



Whole School Engagement Implementation Guide

Table of Contents

Section 1: Getting Started.....	1
• What is Whole School Engagement?	
• The Awareness-Participation-Visibility Framework	
• How to Use This Guide	
• Planning for Success	
Section 2: September - Recruitment & Belonging_____	04
Section 3: October - Respect & Disability Awareness____	12
Section 4: November - Giving Back_____	20
Section 5: December - Community & Kindness_____	29
Section 6: January - Culture Reset_____	38
Section 7: February - Relationships & Connection_____	47
Section 8: March - Advocacy & Inclusion_____	56
Section 9: April - Acceptance & Understanding_____	65
Section 10: May - Action & Celebration_____	74
Section 11: June - Leadership & Legacy_____	83
Section 12: July - Maintaining Connections_____	93
Section 13: Resources & Templates_____	102

Additional tools, templates, planning resources, and printables - *coming soon*

Getting Started

Understanding Whole School Engagement, the Awareness-Participation-Visibility framework, and how to use this guide

What is Whole School Engagement

Whole School Engagement (WSE) is one of the three components of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools. It consists of activities that engage the majority of students and staff in building awareness, promoting participation, and making inclusion visible throughout the school community. Effective WSE activities help create school climates where respect, belonging, and inclusion are the norm rather than the exception.

Awareness-Participation-Visibility Framework

Throughout this guide, WSE activities are organized into three categories:

Awareness Activities

Activities that engage a majority of the school community in learning about disability, inclusion, belonging, and Unified Champion Schools.

Participation Activities

Activities that provide students with opportunities to actively engage in inclusive experiences, events, and initiatives.

Visibility Activities

Activities that make inclusion visible, celebrated, and recognized throughout the school community.

Together, these three categories help schools create opportunities for students to learn, lead, participate, and belong.

How to Use This Guide

The Whole School Engagement Strategic Playbook provides a month-by-month framework for building an inclusive school culture through awareness, participation, and visibility. This Implementation Guide is designed to accompany the Playbook by providing practical tools, examples, and step-by-step guidance for bringing those ideas to life.

Each monthly section follows the same format, beginning with the month's theme and primary goal, followed by implementation guidance for the featured Awareness, Participation, and Visibility activities, bulletin board ideas, and planning tips. This consistent structure allows schools to quickly locate the information they need while building Whole School Engagement throughout the year.

Whether your school is launching a new Unified Champion Schools program or expanding an existing one, this guide is intended to help move ideas into action and create meaningful opportunities for all students to learn, lead, participate, and belong.

Planning for Success

Whole School Engagement is most effective when it is planned intentionally throughout the school year rather than as a series of isolated events. Schools do not need to complete every activity in the Strategic Playbook or this Implementation Guide. Instead, focus on selecting activities that align with your school's goals, calendar, student interests, and available resources.

As you plan, consider the following:

- **Build a team.** Involve Unified Club members, educators, administrators, and student leaders in planning activities throughout the year.
- **Start small.** A few well-executed activities often have a greater impact than trying to do everything.
- **Balance the three components.** Aim to include Awareness, Participation, and Visibility activities consistently across the school year.
- **Use existing opportunities.** Connect Unified activities to assemblies, spirit weeks, athletic events, service projects, and other school traditions whenever possible.
- **Celebrate often.** Share successes through announcements, social media, bulletin boards, newsletters, and school websites to help inclusion remain visible throughout the community.
- **Reflect and grow.** At the end of each month, consider what worked well, what students enjoyed most, and what could be improved before planning the next activity.

September - Recruitment & Belonging

Theme: Back to School, Back to Unified!

A new school year is the perfect opportunity to establish that Unified is more than a club or sports team; it's a commitment to creating a school where every student belongs. September focuses on helping students make connections, welcoming new members, and introducing Unified Champion Schools to the entire school community.

Primary Goal

Recruit new students while establishing a visible Unified presence throughout the school. Schools should focus on creating opportunities for students to learn about Unified, meet new peers, and understand how they can become involved throughout the year.

Awareness Activity - What Is Unified? Campaign

Participation Activity - Start With Hello Day

Visibility Activity - Unified Kickoff Media Push

Bulletin Board Feature - Inclusion Starts With Hello

If You Only Do One Thing...Unified Kickoff Media Push

If your school only has the capacity to complete one Whole School Engagement activity this month, prioritize a Unified Kickoff Media Push. Launching the school year with a coordinated awareness campaign helps students, staff, and families understand what Unified Champion Schools is and how they can become involved. By making Unified visible from the very beginning of the school year, schools create momentum for recruitment, increase participation in future events, and establish inclusion as a schoolwide priority rather than a single program or club.

What is Unified Campaign

Purpose - Introduce students and staff to Unified programming by increasing awareness of Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership, Whole School Engagement, and school-specific Unified offerings. This campaign helps establish a common understanding of inclusion and belonging while encouraging participation in Unified programs throughout the school year.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Which Unified opportunities currently exist? Are students being recruited for Unified Sports, IYL, or both? How will students express interest? What communication channels are available?
- **Materials Needed:** Recruitment table; posters and flyers; morning announcement scripts; interest forms or QR codes; school website or social media access; Unified Club information; Unified Sports information; Student leadership volunteers; Photos and videos of Unified activities; display board or bulletin board space

Student Leadership Opportunities - Recruitment table hosts; morning announcement presenters; club fair representatives; student speakers; social media ambassadors; video creators; athlete and partner representatives; poster and bulletin board designers; school tour or information session leaders
Unified athletes and partners should *always* present together.

How to Implement

- **Introduce Unified:** help students understand what UCS is, what Unified Sports are, what IYL is, how students can participate, and *why inclusion matters*
- **Share Student Stories:** highlight current athletes, Unified partners, student leaders, coaches, and advisors
- **Create Opportunities to Learn More:** recruitment table, club fair, lunch information booth, classroom visits, advisory presentations, open house events
- **Provide a Call to Action:** students should leave knowing how to join, who to contact, upcoming events, meeting dates, sports registration opportunities

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Classroom presentations; schoolwide assembly; buddy activity; morning meeting discussions; simple introductory videos
- **Middle School:** Club fair participation; lunch information table; student ambassador presentations; advisory activities; recruitment week
- **High School:** Freshman orientation; club fair recruitment; morning show features; athlete and partner panels; social media recruitment campaign

Additional Considerations - Use person-to-person recruitment whenever possible; focus on belonging rather than membership numbers; highlight both athletes and partners equally; ensure students understand that Unified is open to everyone; use authentic student voices whenever possible; consider repeating the campaign mid-year to recruit new participants and maintain momentum.

Start With Hello Day

Purpose - Developed by **Sandy Hook Promise**, Start With Hello is a national school climate initiative that encourages students to intentionally reach out to classmates who may feel isolated or disconnected. By promoting simple acts of kindness and connection, the campaign helps foster a school culture where every student feels welcomed, valued, and included. As part of Whole School Engagement, Start With Hello provides a natural opportunity to introduce Unified Champion Schools while reinforcing that belonging begins with everyday interactions.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** How will students be encouraged to meet someone new? Will activities occur during advisory, lunch, classrooms, or schoolwide? Which student leaders will help facilitate activities? How will you encourage inclusion beyond a single day?
- **Materials Needed:** Conversation starters; posters and promotional materials; morning announcement script; name tags; activity supplies

Student Leadership Opportunities - Welcome new students; facilitate icebreakers; lead lunch or advisory activities; create promotional materials; model inclusive interactions; encourage classmates to participate

How to Implement

- **Build Awareness:** Introduce Start With Hello through morning announcements, classroom discussions, posters, or a schoolwide kickoff. Explain the purpose of the initiative and encourage students to recognize the importance of making others feel welcome.
- **Create Opportunities to Connect:** Invite students to participate in Start With Hello through a lunchtime or schoolwide activity. For example, Unified Club members can staff a table where students pledge to say hello to or sit with someone new. After completing the challenge, students can add their name to a handprint that becomes part of the month's Unified bulletin board. Schools may also adapt the activity for advisory, classrooms, or schoolwide events.

- **Model Inclusive Behavior:** Encourage educators, administrators, Unified athletes, Unified partners, and student leaders to intentionally welcome students who may be new, isolated, or less connected. Visible modeling reinforces that inclusion is everyone's responsibility.
- **Reinforce the Message:** Continue promoting belonging throughout the week or month by incorporating reminders into announcements, classroom conversations, and Unified Club activities. Encourage students to make welcoming others an everyday habit rather than a one-day event. Continue to share stories and photos through the Unified Kickoff Media Push.
- **Reflect and Celebrate:** Invite students to share examples of meaningful connections they made, recognize acts of inclusion, and celebrate how small interactions contribute to a stronger, more inclusive school community. Invite participants to learn more about Unified Club.

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Classroom buddy activities; morning meeting introductions; kindness challenges
- **Middle School:** Advisory mixers; lunch conversation tables; team-building games
- **High School:** Freshman welcome activities; club fair outreach; peer ambassador programs; unified lunch meet-ups

Additional Considerations - Use Start With Hello as the beginning of a year-long focus on belonging rather than a one-day event. Encourage students to continue reaching out to classmates throughout the school year.

Unified Kickoff Media Push

Purpose - Launch the school year by introducing Unified Champion Schools to the entire school community. A coordinated media campaign builds excitement, recruits new participants, celebrates existing Unified opportunities, and establishes inclusion as a visible part of school culture from the very beginning of the school year.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Which communication platforms does your school use? What photos, videos, or student stories are available? Who will help create and share content? How will students and families learn how to get involved? How will the campaign connect to upcoming Unified events and recruitment opportunities?
- **Materials Needed:** Photos and videos from previous Unified activities; student testimonials or quotes; morning announcement scripts; school website and/or social media access; digital signage or hallway displays; flyers or QR codes

Student Leadership Opportunities - Record promotional videos; share personal Unified experiences; design graphics and promotional materials; deliver morning announcements; welcome prospective members; assist with recruitment events; help manage social media content (when appropriate)

How to Implement

- **Gather Authentic Content:** Collect photos, videos, student quotes, and success stories that showcase Unified participation, leadership, friendship, and school culture.
- **Develop a Communication Plan:** Schedule announcements, newsletters, social media posts, digital signage, and website updates so Unified remains visible throughout September rather than being promoted only once.
- **Highlight Opportunities to Participate:** Share information about upcoming Unified Sports, Unified Club meetings, Whole School Engagement activities, volunteer opportunities, and ways students can become involved.
- **Elevate Student Voices:** Feature Unified athletes and partners sharing their experiences, favorite memories, and what Unified means to them. Authentic student stories help others understand the impact of inclusion.

- **Maintain Momentum:** Continue highlighting Unified activities as they begin throughout the month, celebrating participation and reminding students that there are many opportunities to get involved throughout the school year.

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Morning announcements; family newsletters; hallway displays; classroom photo slideshows
- **Middle School:** Daily announcements; digital signage; recruitment posters; student-created promotional videos
- **High School:** Student-produced videos; activity fair displays; social media campaigns; athlete and partner testimonials; club recruitment events

Additional Considerations - Focus on belonging, friendship, leadership, and participation rather than simply advertising events. Authentic student voices and real photos create the greatest impact and help students see themselves as future participants.

Bulletin Board Feature: Inclusion Starts With Hello

Purpose - Create a visual reminder that inclusion begins with everyday acts of kindness and connection. This collaborative bulletin board encourages students to reflect on how simple interactions can help every member of the school community feel welcomed, valued, and included.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**
 - Student handprints with welcoming messages
 - Photos from Unified activities and recruitment events
 - Student quotes about belonging and friendship
 - Examples of inclusive actions observed throughout the month
 - "Ways We Welcome Others" contributions from students and staff
- **Possible Headings:**
 - Everyone Belongs Here
 - Inclusion Starts With Hello
 - One Hello Can Make a Difference
 - Building Belonging Together

Student Leadership Opportunities - Design the display; create titles and decorations; collect handprints or messages; write captions; add photos; invite contributions

Additional Considerations - Keep the bulletin board interactive by leaving space for new student contributions throughout September. As students participate in Start With Hello activities and Unified events, continue adding photos and examples of inclusion to reinforce that belonging is something the school community builds together.

