrepancies

Monthly Reports Overview



- Due 10th of the month for the previous month
- Submit a report each month even if you didn't offer Unified programming
- New this year: reporting is through Airtable
- Use the [Reporting Guide](#) & [Tracker](#) throughout the month to help!
- Your monthly reports should support your reimbursement requests
- Find everything in [Liaison Launchpad – Reports & Surveys](#)

Reimbursement Requests



- Schools/districts pay eligible expenses first and request reimbursement
- Submit request within 30 days of making payment
- Forms are on the UCS Website:
 - Funding & Reimbursements → [Requesting Reimbursement](#)
- Questions? Ask *before* you purchase
- Email requests to UCS@SONJ.org with your school name and reimbursement request in the subject line
 - If you don't receive confirmation, please follow up
 - If you don't receive payment within 6 weeks, please follow up
- Pre-approval is required for both the purchase and design of uniforms, all apparel, and single items costing \$500 or more

Participation Paperwork



- Paperwork is now required for students attending:
 - Unified Cup
 - Unified Game Day
 - Youth Summits
- This is a new module and information is taking much longer to hit our systems; please start sharing this information with your students now to ensure everyone can participate
- Our system has many limitations, so please follow the instructions carefully as you may need to select certain options. For example, school-based Unified Partners are going to register as athlete.
- One-pager that can be emailed or printed and sent home with instructions and a link to the paperwork portal

Cool Schools Challenge



- CSCs allow UCS schools to participate in select SONJ events to raise funds for both your school and SONJ
 - Revenue share. Generally, 50% of every dollar fundraised is returned to your school
 - Registered participants receive an event t-shirt and race bib
- SONJ handles the registration, the finances, the event logistics, etc.
 - You just create the team online and spread the word
 - Be sure to register under Cool Schools Challenge, not the main event page
- Upcoming Events:
 - Thanks4Giving Turkey Dash & Splash – November 14 in Asbury Park
 - Jingle All the Way – December 6 - Virtual



New Resources

- [Quick Links](#)
- [Active Schools List](#)
- [Unified Sports Directory](#)
- [Whole School Engagement Playbook](#) – *a monthly guide*
- [Whole School Engagement Implementation Guide](#)
- [Online t-shirt order form](#)
- [Online pre-approval request form](#)
 - Automated email with approval decision

Your next steps...



- BUILD – choose one component to strengthen this fall
- CONNECT – bring students and the Unified leadership team into the planning
- PREPARE – complete any outstanding registration or participation paperwork
- REPORT – submit September activities by October 10
- PLAN – add the 2026-27 deadlines and important dates to your calendar
- Follow us on Instagram @SONJ.UCS and tag us in your posts
- *Need help building Unified at your school? We're here! ucs@sonj.org*

Questions

Next Meeting:

October 20 at 7am, 11am, and 6pm

Deep dive into funding and reimbursement requests