October - Respect & Disability Awareness

Theme: Respect Includes Everyone

October encourages students to move beyond welcoming others to understanding and valuing disability as part of human diversity. By connecting Unified Champion Schools with Week of Respect and National Disability Employment Awareness Month, schools can reinforce that respect, inclusion, and belonging go hand in hand.

Primary Goal

Build understanding of disability inclusion while reinforcing a respectful school culture where every student feels welcomed, valued, and included.

Awareness Activity - Week of Respect + Disability Awareness

Participation Activity - Fans in the Stands for Unified Fall Sports

Visibility Activity - Unified Respect Spotlight

Bulletin Board Feature - Ability in Action: Disability Employment Awareness

If You Only Do One Thing...Fans in the Stands

If your school only has the capacity to complete one Whole School Engagement activity this month, prioritize Fans in the Stands. Bringing students, staff, and families together to support Unified athletes and partners creates one of the most visible and memorable demonstrations of inclusion. It strengthens school spirit while showing that every athlete deserves the same encouragement and recognition.

Week of Respect + Disability Awareness

Purpose - Build understanding of disability, inclusion, and respect by connecting Unified Champion Schools to New Jersey's required Week of Respect activities and National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Rather than creating a separate initiative, schools can use Unified to strengthen existing school climate efforts by helping students understand that respect includes everyone.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** How does your school currently celebrate Week of Respect? Which Unified students can help lead awareness activities? What disability awareness topics would be most meaningful for your school? How can activities reinforce respectful language, belonging, and inclusion throughout the month?
- **Materials Needed:** Morning announcement scripts; disability awareness resources; posters or digital graphics; advisory discussion prompts; bulletin board materials; student leadership volunteers

Student Leadership Opportunities - Write and present morning announcements; share disability and inclusion facts; lead classroom or advisory discussions; create posters and awareness displays; share personal experiences with inclusion; help facilitate Week of Respect activities.

Unified athletes and partners should *always* present together.

How to Implement

- **Connect to Existing School Initiatives:** Incorporate Unified Champion Schools into your school's Week of Respect activities rather than creating a separate campaign. Help students recognize that disability inclusion is an essential part of building a respectful school community.
- **Teach Through Everyday Moments:** Share disability awareness facts, respectful language reminders, and stories that highlight the strengths, talents, and contributions of individuals with disabilities.
- **Encourage Student Reflection:** Use advisory periods, classroom discussions, or morning meetings to help students consider how respect is demonstrated through inclusion, friendship, and everyday actions.

- **Highlight Disability Leadership:** Feature successful individuals with disabilities and discuss how accessibility, opportunity, and inclusion help people succeed in school, work, and their communities.
- **Extend the Conversation:** Continue reinforcing respect and inclusion throughout October through announcements, classroom activities, Unified events, and schoolwide messaging.

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Daily respect themes; picture books; classroom discussions; morning announcements
- **Middle School:** Advisory discussion prompts; Myth vs. Fact activities; student-created posters; disability awareness announcements
- **High School:** Student panels; Disability Employment Awareness features; classroom discussions; inclusion campaigns; advisory lessons

Additional Considerations - Focus on disability as a natural part of human diversity rather than something to pity or overcome. Encourage curiosity, respectful language, and authentic understanding while highlighting disability identity, leadership, employment, and belonging.

Fans in the Stands

Purpose - Demonstrate schoolwide support for Unified athletes and partners by encouraging students, staff, and families to attend Unified athletic events. Fans in the Stands builds school spirit, increases visibility for Unified Sports, and creates authentic opportunities for the entire school community to experience inclusion in action.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Which Unified competitions will take place this month? How will students learn about the event? Will there be a schoolwide theme or spirit activity? Which student leaders will help organize attendance?
- **Materials Needed:** Event schedule; promotional flyers and announcements; spirit signs and posters; school colors or themed apparel

Student Leadership Opportunities - Promote attendance; organize student sessions; create spirit posters; invite clubs, teams, and classrooms; welcome spectators; help coordinate recognition activities

How to Implement

- **Build Excitement:** Promote upcoming Unified competitions through announcements, social media, posters, and classroom reminders.
- **Invite the School Community:** Encourage students, staff, families, clubs, and athletic teams to attend together and celebrate Unified athletes and partners.
- **Create a Unified Student Section:** Organize a designated cheering section featuring school colors, spirit signs, themed attire, or student section leaders.
- **Celebrate Participation:** Recognize athletes, partners, coaches, volunteers, and spectators before, during, or after the event to reinforce that everyone contributes to an inclusive school community.
- **Capture the Experience:** Take photos and videos to share through the Unified Respect Spotlight, newsletters, and social media throughout the month.

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Classroom buddy activities; morning meeting introductions; kindness challenges

- **Middle School:** Advisory mixers; lunch conversation tables; team-building games
- **High School:** Freshman welcome activities; club fair outreach; peer ambassador programs; unified lunch meet-ups

Additional Considerations - Use Start With Hello as the beginning of a year-long focus on belonging rather than a one-day event. Encourage students to continue reaching out to classmates throughout the school year.

Unified Respect Spotlight

Purpose - Showcase how students demonstrate respect, inclusion, and belonging throughout the school community. By highlighting authentic stories of friendship, leadership, and participation, schools reinforce that respect is demonstrated through everyday actions.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Which students or events will be highlighted? Who will help gather stories and photos? Which communication platforms will be used? How will respect and inclusion remain visible throughout the month?
- **Materials Needed:** Student photos; morning announcements; social media access; digital signage; school newsletter

Student Leadership Opportunities - Conduct interviews; share personal experiences; create graphics and social media posts; write announcements; highlight classmates demonstrating inclusion

How to Implement

- **Identify Stories of Inclusion:** Highlight students, classrooms, staff members, or teams demonstrating respect and inclusion throughout October.
- **Share Student Voices:** Feature Unified athletes and partners discussing what respect and belonging look like in their school community.
- **Promote Positive Examples:** Use announcements, newsletters, digital displays, and social media to celebrate inclusive actions and schoolwide participation.
- **Connect to Unified Events:** Share photos and stories from Week of Respect activities, Fans in the Stands events, and other October initiatives.
- **Keep Inclusion Visible:** Continue recognizing acts of respect and belonging throughout the month to reinforce that inclusion is practiced every day.

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Classroom shout-outs; hallway displays; morning announcements
- **Middle School:** Student interviews; digital signage; social media highlights
- **High School:** Morning show features; athlete and partner spotlights; student-produced videos; school newsletters

Additional Considerations - Feature authentic examples from across the school community. Recognizing everyday acts of inclusion reinforces that respect is demonstrated through consistent actions rather than isolated events.

Bulletin Board Feature:

Ability in Action: Disability Employment Awareness

Purpose - Celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month by highlighting successful professionals with disabilities and reinforcing that disability is one aspect of a person's identity—not a limitation. This display helps students recognize the many ways individuals with disabilities contribute as leaders, professionals, innovators, artists, and advocates.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**
 - "Disabled AND..." profile cards
 - Career pathways connected to Unified leadership skills
 - Quotes from featured individuals
 - Student reflections on leadership and inclusion
 - Connections between Unified skills and future careers
- **Possible Headings:**
 - Ability in Action
 - Disabled AND...
 - Talent Knows No Limits
 - Inclusion Builds Leaders

Student Leadership Opportunities - Research featured individuals; design profile cards; create graphics and displays; present featured individuals during announcements; connect unified experiences to workplace leadership skills; update the bulletin board throughout the month

Additional Considerations - Keep the bulletin board interactive by leaving space for new student contributions throughout September. As students participate in Start With Hello activities and Unified events, continue adding photos and examples of inclusion to reinforce that belonging is something the school community builds together.

November - Giving Back

Theme: Unified Through Action

November reminds students that everyone has something valuable to contribute. By creating opportunities for service, leadership, and participation, schools reinforce that inclusion is about recognizing the strengths, talents, and contributions of every student while working together to make a difference.

Primary Goal

Build a school culture where all students are recognized as being able to contribute and lead through service.

Awareness Activity - Everyone Can Contribute Campaign

Participation Activity - Thanks4Giving Turkey Dash & Splash

Visibility Activity - Unified Service Recognition Campaign

Bulletin Board Feature - Leadership Looks Like...

If You Only Do One Thing...Thanks4Giving Dash & Splash

If your school only has the capacity to complete one Whole School Engagement activity this month, prioritize the Thanks4Giving Turkey Dash & Splash. This statewide initiative brings students together through a shared experience that celebrates participation, school spirit, and giving back while demonstrating that everyone can contribute to a more inclusive community.

Everyone Can Contribute

Purpose - Help students recognize that everyone has unique strengths, talents, and gifts to offer their school and community. This campaign reinforces that disability does not define a person's ability to lead, serve, or make a meaningful contribution.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** How will students share their strengths and contributions? Will the campaign focus on individuals, classrooms, or the entire school? How can the campaign connect to service learning or Thanksgiving? Which student leaders will help promote participation?
- **Materials Needed:** Morning announcement scripts; disability awareness resources; posters or digital graphics; advisory discussion prompts; bulletin board materials; student leadership volunteers

Student Leadership Opportunities - Write and present morning announcements; share disability and inclusion facts; lead classroom or advisory discussions; create posters and awareness displays; share personal experiences with inclusion; help facilitate Week of Respect activities.

Unified athletes and partners should *always* present together.

How to Implement

- **Introduce the Theme:** discuss how every person contributes differently through kindness, leadership, service, creativity, or friendship
- **Celebrate Individual Strengths:** invite students to identify their own talents and recognize the strengths they see in classmates
- **Connect Contributions to Inclusion:** reinforce that inclusive school communities are strongest when everyone's abilities are recognized and valued
- **Share Student Stories:** highlight examples of students making a positive difference in classrooms, clubs, athletics, and Unified activities
- **Continue the Conversation:** encourage students to look for opportunities to contribute throughout the month and beyond

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** "I Can Help By..." activities; classroom kindness chains; strength stars
- **Middle School:** Student recognition wall; advisory discussions; gratitude activities
- **High School:** Student spotlights; leadership reflections; service-learning connections

Additional Considerations - Avoid comparing contributions. Emphasize that every act of kindness, leadership, and participation helps strengthen an inclusive school community.

Thanks4Giving Turkey Dash & Splash

Purpose - Bring students together through a fun, inclusive event that promotes participation, teamwork, and school spirit while supporting Special Olympics New Jersey. The experience reinforces that everyone can contribute to a stronger, more inclusive school community.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Which event format best fits your school? Will the event involve the entire school (yes!) or select Unified participants? How will Unified athletes and partners participate together? How will participation be promoted?
- **Materials Needed:** Event registration materials and links; promotional posters; school announcements; participation tracking materials

Student Leadership Opportunities - Promote participation; organize teams; lead warm-ups; welcome participants; assist with event logistics; celebrate participants

How to Implement

- **Promote the Event:** Build excitement through announcements, posters, newsletters, and classroom visits.
- **Encourage Schoolwide Participation:** Invite students, staff, and families to participate together while emphasizing inclusion over competition.
- **Celebrate Unified Participation:** Highlight Unified athletes and partners throughout the event and recognize teamwork, encouragement, and school spirit.
- **Share the Experience:** Capture photos and stories to celebrate participation and encourage continued involvement.
- **Reflect Together:** Discuss how participating together strengthens both the school community and the mission of inclusion.

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Schoolwide walk or movement challenge

- **Middle School:** Grade-level participation challenge
- **High School:** Unified team event; friendly class competition; schoolwide celebration; Cross Country team participation in 5K

Additional Considerations - Keep the focus on participation, teamwork, and inclusion rather than fundraising totals or competition.

Unified Service Recognition Campaign

Purpose - Celebrate students whose actions demonstrate kindness, leadership, service, and inclusion. By making these contributions visible, schools reinforce that everyone has the ability to make a positive impact.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** How will students be recognized? Who can nominate students? Which communication platforms will be used? How will recognition remain authentic and inclusive?
- **Materials Needed:** Student nomination forms; certificates or recognition cards; morning announcement scripts; social media or newsletter access

Student Leadership Opportunities - Nominate peers; write recognition announcements; conduct interviews; share stories; present awards or acknowledgements

How to Implement

- **Recognize Everyday Leadership:** Celebrate students demonstrating kindness, inclusion, teamwork, and service
- **Share Positive Stories:** Highlight examples through announcements, newsletters, bulletin boards, and social media
- **Celebrate Diverse Contributions:** Recognize students with different talents and leadership styles
- **Encourage Peer Recognition:** Invite students and staff to nominate classmates making a positive impact
- **Continue Throughout the Month:** Regular recognition reinforces that service and inclusion are everyday actions

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Classroom recognition; kindness shoutouts
- **Middle School:** Student spotlight board; morning announcements
- **High School:** Morning show features; social media recognition; leadership spotlights; school newsletter feature

Additional Considerations - Recognize authentic contributions of all sizes. Small, everyday acts of inclusion often have the greatest impact.

Bulletin Board Feature:

Leadership Looks Like...

Leadership isn't just a title. It's how we show up for others.

Purpose - Help students expand their understanding of leadership by recognizing the everyday actions that strengthen a school or community. This bulletin board highlights servant leadership in action and reinforces that students can lead through service, listening, inclusion, teamwork, advocacy, and creating opportunities for others to contribute.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**

- Photos of students demonstrating leadership through service, teamwork, inclusion, advocacy, and community involvement
- Real examples of students giving back to their school or community
- Student or staff nominations recognizing everyday examples of leadership
- Photos and highlights from service projects, fundraising efforts, Unified activities, and the Thanks4Giving Cool Schools Challenge
- Leadership Looks Like...
 - Listening
 - Serving
 - Including
 - Showing Up
 - Using Your Voice
 - Sharing Skills
 - Recognizing Strengths
 - Taking Action

- **Possible Headings:**

- Leadership Looks Like...
- Lead Through Service
- Leadership in Action
- Small Actions. Big Impact.
- Lead. Serve. Include.

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can help identify and celebrate examples of leadership throughout the school, select photos and stories to feature, create “Leadership Looks Like...” cards, and invite peers and staff to recognize students making a positive impact. Students can also highlight examples from Unified activities, service projects, fundraising efforts, clubs, teams, and everyday school experiences that demonstrate different ways to lead. Unified athletes and partners can work together to maintain the display and reinforce that leadership is not about being in charge—it is about using your strengths, actions, and influence to help others and strengthen your community.

Additional Considerations - Highlight many different forms of leadership so students understand that leadership does not require a title, a formal position, or being the loudest person in the room. Include examples such as listening, supporting teammates, advocating for others, following through on commitments, serving the community, sharing responsibility, and creating opportunities for other people to lead. Be intentional about representing students with and without disabilities as contributors and leaders, rather than portraying students with disabilities primarily as recipients of service or support. The goal is to help every student recognize that leadership can happen in everyday moments and that some of the strongest leaders are those who use their actions to strengthen the people and communities around them.

December - Community & Kindness

Theme: Season of Inclusion

December focuses on strengthening community through connection, kindness, and everyday acts of inclusion. As schools move through a season often centered on giving and togetherness, Unified provides an opportunity to reinforce that meaningful inclusion goes beyond being kind—it means intentionally creating spaces where everyone is welcomed, valued, and able to participate.

Primary Goal

Strengthen school community by encouraging everyday acts of inclusion, kindness, and connection.

Awareness Activity - International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Participation Activity - Unified Kindness in Action campaign

Visibility Activity - Unified Community Highlights

Bulletin Board Feature - This Is Unified

If You Only Do One Thing...Unified Kindness in Action

If your school only has the capacity to complete one Whole School Engagement activity this month, prioritize Unified Kindness in Action. This flexible schoolwide activity encourages students to turn inclusive values into everyday actions by intentionally connecting with others, inviting participation, showing appreciation, and helping build a stronger school community.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Purpose - International Day of Persons with Disabilities provides an opportunity to celebrate disability as a natural part of human diversity while promoting inclusion, belonging, and respect for all students. By highlighting disability awareness through positive messaging and student voice, schools reinforce that inclusive communities benefit everyone.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** How will we recognize the day? What messages best reflect our school's commitment to inclusion? How can students take an active role in leading awareness efforts? Which communication methods will reach the greatest number of students?
- **Materials Needed:** Morning announcement scripts; student quotes or testimonials; posters or bulletin board materials; school social media or communication platforms; short videos or presentation materials; disability inclusion facts and messages

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can develop announcements, create posters, record short awareness videos, share personal stories about inclusion, develop social media content, and encourage peers to participate in awareness activities throughout the day.

Unified athletes and partners should *always* present together.

How to Implement

- **Introduce the Day:** Share the purpose of International Day of Persons with Disabilities and connect it to your school's commitment to inclusion and belonging
- **Center Disability as Diversity:** Reinforce that disability is a natural part of human diversity and inclusive communities value people with all abilities and experiences
- **Share Inclusive Messages:** Use announcements, posters, videos, or social media to highlight disability inclusion, belonging, and respect
- **Elevate Student Voice:** Invite students to share quotes, reflections, or stories about what inclusion and belonging mean to them

- **Connect Awareness to Action:** Encourage students to identify everyday ways they can help create a school where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and included

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Morning announcements about kindness and inclusion; read-aloud featuring disability representation; classroom discussion about belonging
- **Middle School:** Student-created awareness posters; advisory discussion on inclusion; daily disability inclusion facts
- **High School:** Student-produced awareness video; social media campaign; student panel or classroom discussion on belonging and inclusion

Additional Considerations - Keep the focus on celebrating disability as an important part of diversity rather than creating sympathy or emphasizing limitations. Highlight the voices and experiences of people with disabilities whenever possible, and reinforce that inclusion is about creating environments where everyone belongs. Encourage students to recognize that small actions of respect and acceptance contribute to a stronger school community every day.

Unified Kindness in Action Campaign

Purpose - Help students recognize that inclusion is built through everyday actions by encouraging intentional acts of kindness that foster belonging and connection. This campaign reinforces that simple choices, such as inviting someone to join an activity or expressing appreciation, can have a lasting impact on school culture.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What acts of kindness best reflect an inclusive school community? How will participation be encouraged and celebrated? Will activities take place over one day, one week, or throughout the month? How can all students participate regardless of age or ability?
- **Materials Needed:** Kindness challenge cards or bingo sheets; thank you note supplies; posters promoting the campaign; participation tracking materials; recognition certificates or displays

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can organize kindness challenges, distribute materials, encourage participation, collect examples of inclusive actions, recognize classmates' efforts, and help promote the campaign through announcements and social media.

How to Implement

- **Introduce the Challenge:** Encourage students to practice small, intentional acts of kindness and inclusion throughout the month
- **Offer Simple Ways to Participate:** Provide kindness bingo, thank-you notes, invitation challenges, or other accessible activities students can complete
- **Focus on Inclusive Actions:** Encourage students to invite someone to join, sit with someone new, recognize a peer, or make an intentional effort to include others
- **Share Kindness in Action:** Highlight examples through announcements, displays, newsletters, or social media to inspire continued participation

- **Celebrate Collective Impact:** Reflect on how individual acts of kindness and inclusion work together to create a stronger school community

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Kindness bingo; thank you cards for school staff; invite someone new to play at recess
- **Middle School:** Sit with someone new at lunch; classroom kindness challenges; holiday card project
- **High School:** Student-led kindness campaign; peer recognition initiative; community service or holiday outreach project

Additional Considerations - Emphasize that kindness should be authentic and inclusive rather than competitive. Encourage students to recognize both large and small acts that help others feel welcomed, respected, and valued. Consider celebrating participation collectively instead of rewarding individuals so the focus remains on building community rather than earning recognition.

Unified Community Highlights

Purpose - Celebrate the impact of Unified by highlighting the friendships, leadership, events, and accomplishments that have strengthened your school community throughout the semester. Sharing these moments helps students reflect on the positive culture they have created together while encouraging continued participation in the months ahead.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Which Unified events best represent our school's growth this semester? How will students contribute photos and stories? What communication platforms will be used? How will accomplishments from all Unified components be represented?
- **Materials Needed:** Photos from Unified events; student quotes or testimonials; presentation software or slideshow platform; school social media access; bulletin board or display materials

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can collect photos, interview participants, write captions, create slideshows, present semester highlights during announcements, and help develop social media posts celebrating Unified accomplishments.

How to Implement

- **Reflect on the Semester:** Look back at Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership, Whole School Engagement, and other moments that brought students together
- **Collect Meaningful Moments:** Gather photos, student quotes, stories, milestones, and examples of friendship, leadership, and inclusion
- **Highlight the Whole Community:** Feature a variety of students, activities, and experiences rather than focusing only on major events or accomplishments
- **Share Your Unified Story:** Create a slideshow, morning show segment, social media series, newsletter feature, or other schoolwide recap
- **Celebrate and Look Ahead:** Recognize what students have built together while encouraging continued participation and connection in the new year

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Classroom photo display; favorite Unified memory wall; friendship celebration slideshow
- **Middle School:** Morning show semester recap; social media highlights; student interviews
- **High School:** Semester highlight video; Unified awards or recognition; schoolwide presentation celebrating Unified achievements

Additional Considerations - Focus on authentic moments of participation rather than only major events or accomplishments. Ensure photos represent a wide variety of students, activities, and leadership experiences across the Unified Champion Schools framework. Highlight growth, friendships, and belonging to reinforce that the strongest measure of success is the inclusive community students have created together.

Bulletin Board Feature: This Is Unified

Purpose - Celebrate the story of your school's Unified Champion Schools program by showcasing authentic moments of friendship, leadership, teamwork, and inclusion from throughout the semester. This display helps students reflect on how everyday participation has strengthened the school community while inspiring others to become involved.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**
 - Photos from Unified Sports, clubs, and school events
 - Student quotes about friendship, belonging, and inclusion
 - Semester timeline of Unified activities
 - “Unified Moments” photo highlights
 - Examples of student leadership and community involvement
- **Possible Headings:**
 - This Is Unified
 - What Unified Looks Like
 - Building Community Together
 - Moments That Matter
 - Together We Belong
 - Our Unified Story

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can collect photos, select memorable moments, write captions, organize displays, interview classmates, update the board throughout the month, and help tell the story of how Unified has impacted their school community.

Additional Considerations - Focus on authentic student experiences rather than polished displays or formal accomplishments. Include a variety of students, activities, and perspectives that represent all three components of Unified Champion Schools while highlighting the friendships and relationships that make inclusion meaningful. Encourage

students to contribute new photos and reflections throughout the month so the display continues to evolve and celebrate the many ways inclusion happens every day. The bulletin board should help viewers understand that Unified is not a single event or club—it is a culture of belonging built through shared experiences.

January - Culture Reset

Theme: New Year, New U-nified

A new year offers an opportunity to reset routines, strengthen community, and think intentionally about what meaningful inclusion looks like. This month, encourage students to move beyond the idea that inclusion simply means being welcoming or kind and begin thinking about **access**, recognizing barriers, designing opportunities so everyone can participate, and understanding that small changes to environments, communication, and activities can create greater belonging for everyone.

Primary Goal

Help students recognize that inclusion is built through intentional daily actions and leadership habits.

Awareness Activity - Acceptance & Accessibility Awareness Campaign

Participation Activity - Access in Action Challenge

Visibility Activity - Unified Builds Access Highlights

Bulletin Board Feature - Inclusion by Design

If You Only Do One Thing...Access in Action Challenge

If your school chooses just one activity this month, challenge students to put inclusion into practice by completing intentional actions that make participation easier for others. Encourage students to invite others in, communicate clearly, make space for different ways of participating, ask before offering assistance, and notice barriers that might prevent someone from fully engaging. Access in Action moves inclusion beyond simply being kind and helps students understand that belonging grows when we intentionally create opportunities for everyone to participate.

Acceptance & Accessibility Awareness

International Day of Acceptance - January 20

Purpose - Help students understand that acceptance goes beyond kindness and includes creating environments where everyone has meaningful access to participate. Through student-led messaging and awareness activities, students explore accessibility, recognize barriers to participation, and identify ways inclusive design benefits the entire school community.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What does acceptance look like *beyond* simply being kind or welcoming? What physical, social, communication, or participation barriers might students experience in our school? What examples of accessibility will be meaningful and age-appropriate for our students?
- **Materials Needed:** Morning announcement scripts; accessibility facts and examples; posters or display materials; student reflection prompts; school social media or communication platforms; short videos or other age-appropriate accessibility resources

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can develop accessibility tips, write or record morning announcements, share examples of how Unified removes barriers, identify inclusive practices already happening within their school, and create awareness messages about acceptance and accessibility. Students with and without disabilities should work together to determine which messages and examples are most relevant to their school community.

How to Implement

- **Introduce Acceptance:** Explore what it means to accept people as they are while ensuring everyone has opportunities to participate and belong
- **Build Accessibility Awareness:** Share examples of physical, communication, social, and participation barriers students may encounter
- **Highlight Inclusive Design:** Demonstrate how accessible practices can benefit many people, not only individuals with disabilities

- **Connect to Unified:** Share examples of how Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and Whole School Engagement create opportunities for meaningful participation
- **Turn Awareness Into Action:** Encourage students to notice barriers and consider changes that could make their school more accessible and inclusive

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Share simple examples of things that help everyone participate; use morning announcements to introduce acceptance and accessibility; discuss how changing a game or activity can make sure everyone can join; invite students to identify things that help them learn, play, and communicate
- **Middle School:** Feature an “Access Tip of the Week”; discuss physical, social, and communication barriers during advisory; have students identify examples of accessibility within their school; share examples of how Unified activities are designed for meaningful participation
- **High School:** Create a student-led accessibility awareness campaign; examine accessibility in school spaces, activities, communication, and events; share student reflections about what helps them participate; explore how universal and inclusive design can improve experiences for the entire school community

Additional Considerations - Avoid presenting accessibility as something provided only to people with disabilities or as a special favor that allows someone to participate. Emphasize that people experience different barriers and may need different forms of access, and that accessibility often improves environments and experiences for everyone. Whenever possible, center the perspectives of students with disabilities rather than asking others to assume what they need. Keep the focus on recognizing barriers and creating opportunities for meaningful participation rather than trying to “fix” individuals.

Access in Action Challenge

Purpose - Turn accessibility awareness into everyday action by challenging students to recognize simple ways they can make participation easier and more meaningful for others. Students practice inclusive behaviors that create space for everyone to contribute, communicate, and belong.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What everyday situations provide opportunities for students to practice inclusive behaviors? What actions are appropriate and meaningful for the age group participating? How can the challenge reinforce access without encouraging students to make assumptions about what others need? How will students reflect on or share examples of Access in Action? Would a mid-year recruitment component help create additional opportunities for participation?
- **Materials Needed:** Access in Action challenge cards or prompts; posters or promotional materials; reflection cards or worksheets; morning announcement scripts; participation trackers, if desired; recruitment materials for an optional mid-year Unified recruitment push

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can develop challenge prompts, model inclusive behaviors, encourage peers to participate, share examples of Access in Action, and help recognize inclusive practices happening throughout the school. Students can also lead a mid-year recruitment effort by inviting new athletes, partners, and student leaders to participate in Unified activities.

How to Implement

- **Introduce Access in Action:** Explain that inclusion happens when we intentionally create opportunities for everyone to participate
- **Practice Everyday Inclusion:** Challenge students to invite others to participate, explain directions clearly, make space in groups, use inclusive language, and check for understanding

- **Ask Before Helping:** Reinforce that offering support should include listening to what another person wants or needs rather than assuming
- **Notice What Works:** Encourage students to identify actions, adaptations, and practices that make participation easier for themselves and others
- **Expand Participation:** Use the challenge as an opportunity to invite new students into Unified activities, clubs, leadership roles, or sports

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Identify a barrier to participation in recess and brainstorm a change that allows everyone to participate; practice giving directions in all different ways; look at a classroom, playground, or activity space and identify something that could make participation difficult then suggest a change; choose a familiar classroom activity and brainstorm different ways student could take part
- **Middle School:** Identify barriers in common school activities; brainstorm ways more students could participate meaningfully in familiar games, projects, or school activities and implement those changes; explore how captions, visuals, written directions, demonstrations, or clear language can make information easier for more people to access; walk through a familiar school experience (lunch, an assembly, etc.) and identify one barrier and a realistic solution
- **High School:** Accessibility Audit - examine a school event, activity, club, athletic experience, or common platform for potential barriers and recommend practical improvements; review an upcoming student-led activity and intentionally build accessibility into the planning process; evaluate communication access; identify a real participation barrier within the school community, develop a possible solution, and share the recommendation with the appropriate school leaders/staff

Additional Considerations - Access in Action should focus on removing barriers rather than encouraging students to "help" people they assume need assistance. Reinforce the importance of asking, listening, and respecting individual preferences and independence. Students may identify barriers that require action from adults or school administrators; create an appropriate process for sharing those observations without promising that every suggestion can be immediately implemented. Celebrate thoughtful changes and inclusive practices rather than the number of actions completed.

Unified Builds Access Highlights

Purpose - Make accessibility visible by showing how Unified creates meaningful opportunities for students of all abilities to participate, lead, compete, contribute, and belong. Highlighting real examples helps the broader school community recognize that inclusion is not simply an idea—it is something students intentionally create through the way activities and opportunities are designed.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Where do we already see accessibility and meaningful participation within Unified? Which examples best demonstrate students removing barriers or creating access? How can we highlight students without portraying anyone as inspirational simply because they have a disability? Which platforms will reach the broader school community? How can students help identify stories worth sharing?
- **Materials Needed:** Photos and videos from Unified activities; student quotes and testimonials; morning announcement scripts; school social media or newsletter access; presentation or graphic design tools; photo permissions as required by school policy

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can identify examples of inclusive practices, collect stories and photos, interview peers, create highlight posts, write captions, and present accessibility examples during announcements or school broadcasts. Students can also highlight peers who are helping create more inclusive opportunities through leadership, teamwork, advocacy, and thoughtful problem-solving.

How to Implement

- **Identify Access in Unified:** Look for examples of students adapting, communicating, collaborating, and creating opportunities for meaningful participation
- **Tell the Story:** Use photos, student quotes, short videos, announcements, or social media to explain how an inclusive practice increased access
- **Highlight Inclusive Leadership:** Recognize students who notice barriers, listen to others, and help create environments where more people can participate

- **Show Different Forms of Access:** Feature examples from Unified Sports, clubs, leadership activities, school events, and everyday school experiences
- **Keep Access Visible:** Share examples throughout the month so accessibility becomes part of the school's ongoing conversation about inclusion

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Feature photos showing students participating together; share simple “Here’s How We Included Everyone” stories; highlight classroom or playground practices that help everyone
- **Middle School:** Create weekly “Unified in Action” accessibility highlights; feature students explaining how their Unified activities include everyone; share examples during announcements or advisory
- **High School:** Produce student-led social media features about accessibility; highlight inclusive practices within Unified Sports, clubs, and leadership; interview students about changes that helped them participate more meaningfully; showcase students leading efforts to improve access within the school

Additional Considerations - Focus highlights on the inclusive practice, barrier removed, or opportunity created rather than portraying students with disabilities as inspirational simply for participating. Include examples of different forms of accessibility and recognize that access may look different for different people. Whenever sharing an individual's experience, allow that student to have a voice in how their story is represented. The goal is to make inclusive practices visible so others begin recognizing accessibility as a shared responsibility throughout the school community.

Bulletin Board Feature: Inclusion by Design

Purpose - Help students visualize how intentional choices can remove barriers and create greater opportunities for participation. By pairing barriers with possible solutions and highlighting examples already happening through Unified, the display reinforces that accessibility is something a school community can actively build together.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**
 - Barrier → Solution examples
 - Student-identified accessibility ideas
 - Examples of how Unified removes barriers to participation
 - "Access Helps Everyone" spotlight cards
 - Inclusive practices already happening throughout the school
 - Student suggestions for creating greater access
- **Possible Headings:**
 - Inclusion By Design
 - Access Makes Participation Possible
 - Barriers We Can Remove
 - Building Access Together
 - Access Helps Everyone
 - See a Barrier. Imagine a Solution.
 - Designing a School Where Everyone Belongs

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can facilitate idea collection, identify examples of accessibility already happening within their school, create Barrier → Solution cards, design and maintain the display, and invite peers to contribute suggestions. Student leaders can also identify recurring ideas that may be appropriate to share with teachers, administrators, or other school leaders and help communicate those suggestions in a constructive, solutions-focused way.

Additional Considerations - Keep the display focused on environments, systems, communication, and opportunities rather than identifying individual students or their disabilities as barriers. Student suggestions should encourage creative problem-solving while recognizing that some accessibility needs are individual and should never be publicly shared without permission. When students identify larger structural barriers, establish an appropriate way to share those ideas with school staff rather than using the bulletin board to publicly criticize inaccessible spaces or practices. Most importantly, reinforce that accessibility is an ongoing process of listening, learning, and designing communities where more people have meaningful opportunities to participate.

February - Relationships & Connection

Theme: Building Inclusive Communities

February is a month to build understanding, leadership, and excitement for March's Week of Inclusion. By exploring what meaningful inclusion looks like, preparing students to participate, and involving Unified students in planning and promotion, schools can ensure that Week of Inclusion is more than a series of activities—it becomes an opportunity for the entire school community to understand, practice, and celebrate inclusion together.

Primary Goal

Prepare students and school community to actively participate in March's Week of Inclusion.

Awareness Activity - What Does Inclusion Look Like?

Participation Activity - Inclusion Readiness Challenge

Visibility Activity - Week of Inclusion Countdown Campaign

Bulletin Board Feature - What Inclusion Looks Like

If You Only Do One Thing...prepare for Week of Inclusion

If your school chooses just one focus this month, begin actively preparing students and staff for March's Week of Inclusion. Share what Week of Inclusion is and why it matters, begin promoting activities and opportunities to participate, and invite students into meaningful planning and leadership roles before the celebration begins. Starting early helps move Week of Inclusion beyond a collection of one-time activities and gives the school community time to understand its purpose, build excitement, and take ownership of creating a meaningful celebration of inclusion.

What Does Inclusion Look Like?

Purpose - Help students develop a shared understanding of meaningful inclusion before participating in March's Week of Inclusion. By exploring the difference between kindness, participation, inclusion, and belonging, students can better recognize what inclusive communities look and feel like and the role they play in creating them.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What does meaningful inclusion look like within our school community? How can we help students understand the difference between kindness and inclusion? Where do students already experience belonging within the school? How can Unified students share authentic examples of inclusion? Which messages will best prepare students for the Week of Inclusion?
- **Materials Needed:** Morning announcement scripts; student quotes or testimonials; inclusion facts and discussion prompts; posters or promotional materials; Week of Inclusion calendar or event information; school communication platforms

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can introduce Week of Inclusion themes, write or record awareness messages, share personal perspectives about belonging, identify examples of meaningful inclusion within their school, and help develop classroom or advisory discussion prompts. Students can also begin introducing upcoming Week of Inclusion opportunities and explain why schoolwide participation matters.

How to Implement

- **Define Inclusion:** Explore what inclusion means and how it differs from simply being friendly, kind, or physically present
- **Explore Belonging:** Encourage students to think about what helps people feel valued, connected, and able to participate meaningfully
- **Connect to Unified:** Highlight real examples of how Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and Whole School Engagement build inclusive communities
- **Center Student Voice:** Share student perspectives, quotes, stories, and examples that demonstrate what inclusion looks and feels like

- **Look Ahead to March:** Introduce Week of Inclusion and connect upcoming activities to the larger goal of building a school where everyone belongs

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Classroom discussion about what inclusion looks like; inclusion-themed read-aloud; student examples of belonging; simple inclusion morning messages
- **Middle School:** Advisory discussion about inclusion and belonging; student-created inclusion messages; Unified student reflections; inclusion scenario discussions
- **High School:** Student-led discussions about meaningful inclusion; student testimonials about belonging; inclusion awareness messaging; Unified student spotlights

Additional Considerations - Avoid reducing inclusion to kindness or friendship; those can support inclusion, but meaningful inclusion also involves access, participation, voice, leadership, and belonging. Use examples that demonstrate students with and without disabilities participating and contributing together rather than positioning one group as helping another. Allow students to define belonging from their own experiences without requiring anyone to share personal information. February should build the understanding students will need to participate meaningfully in March rather than simply promoting upcoming events.

Inclusion Readiness Challenge

Purpose - Prepare students to take an active role in Week of Inclusion by giving them meaningful opportunities to participate before March begins. Through planning, recruitment, volunteering, and practicing inclusive leadership, students move from learning about inclusion to helping create the experiences their school community will participate in.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What Week of Inclusion activities are already planned or being considered? What student roles are needed to make those activities successful? How can students participate in preparation at different levels of commitment? Which students or groups could be invited to participate who are not currently involved with Unified? Would student planning teams help distribute leadership and responsibility? How will students know what opportunities are available?
- **Materials Needed:** Week of Inclusion planning calendar; student volunteer or leadership sign-up sheets; recruitment materials; planning worksheets or checklists; promotional materials; meeting space for student planning teams; event-specific supplies as needed

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can recruit volunteers and participants, organize planning teams, help select or develop Week of Inclusion activities, assign student leadership roles, create promotional materials, and assist with event logistics. Experienced Unified leaders can also mentor students who are participating in planning or leadership for the first time.

How to Implement

- **Introduce the Challenge:** Explain that a successful Week of Inclusion begins with students actively preparing, planning, and inviting others to participate
- **Create Ways to Get Involved:** Offer different roles such as planning, promotion, recruitment, event support, activity leadership, or volunteering
- **Build Planning Teams:** Organize students around specific Week of Inclusion activities, spirit days, communications, or logistics

- **Expand Participation:** Encourage students to invite peers, bring a friend to Unified Club, and connect with other clubs, teams, classes, or student organizations
- **Prepare Student Leaders:** Give students opportunities to practice announcements, facilitate activities, review responsibilities, and prepare for the leadership roles they will hold in March

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Create Week of Inclusion invitations; help prepare activity materials; practice student leadership roles; invite classmates to participate
- **Middle School:** Help plan spirit days or activities; create promo materials; recruit classmates to participate; volunteer for Week of Inclusion roles
- **High School:** Join Week of Inclusion planning teams; recruit clubs, teams, and student groups; coordinate student volunteers; prepare to lead March activities

Additional Considerations - Provide multiple ways for students to contribute so leadership is not limited to students who are comfortable speaking publicly or taking highly visible roles. Planning should be genuinely student-led where appropriate while still providing enough adult structure to ensure activities are accessible, realistic, and aligned with school expectations. Include students with and without disabilities throughout the planning and decision-making process rather than waiting until events are finalized to ask for participation. The goal is for students to enter March already invested in Week of Inclusion because they helped build it.

Week of Inclusion Countdown

Purpose - Build schoolwide awareness and anticipation for Week of Inclusion by making upcoming opportunities visible throughout February. A student-led countdown helps students understand what is coming, why it matters, and how they can participate before March activities begin.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** When will the countdown begin? Which Week of Inclusion activities are confirmed and ready to promote? What information do students need in order to participate? Which school communication platforms can be used? How can promotion explain the purpose behind Week of Inclusion rather than focusing only on events? How will Unified students lead or contribute to the campaign?
- **Materials Needed:** Week of Inclusion event calendar; posters and signage; morning announcement scripts; school social media or communication platforms; countdown graphics; student-created videos; spirit day information; QR codes or sign-up information if applicable; photo drop opportunities for Spirit Day participation

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can design promotional materials, create countdown graphics and posts, record video invitations, present morning announcements, reveal spirit days or activities, and personally invite students and groups to participate. Students can also create "Why Inclusion Matters" features that connect promotional messaging to the larger purpose of Week of Inclusion.

How to Implement

- **Introduce What's Coming:** Announce Week of Inclusion early enough for students and staff to understand the purpose and begin planning to participate
- **Build the Countdown:** Share regular reminders, activity reveals, spirit days, student invitations, and other updates as March approaches
- **Explain the Why:** Pair event promotion with student voices and messages explaining why inclusion, belonging, and Unified matter
- **Make Participation Clear:** Tell students exactly how, when, and where they can participate, volunteer, or get involved

- **Build Momentum:** Increase the frequency and visibility of messaging as Week of Inclusion approaches so the entire school community knows something meaningful is coming

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Visual Week of Inclusion countdown; Activity or spirit day previews; student morning announcements; Week of Inclusion posters
- **Middle School:** Student-designed countdown posters; morning show promotions; student video invitations; weekly activity reveals
- **High School:** Student-led social media countdown; promotional videos; event and spirit day reveals; club and team outreach

Additional Considerations - Promotion should consistently communicate the purpose of Week of Inclusion rather than allowing it to become simply another spirit week or collection of themed activities. Make event information clear, accessible, and available through multiple communication methods so students know how to participate. Use authentic student voices and images whenever possible and represent students with and without disabilities as shared leaders of the initiative. The countdown should build excitement while reinforcing that Week of Inclusion is an opportunity to strengthen practices the school should carry throughout the year.

Bulletin Board Feature: What Inclusion Looks Like

Purpose - Help students understand meaningful inclusion before, during, and after the Week of Inclusion by showing concrete examples of belonging, participation, shared leadership, and community. The display also serves as a central location for promoting Unified activities and showing students how they can become involved.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**
 - Real examples of inclusive actions and practices
 - Photos of students participating together in Unified activities
 - Student quotes about inclusion and belonging
 - Week of Inclusion event previews
 - Student leadership and volunteer opportunities
 - Ways students can participate in March
 - Week of Inclusion Spirit Days and photos
- **Possible Headings:**
 - What Inclusion Looks Like
 - This Is What Belonging Looks Like
 - Inclusion Starts With Us
 - Building an Inclusive Community
 - See Inclusion. Build Inclusion.
 - Get Ready for Week of Inclusion
 - Inclusion Is More Than a Week

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can help design and maintain the board, select photos and examples that represent meaningful inclusion, contribute quotes or reflections, promote upcoming Week of Inclusion events, update countdown information, and recruit students for March activities and leadership roles. Students can also invite classmates to contribute examples of inclusion they notice throughout the school and use those examples to keep the display active throughout February.

Additional Considerations - Use the display to show what inclusion means rather than relying primarily on definitions or inspirational statements. Feature students with and

without disabilities participating, leading, contributing, and building relationships together, and avoid imagery that frames inclusion as one group helping or doing something for another. Keep Week of Inclusion information current and provide clear ways for students to participate as activities are finalized. Most importantly, connect the March celebration to the larger message that inclusion is something a school community intentionally builds throughout the entire year.

March - Advocacy & Inclusion

Theme: Choose to Include

March is an opportunity to turn awareness into action and make inclusion visible throughout the school community. Through student advocacy, schoolwide

participation, and Week of Inclusion, students are empowered to use their voices, lead alongside their peers, and make intentional choices that strengthen belonging. This month reinforces that inclusion is not simply something we celebrate, it is something we actively choose and create together.

Primary Goal

Empower students to actively promote inclusion and advocate for school communities where everyone belongs.

Awareness Activity - Spread the Word: Inclusion Campaign

Participation Activity - Week of Inclusion Spirit Days

Visibility Activity - Unified Inclusion Campaign

Bulletin Board Feature - Choose to Include

If You Only Do One Thing...Week of Inclusion

If your school chooses just one initiative this month, bring students and staff together for a Week of Inclusion that combines awareness, participation, student leadership, and visible opportunities to choose inclusion. Whether your school plans a full week of activities or starts with a smaller series of meaningful experiences, focus on creating opportunities for students with and without disabilities to participate and lead together. Week of Inclusion should not be the one week each year when your school is inclusive; it should help students experience, practice, and strengthen the kind of school community you want to build every day.

Spread the Word: Inclusion Campaign

Purpose - Use the Spread the Word Inclusion campaign and other March disability awareness opportunities to encourage students to think about their role in creating inclusive

communities. Student-led messaging helps move awareness beyond simply learning about disability and toward advocacy, action, and meaningful inclusion.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What inclusion messages will be most meaningful for our school community? How will we connect Spread the Word: Inclusion to Week of Inclusion? How can student voices lead the campaign? Which March awareness dates or themes will our school recognize? What communication platforms can help reach the entire school?
- **Materials Needed:** Morning announcement scripts; Spread the Word: Inclusion resources; posters and display materials; disability awareness facts; student quotes or reflections; video or presentation materials; school communication and social media platforms

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can write and present announcements, create awareness materials, share personal Unified experiences, develop advocacy messages, and help select disability inclusion facts and resources to share. Unified athletes and partners can work together to encourage their peers to move from simply supporting inclusion to actively choosing and advocating for it.

How to Implement

- **Introduce the Campaign:** Share the purpose of Spread the Word Inclusion and connect it to your school's Week of Inclusion
- **Build Awareness:** Share disability inclusion facts, myth-versus-fact messages, student stories, and other educational content
- **Elevate Student Voice:** Feature student perspectives about belonging, advocacy, and why inclusion matters
- **Connect Awareness to Action:** Encourage students to identify choices they can make to create greater inclusion in their school
- **Recognize March Milestones:** Incorporate opportunities such as Spread the Word Day and World Down Syndrome Day into the broader inclusion campaign

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Inclusion-themed morning announcements; disability awareness facts; student-created inclusion posters; classroom inclusion discussions
- **Middle School:** Myth-versus-fact campaign; student inclusion messages; advisory discussions; Spread the Word activities
- **High School:** Student-led awareness campaign; advocacy videos or testimonials; social media inclusion messages; student-led discussions or presentations

Additional Considerations - Keep messaging focused on acceptance, belonging, advocacy, and meaningful inclusion rather than pity, charity, or disability simulations. Whenever possible, include the voices and perspectives of people with disabilities and allow students with disabilities to determine how and whether they want to share their experiences. March awareness dates can provide useful opportunities for education, but they should connect to the broader goal of building an inclusive school culture. Reinforce that awareness is most meaningful when it leads to action.

Week of Inclusion Spirit Days

Purpose - Engage the entire school community in a student-led celebration that provides multiple opportunities to learn about, practice, and actively choose inclusion. Week of

Inclusion brings awareness, participation, Unified activities, and student leadership together in a highly visible schoolwide experience.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Which activities were selected during February planning? How will students and staff participate throughout the week? What roles will Unified students hold? How will activities represent awareness, participation, and meaningful inclusion? Are activities accessible to students with a variety of abilities and needs? How will participation be promoted and celebrated?
- **Materials Needed:** Week of Inclusion schedule; spirit day materials; inclusion pledge materials; posters and signage; activity and game supplies; unified event materials; student leader and volunteer assignments; school communication platforms

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can lead activities, welcome participants, facilitate games and challenges, present announcements, recruit peers, coordinate volunteers, and help manage events throughout the week. Students should have meaningful ownership of the celebration and opportunities to lead in ways that reflect different strengths, interests, and leadership styles.

How to Implement

- **Launch the Week:** Introduce the purpose, schedule, and opportunities for students and staff to participate
- **Create Daily Opportunities:** Offer spirit days, challenges, awareness activities, Unified events, or other ways to engage throughout the week
- **Put Students in the Lead:** Give Unified students meaningful roles facilitating activities, communicating messages, and engaging their peers
- **Engage the Whole School:** Invite classrooms, clubs, teams, staff, and other student organizations to participate
- **Celebrate Inclusion in Action:** Highlight participation and reinforce how the week's activities connect to everyday inclusion and belonging

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Inclusion Spirit Days; Rock Your Socks Day; Inclusive games; classroom inclusion pledge
- **Middle School:** Inclusion Spirit Days; unified trivia; Inclusion pledge campaign; unified lunch activities
- **High School:** Inclusion Spirit Days; Fans in the Stands; Unified game day; student-led inclusion activities; schoolwide pledge campaign

Additional Considerations - Week of Inclusion should provide multiple ways to participate rather than relying on one large event or activity. Ensure that activities themselves model the inclusion the week is intended to promote by considering accessibility, meaningful participation, and student voice throughout implementation. Avoid activities that simulate disability or position students with disabilities as the focus of charity or inspiration. Most importantly, connect the celebration to everyday school culture so inclusion does not end when the week does.

Unified Inclusion Campaign

Purpose - Make inclusion highly visible throughout Week of Inclusion by sharing student voices, participation, activities, and examples of Unified in action. Consistent schoolwide

communication builds momentum while showing the broader community what meaningful inclusion looks like.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Which Week of Inclusion moments should be highlighted? Who will capture photos, videos, and student reflections? Which communication platforms will be used? How can students help tell the story of the week? How will messaging remain focused on inclusion rather than simply event promotion?
- **Materials Needed:** Photos and videos; student quotes and testimonials; morning announcement scripts; school social media access; school newsletter or website access; graphic design or presentation tools; photo permissions as required

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can create videos, write and present daily updates, capture event photos, interview participants, develop social media content, and highlight examples of inclusion throughout the week. Students can also help identify moments that demonstrate meaningful participation, leadership, friendship, advocacy, and belonging.

How to Implement

- **Share Daily Messages:** Use announcements, videos, social media, and school communications to keep inclusion visible throughout the week
- **Capture Participation:** Document spirit days, activities, Unified events, student leadership, and everyday moments of inclusion
- **Feature Student Voice:** Share quotes, reflections, interviews, and messages from students with and without disabilities
- **Highlight Inclusion in Action:** Focus on examples that demonstrate participation, leadership, friendship, advocacy, and belonging
- **Tell the Week's Story:** Use the campaign to create a collective picture of how the school community chose inclusion

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Daily inclusion announcements; Week of Inclusion photo highlights; student inclusion messages; classroom participation displays
- **Middle School:** Morning show updates; student video messages; daily photo highlights; Week of Inclusion social media posts
- **High School:** Student-led social media campaign; daily recap videos; student interviews; Unified event highlights

Additional Considerations - Visibility should celebrate shared participation rather than portraying students with disabilities as recipients of inclusion. Feature students with and without disabilities participating and leading together, and represent different activities, roles, and experiences throughout the week. Follow school policies for student photos, videos, and social media, and ensure students have a voice in how their experiences are represented. Use the campaign to demonstrate that inclusion is part of the school's identity rather than something reserved for one week.

Bulletin Board Feature:
Choose to Include
Small choices. Strong communities.

Purpose - Capture how students actively chose inclusion throughout Week of Inclusion by showcasing participation, leadership, advocacy, and meaningful moments from across the school. The display creates a visual record of the week while reinforcing that the choices students practiced can continue throughout the year.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**
 - Week of Inclusion photos
 - Spirit day and activity highlights
 - Inclusion pledge results
 - Student leadership moments
 - Unified event highlights
 - Student quotes about inclusion
 - Examples of inclusion in action
- **Possible Headings:**
 - Choose Inclusion
 - How We Chose Inclusion
 - Inclusion in Action
 - This Is What Inclusion Looks Like
 - We Choose to Include
 - More Than a Week

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can collect and select photos, write captions, track participation, highlight student leaders, gather quotes and reflections, and design and maintain the display throughout March. Students can also identify examples of inclusion beyond planned Week of Inclusion activities, helping demonstrate how the week's message carries into everyday school life.

Additional Considerations - Focus the display on authentic participation and shared experiences rather than simply documenting how many activities were completed. Include students with and without disabilities participating and leading together, and feature different types of involvement so students can see that there are many ways to choose inclusion. Update the board during and after Week of Inclusion so it evolves from promotion into a visual record of the school's impact. Consider leaving some elements displayed beyond

March as a reminder that the choices practiced during Week of Inclusion should continue throughout the school year.

April - Acceptance & Understanding

Theme: Unified Acceptance

April creates space for students to deepen their understanding of disability, neurodiversity, and the many ways people think, communicate, learn, and experience the world. By centering acceptance, authentic perspectives, and opportunities to listen and learn from others, schools can move beyond awareness toward a culture

that respects disability identity, values individual differences, and recognizes that belonging should never require someone to change or hide who they are.

Primary Goal

Encourage students to deepen understanding of neurodiversity, disability identity, and inclusive school communities through listening and reflection.

Awareness Activity - Autism Acceptance & Neurodiversity Campaign

Participation Activity - Unified Listening & Learning

Visibility Activity - Unified Voices Campaign

Bulletin Board Feature - Listening to Understand

If You Only Do One Thing...student voice activity

If your school chooses just one activity this month, create an opportunity for students to listen to perspectives they may not regularly hear through a panel, discussion, interview, video, podcast, or reading. Center authentic voices and encourage students to consider how what they learn can shape the way they communicate, include others, and contribute to their school community. The goal is to build a willingness to listen, learn, and create communities where people can belong as themselves.

Autism Acceptance & Neurodiversity Campaign

Purpose - Build understanding of autism, neurodiversity, and disability identity through an acceptance-based, strengths-focused approach. Encourage students to recognize different ways of thinking, communicating, learning, and experiencing the world as part of human diversity while exploring practices that create more inclusive communities.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What do students currently understand about autism and neurodiversity? How can we move messaging from awareness toward acceptance and understanding? Are our resources informed by autistic and disabled perspectives? How can information reflect the diversity of experiences within the autism and disability communities? What misconceptions or stereotypes could this campaign help address?
- **Materials Needed:** Neurodiversity facts and resources; morning announcement scripts; student-created educational materials; quotes or resources from autistic and disabled advocates; posters or display materials; videos, articles, or other age-appropriate resources; school communication platforms

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can research and share neurodiversity information, create educational materials, develop morning announcements, highlight autistic and disabled advocates, and identify examples of inclusive practices within their school. Students can also help ensure messaging focuses on acceptance, strengths, identity, and belonging rather than stereotypes or deficit-based perspectives.

How to Implement

- **Introduce Neurodiversity:** Explore how people think, learn, communicate, process information, and experience the world in different ways
- **Move Toward Acceptance:** Discuss the difference between knowing that a disability exists and creating communities where disabled people are respected and valued
- **Challenge Misconceptions:** Use facts, student-created materials, and authentic perspectives to address stereotypes about autism and disability
- **Elevate Disabled Voices:** Share perspectives and resources created by autistic people and other people with disabilities
- **Connect to School Culture:** Highlight communication, environmental, and social practices that allow more students to participate authentically and belong

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Neurodiversity-themed read-aloud; different ways we learn discussion; acceptance morning messages; student-created acceptance posters

- **Middle School:** Neurodiversity facts and myths; autistic advocate spotlights; inclusive communication activities; advisory discussions about acceptance
- **High School:** Disability identity discussions; student-led neurodiversity campaign; autistic self-advocate features; analysis of disability stereotypes

Additional Considerations - Autism and neurodiversity messaging should reflect the diversity of experiences within these communities and avoid presenting one person's perspective as universal. Whenever possible, prioritize resources created by autistic and disabled people and respect individual preferences regarding identity-first or person-first language. Avoid messaging that focuses primarily on deficits, cures, or making neurodivergent people appear or behave more like their peers. The goal is understanding and acceptance—not speaking for people whose voices should be part of the conversation.

Unified Listening & Learning

Purpose - Create opportunities for students to actively listen to, learn from, and engage with perspectives and experiences that may differ from their own. Through discussion, reflection, and shared learning, students practice curiosity and respectful communication while developing a deeper understanding of disability, identity, and inclusion.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Whose perspectives and experiences will students have an opportunity to hear? How will we create a respectful environment for listening and discussion? Are students with disabilities choosing whether and how they share personal experiences? What format is most appropriate for our students and school community? How will students reflect on what they learn?
- **Materials Needed:** Discussion or reflection prompts; Videos, podcasts, articles, or books; Panel or guest speaker materials, if applicable; Advisory or classroom activity guides; Reflection sheets; Presentation materials; Accessibility supports as needed

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can help select discussion topics and resources, facilitate conversations, participate in panels, introduce speakers or materials, and develop reflection questions. Students who choose to share personal experiences should have control over what they share, while other student leaders can practice listening, asking thoughtful questions, and helping create respectful spaces for conversation.

How to Implement

- **Choose a Learning Experience:** Select a panel, discussion, video, podcast, reading, workshop, or other activity appropriate for your students
- **Prepare to Listen:** Establish expectations for respectful listening, curiosity, and discussion before beginning
- **Center Authentic Perspectives:** Prioritize first-person experiences and resources created by people with disabilities
- **Create Space for Reflection:** Give students opportunities to consider what they learned, what challenged their thinking, and what questions remain
- **Connect Learning to Inclusion:** Encourage students to identify how greater understanding can influence their own communication, choices, and school community

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Inclusive read-aloud and discussion; Student listening circle; Video and classroom reflection; Different ways we communicate activity

- **Middle School:** Student panel or discussion; Podcast or video reflection; Advisory listening activity; Inclusive communication workshop
- **High School:** Student-led panel discussion; Disability identity conversation; Podcast or media discussion group; Guest speaker or advocate presentation

Additional Considerations - No student should be expected to educate others about a disability or disclose personal information simply because they have lived experience. Participation in panels, storytelling, or personal reflection should always be voluntary and students should have meaningful control over what they share. Avoid disability simulations, which can oversimplify disability experiences and reinforce misconceptions rather than build authentic understanding. Whenever possible, create opportunities to learn directly from disabled people through their writing, speaking, advocacy, and other self-represented perspectives.

Unified Voices Campaign

Purpose - Center authentic student voices and lived experiences by creating opportunities for students to share perspectives on inclusion, identity, belonging, and Unified. The campaign reinforces the importance of listening to people rather than speaking for them while demonstrating that every school community includes many different experiences and perspectives.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Whose voices and perspectives are currently represented in our school? How can students choose whether and how they participate? What questions or prompts will encourage meaningful reflection? Which platforms can amplify student voices effectively? How will we avoid tokenizing individual students or asking them to represent an entire group?
- **Materials Needed:** Student reflection prompts; Interview questions; Video or audio recording tools; School social media or communication platforms; Morning show or announcement access; Photo and quote templates; Appropriate student permissions

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can conduct interviews, develop reflection prompts, create videos or posts, share their own experiences when they choose, and identify inclusive practices worth highlighting. Students with and without disabilities can collaborate to create content while ensuring individuals retain ownership over how their stories and perspectives are represented.

How to Implement

- **Invite Student Voice:** Offer students multiple ways to share perspectives through quotes, interviews, writing, audio, video, or artwork
- **Ask Meaningful Questions:** Use prompts about belonging, identity, inclusion, communication, leadership, and school experiences
- **Center Authentic Experiences:** Allow students to speak from their own perspectives without expecting them to represent an entire community
- **Amplify Student Perspectives:** Share selected content through announcements, social media, newsletters, displays, or school broadcasts
- **Listen and Learn:** Encourage the school community to consider what student voices reveal about current strengths and opportunities for greater inclusion

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Student belonging quotes; classroom interviews; inclusion artwork; morning message features

- **Middle School:** Student reflection campaign; Unified student interviews; morning show spotlights; inclusion quote series
- **High School:** Student-produced video series; athlete leadership stories; student interviews; social media voice campaign

Additional Considerations - Participation should always be voluntary, particularly when students are discussing disability, identity, or personal experiences. Avoid positioning one student as the representative of an entire disability or identity group, and give students an opportunity to review how their words will be shared. Include a range of perspectives and forms of communication rather than defining "student voice" only as public speaking or written quotations. Most importantly, treat student voice as something to listen and respond to—not simply content to display.

Bulletin Board Feature: Listening to Understand

Every voice adds to our understanding

Purpose - Create a space that centers perspectives, experiences, and authentic voices while encouraging the school community to listen with curiosity and respect. By combining student reflections, disabled advocates' perspectives, neurodiversity information, and

practical inclusion strategies, the display reinforces that understanding begins when we make space for people to speak for themselves.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**
 - Quotes from disabled advocates and self-advocates
 - Student reflections about inclusion and belonging
 - Neurodiversity facts and perspectives
 - Inclusive communication tips
 - Examples of inclusive practices within the school
 - Advocate spotlight cards
- **Possible Headings:**
 - Listening to Understand
 - Every Voice Matters
 - Listen. Learn. Include.
 - Perspectives Worth Hearing
 - Nothing About Us Without Us
 - Understanding Starts With Listening

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can select quotes and resources, research disabled advocates, collect student reflections, create advocate spotlight cards, and design and maintain the display. Students can also develop prompts that invite peers to reflect on what they have learned and identify perspectives that have helped them think differently about disability, neurodiversity, acceptance, and inclusion.

Additional Considerations - Prioritize first-person perspectives and resources created by people with disabilities rather than relying primarily on others to explain disability experiences. Include a range of disabilities, communication styles, identities, and perspectives while recognizing that no individual can speak for an entire community. Students should never be expected to disclose a disability or personal experience for the display, and any personal contributions should be voluntary. Use the board as an opportunity to encourage listening and learning rather than presenting disabled people's experiences primarily as inspirational stories.

May - Giving Back

Theme: Unified in Action

May is a time to celebrate the participation, leadership, relationships, and schoolwide impact that students have built through Unified throughout the year. By reflecting on progress, recognizing meaningful contributions, and bringing the school community together through inclusive events, students can see how their individual actions have contributed to something larger, and how they can continue building inclusion beyond this school year.

Primary Goal

Celebrate the impact of Unified while encouraging students to continue building inclusive school communities through participation and leadership.

Awareness Activity - The Impact of Unified

Participation Activity - Unified Celebration Events

Visibility Activity - Unified Recognition Campaign

Bulletin Board Feature - The Year in Action

If You Only Do One Thing...Celebrate Unified!

If your school chooses just one activity this month, bring students together for a visible Unified event that celebrates participation, leadership, and community. Whether it's a Unified Field Day, game, Fans in the Stands event, school celebration, or SONJ community event, create an opportunity for students with and without disabilities to participate and lead together. Use the experience to celebrate what students have built throughout the year and remind the school community that Unified is strongest when everyone has a role in creating it.

The Impact of Unified

Purpose - Help students recognize how Unified participation, leadership, and inclusive practices have shaped their school community throughout the year. By reflecting on growth and sharing meaningful moments, schools can demonstrate that Unified's impact extends beyond individual activities or events.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What growth or accomplishments should we highlight from this year? What participation data or milestones help tell our story? Which student experiences demonstrate Unified's impact? How has student leadership grown throughout the year? How can students help identify the moments that mattered most?
- **Materials Needed:** Participation data and milestones; photos from Unified activities and events; student quotes or reflections; event highlights; morning announcement materials; presentation or video tools; school communication platforms

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can identify meaningful moments from the year, share impact stories, present participation statistics, reflect on their leadership experiences, and help communicate how Unified has influenced their school community. Athletes and partners can work together to tell the story of the year from their perspectives and identify accomplishments that may not be captured through numbers alone.

How to Implement

- **Reflect on the Year:** Identify meaningful activities, accomplishments, milestones, and moments from throughout the school year
- **Share the Impact:** Highlight participation, growth, student leadership, relationships, and examples of schoolwide inclusion
- **Center Student Experiences:** Use student quotes, reflections, stories, and perspectives to demonstrate what Unified has meant to participants
- **Celebrate Growth:** Recognize progress in participation, leadership, visibility, and school culture
- **Look Beyond the Numbers:** Pair participation data with stories that demonstrate the relationships and experiences behind the statistics

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Unified year-in-review; favorite Unified moments; student belonging reflections; participation highlights
- **Middle School:** Student impact stories; Unified milestone highlights; leadership reflections; year-in-review presentation

- **High School:** Student leadership reflections; Unified impact presentation; participation and growth highlights; senior reflections

Additional Considerations - Impact does not need to be measured only through participation numbers, awards, or large-scale accomplishments. Include stories about relationships, leadership growth, increased participation, new opportunities, and meaningful changes students noticed within their school community. Celebrate contributions from students with and without disabilities and recognize different forms of participation and leadership. Reflection should help students understand that the year's impact was created collectively.

Unified Celebration Events

Purpose - Bring students and the broader school community together through inclusive events that celebrate participation, relationships, and the impact of Unified. These experiences provide an opportunity to finish the year with students actively participating alongside one another rather than simply recognizing accomplishments from a distance.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What type of celebration best fits our school community? How can students with and without disabilities participate meaningfully? Which existing school or SONJ opportunities could be incorporated? How will Unified students help lead the event? How can we make the celebration welcoming to the broader school community?
- **Materials Needed:** Event-specific supplies; promotional materials; registration materials, if needed; team or participant lists; signage and decorations; volunteer assignments; recognition materials, if appropriate

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can help select and plan celebration activities, recruit participants, organize teams, promote events, welcome attendees, and lead activities. Students can also help connect the event to the year's larger Unified experience by sharing highlights, recognizing peers, and encouraging participation from across the school community.

How to Implement

- **Choose Your Celebration:** Select a Unified Field Day, game day, school celebration, Fans in the Stands event, or SONJ community event
- **Invite Broad Participation:** Engage students, staff, families, clubs, teams, and other members of the school community
- **Put Students in the Lead:** Give Unified students meaningful roles in planning, promotion, organization, and event leadership
- **Celebrate Together:** Focus on shared participation and community rather than separating recognition from the experience
- **Connect to the Year:** Use the event to recognize the relationships, leadership, and inclusion students have built throughout the school year

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Unified Field Day; inclusive game day; schoolwide celebration; Unified activity stations
- **Middle School:** Unified Field Day; end-of-year game day; Fans in the Stands event; WalkSONJ Team

- **High School:** Unified game or tournament; Fans in the Stands celebration; Lincoln Tunnel Challenge or WalkSONJ Team; End-of-year Unified event or celebration

Additional Considerations - Choose an event that is realistic for your school's schedule, resources, and existing Unified programming rather than feeling pressure to add a large new event at the end of the year. Design activities so students with and without disabilities participate meaningfully together and have multiple ways to contribute. SONJ events can provide an additional opportunity for participation, but school-based celebrations can be equally meaningful. Keep the emphasis on community, shared experiences, and celebrating what students have built together.

Unified Recognition Campaign

Purpose - Recognize the students, teams, leaders, and school community members who contributed to Unified throughout the year. Celebration helps make student contributions visible while reinforcing that Unified succeeds because many people participate, lead, support, and show up in different ways.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Who contributed to Unified this year? What types of participation and leadership should be recognized? How will we ensure recognition extends beyond the most visible students? Are there graduating seniors or transitioning leaders to highlight? What platforms can we use to celebrate students and accomplishments?
- **Materials Needed:** Student and team information; photos; student quotes or reflections; recognition certificates or materials; morning announcement scripts; social media or newsletter access; video or presentation tools

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can nominate and recognize peers, create celebration materials, develop senior spotlights, write announcements, share stories, and help produce end-of-year recap content. Students can also identify behind-the-scenes contributions and meaningful moments that adults may not have noticed.

How to Implement

- **Recognize Many Contributions:** Celebrate athletes, partners, leaders, volunteers, supporters, teams, and other participants
- **Highlight Different Forms of Leadership:** Recognize students who organized, encouraged, advocated, participated, supported, and helped others belong
- **Share Student Stories:** Use announcements, spotlights, videos, social media, or school communications to feature meaningful contributions
- **Celebrate Seniors and Leaders:** Recognize graduating students and others completing significant Unified leadership roles
- **Thank the Community:** Acknowledge staff, families, volunteers, and school partners who helped create opportunities throughout the year

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Student recognition announcements; Unified appreciation certificates; classroom or team spotlights; year-end celebration messages
- **Middle School:** Unified student spotlights; leadership recognition; team appreciation; year-end recap video

- **High School:** Senior Unified spotlight; athlete and partner recognition; student leadership awards; end-of-year recap campaign

Additional Considerations - Recognition should reflect the many ways students contribute rather than focusing only on athletic achievement, popularity, or formal leadership positions. Avoid creating unnecessary distinctions between athletes and partners or framing one group's participation as service to another. Include quieter contributions, growth, consistency, teamwork, advocacy, and behind-the-scenes leadership alongside highly visible accomplishments. Recognition should reinforce that Unified is something students build together.

Bulletin Board Feature:

The Year in Action

Look what we built...together!

Purpose - Create a visual celebration of Unified participation, leadership, relationships, and growth throughout the school year. The display helps students see individual events and experiences as part of a larger story of how their school community has grown through Unified.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**

- Photos from Unified events and sports
- Participation milestones
- Student leadership highlights
- Team accomplishments
- Schoolwide inclusion moments
- Student quotes and reflections
- Significant moments from throughout the year

- **Possible Headings:**

- The Year in Action
- Where We Showed Up
- How We Led
- What We Built Together
- Our Unified Year
- Unified: Year in Review

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can select photos and milestones, write captions, identify meaningful moments, design the display, and help determine which stories best represent the year. Athletes and partners can work together to make sure the board captures not only major events but also relationships, everyday moments, student leadership, and experiences that mattered to participants.

Additional Considerations - Make the display representative of the entire Unified experience rather than simply a collection of event photos or athletic accomplishments. Include students with and without disabilities in a variety of roles and highlight participation, leadership, relationships, advocacy, and schoolwide involvement. Invite students to identify moments they believe deserve to be remembered, including smaller experiences adults may have overlooked. The finished display should tell the story of what the school community built together, not simply what the program accomplished.

June - Leadership & Legacy

Theme: Building What's Next

June is about carrying Unified forward. As the school year ends, students can celebrate the leaders who have helped shape their Unified community while intentionally preparing new students to step into leadership, strengthen existing programs, and bring new ideas into the year ahead. By creating opportunities for mentorship, transition, and goal setting, schools can ensure that Unified continues to grow from one generation of student leaders to the next.

Primary Goal

Ensure the continued growth of Unified by developing future leaders and preparing for next school year.

Awareness Activity - The Future of Unified

Participation Activity - Leadership Transition Activities

Visibility Activity - Meet the Next Generation of Unified Leaders

Bulletin Board Feature - The Next Chapter

If You Only Do One Thing...Passing the torch

If your school chooses just one activity this month, bring current and emerging Unified leaders together to recognize what has been built and intentionally prepare for what comes next. Give experienced leaders an opportunity to share what they have learned, while inviting younger students to step into new roles, set goals, and begin shaping the next school year. The strongest legacy Unified leaders can leave is creating opportunities for someone else to lead next.

The Future of Unified

Purpose - Help students understand that the continued strength of Unified depends on new students stepping into opportunities to participate, contribute, and lead. Highlight leadership pathways and future opportunities so students can begin to see themselves as part of what comes next.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What leadership opportunities will be available next year? Which graduating or transitioning students should be recognized? Who are potential

emerging leaders? How can current leaders encourage other students to become involved? What upcoming Unified opportunities can we introduce before summer?

- **Materials Needed:** Leadership pathway information; photos of current student leaders; senior or graduating student reflections; information about next year's opportunities; morning announcement materials; recruitment or interest forms; school communication platforms

Student Leadership Opportunities - Current Unified leaders can share their experiences, introduce leadership opportunities, encourage younger students to become involved, and offer advice about getting started. Graduating students can reflect on what they have learned while emerging leaders can begin sharing their ideas and goals for the future.

How to Implement

- **Share the Unified Journey:** Highlight how student participation and leadership have helped Unified grow
- **Introduce Leadership Pathways:** Show students the different ways they can participate, contribute, and take on greater responsibility
- **Pass Along Experience:** Invite current leaders to share lessons, advice, and encouragement with younger students
- **Look Ahead:** Introduce upcoming programs, activities, leadership roles, and opportunities for the next school year
- **Invite the Next Generation:** Encourage students who may not currently see themselves as leaders to consider taking a next step

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Student leadership spotlights; next-year Unified opportunities; advice from older students; future leader messages
- **Middle School:** Leadership pathway highlights; student leader reflections; emerging leader spotlights; next-year opportunities
- **High School:** Senior leadership reflections; leadership pathway campaign; alumni or graduate spotlights; next-year leadership opportunities

Additional Considerations - Present leadership as something students can develop rather than a quality that only certain students naturally possess. Highlight different leadership styles and pathways so students can see opportunities beyond formal officer positions or public-facing roles. Include students with and without disabilities as current and future leaders throughout Unified. The goal is to help students recognize that the future of Unified belongs to everyone willing to contribute to it.

Leadership Transition Activities

Purpose - Create an intentional process for current student leaders to pass knowledge, responsibilities, and experience to the students who will carry Unified forward. Transition activities help schools preserve momentum while giving emerging leaders opportunities to develop confidence, ownership, and direction for the coming year.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Which student leadership roles need to transition? What information or experience should current leaders pass along? Which students are

interested in taking on greater responsibility? What decisions can incoming leaders begin making now? What goals should students establish for next year?

- **Materials Needed:** Leadership role descriptions; transition or mentorship materials; leadership interest forms or applications; planning worksheets; goal-setting materials; next-year calendar, if available; meeting space

Student Leadership Opportunities - Current leaders can mentor younger students, share responsibilities and lessons learned, help identify emerging leaders, and support leadership transitions. Incoming leaders can participate in planning meetings, set goals, learn new responsibilities, and begin shaping priorities for the next school year.

How to Implement

- **Identify Emerging Leaders:** Invite students interested in taking on new or expanded roles
- **Create Leadership Connections:** Pair experienced leaders with students who can learn from their knowledge and experience
- **Transfer Responsibilities:** Review important roles, routines, resources, and expectations for the coming year
- **Plan What's Next:** Give incoming leaders opportunities to identify priorities, activities, and goals for next year
- **Build Early Ownership:** Allow future leaders to make meaningful decisions before the current school year ends

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Older-to-younger student mentorship; future leader interest activity; next-year idea sharing; student goal setting
- **Middle School:** Leadership interest forms; peer mentorship; next-year planning meeting; emerging leader roles
- **High School:** Officer elections or applications; senior-to-underclassman mentorship; leadership transition meeting; next-year goal setting

Additional Considerations - Leadership transitions should create opportunities rather than simply replacing one group of students with another. Avoid relying exclusively on

elections or popularity-based processes when identifying future leaders; consider interest, commitment, growth, different strengths, and willingness to contribute. Provide meaningful leadership opportunities for athletes and partners alike. Whenever possible, complete transitions before summer so students return knowing they have a role and a sense of ownership in what comes next.

Meet the Next Generation of Unified Leaders

Purpose - Introduce and celebrate the students who will help carry Unified forward into the next school year. Making emerging leadership visible builds confidence, creates accountability, and helps the school community recognize that Unified's future is already being built.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** Which incoming or emerging leaders should be introduced? How can we highlight different types of leadership? What future goals or

ideas can students share? Which school platforms can introduce next year's leaders?
How can graduating leaders participate in welcoming the next generation?

- **Materials Needed:** Student photos; leadership profiles or spotlight templates; student quotes; morning announcement materials; school social media or newsletter access; next-year Unified information

Student Leadership Opportunities - Incoming leaders can introduce themselves, share why Unified matters to them, and identify goals or ideas they hope to pursue next year. Current leaders can help create spotlights, introduce emerging leaders, and publicly pass leadership responsibilities forward.

How to Implement

- **Introduce Emerging Leaders:** Highlight students stepping into new roles or greater responsibilities
- **Share Their Vision:** Give incoming leaders opportunities to share ideas, goals, and hopes for the coming year
- **Recognize Leadership Growth:** Celebrate students who have developed as leaders throughout their Unified experience
- **Connect Leadership Generations:** Feature current and incoming leaders together when possible
- **Build Momentum:** Use leadership spotlights to generate interest in next year's Unified opportunities

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Future leader spotlights; student goal cards; unified leadership announcements; next-year participation invitations
- **Middle School:** Emerging leader features; incoming leadership introductions; student goal spotlights; next-year recruitment messages
- **High School:** Incoming officer introductions; senior-to-new-leader features; leadership transition spotlights; next-year vision statements

Additional Considerations - Avoid presenting future leadership as limited to students holding formal titles. Highlight students taking on different responsibilities and demonstrate that leadership can happen through advocacy, organization, encouragement, communication, service, or consistent participation. Include students with and without disabilities in visible leadership roles and allow students to describe their own goals and leadership styles. The campaign should leave the school community looking forward rather than simply looking back.

Bulletin Board Feature:

The Next Chapter

What you help build next?

Purpose - Shift the end-of-year focus from what Unified has accomplished to what students will build next. The display connects the experience and wisdom of current leaders with emerging leadership, future goals, and opportunities for students to become part of Unified's next chapter.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**
 - Incoming and emerging Unified leaders
 - Goals and ideas for next year
 - Advice from graduating students
 - Leadership pathways and opportunities
 - Summer or upcoming Unified opportunities
 - Invitations for students to become involved
- **Possible Headings:**
 - The Next Chapter
 - Who's Leading Next?
 - What's Next for Unified?
 - Passing It Forward
 - Our Next Chapter Starts Here
 - What Will You Help Build?

Student Leadership Opportunities - Current and incoming Unified leaders can design the display together, contribute advice and goals, introduce future leaders, and identify opportunities for students to become involved next year. Graduating students can leave messages for future leaders while younger students contribute ideas about what they hope to build, strengthen, or try next.

Additional Considerations - Keep this display intentionally future-focused so it does not duplicate May's year-in-review celebration. Graduating students can be included through advice, lessons learned, and leadership handoffs, but the primary emphasis should be on the students and opportunities that come next. Highlight multiple leadership pathways rather than only formal positions and ensure athletes and partners are represented as future leaders. The display should leave students with the message that Unified's next chapter is not already written—they have an opportunity to help shape it.

Additional Activity

Unified Recognition & Leadership

The Celebration

Purpose - Recognize students and school community members whose participation, leadership, advocacy, and service have strengthened Unified while celebrating the transition to the next generation of leaders. Recognition can honor meaningful contributions without making leadership feel competitive or limited to formal positions.

Recognition Ideas

- **Possible Awards:**

- **Inclusion Champion Award:** Consistently promotes inclusion, belonging, and respect
- **Unified Leader Award:** Demonstrates outstanding leadership within Unified
- **Unified Partner Award:** Demonstrates commitment through partnership and teamwork
- **Unified Athlete Leader Award:** Demonstrates leadership on and off the field of play
- **Bridge Builder Award:** Connects people and creates opportunities for belonging
- **Rising Unified Leader Award:** Demonstrates emerging leadership and potential for continued growth
- **Unified Legacy Award:** Honors a graduating student whose contributions have made a lasting impact
- **School Culture Champion Award:** Recognizes a student, staff member, or community member who strengthens inclusive school culture

July - Leadership & Legacy

Theme: Maintaining Connections

Inclusion does not end when the traditional school year does. Extended School Year provides opportunities to maintain inclusive practices, strengthen peer relationships, and create meaningful shared experiences for students with and without disabilities. By incorporating Unified principles into activities already happening during ESY, schools can continue building inclusive communities without creating an entirely separate summer program.

Primary Goal

Encourage students to continue fostering inclusion and meaningful peer interaction during Extended School Year by incorporating Unified principles into existing ESY programming wherever appropriate.

Awareness Activity - Inclusion Never Takes a Break

Participation Activity - Unified Connections

Visibility Activity - Summer Spotlight

Bulletin Board Feature - Growing Together

If You Only Do One Thing...invite Unified Partners to ESY

If your school chooses just one activity this month, invite Unified partners to join an existing ESY activity where students can participate, collaborate, and connect naturally. Whether through recreation, art, STEM, gardening, service, or another shared experience, focus on creating authentic peer interaction rather than adding a separate summer program. The goal is simple: create an opportunity for students to do something meaningful together.

Inclusion Never Takes a Break

Purpose - Reinforce that inclusion is an everyday practice that can continue during ESY, even when routines, programs, and school communities look different. Help students recognize simple ways their actions can create welcoming environments where others can participate and belong.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What does inclusion look like within our ESY program? What inclusive practices are already happening? What messages would be meaningful for our students? How can students help create a welcoming ESY environment? How can awareness activities be incorporated into existing routines?

- **Materials Needed:** Morning announcement messages; inclusion prompts or discussion questions; posters or classroom display materials; student-created messages; existing school communication platforms; age-appropriate inclusion resources

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can welcome new and returning students, share inclusion messages, model inclusive behaviors, and identify ways students can help one another participate. Students can also contribute examples of what inclusion looks like during ESY and help introduce simple inclusion activities.

How to Implement

- **Introduce Everyday Inclusion:** Reinforce that inclusion can happen anywhere students learn, play, and spend time together
- **Connect to ESY:** Identify ways students can create welcoming and inclusive environments within existing summer activities
- **Share Simple Messages:** Use announcements, discussions, or displays to reinforce respect, participation, and belonging
- **Highlight Inclusive Actions:** Recognize examples of students making activities more welcoming or accessible to others
- **Practice Throughout ESY:** Encourage students to carry inclusive behaviors into classrooms, recreation, and shared activities

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Inclusion morning messages; friendship and teamwork reminders; classroom inclusion posters; welcoming activities
- **Middle School:** Student-created inclusion messages; inclusive teamwork discussions; peer participation reminders; everyday inclusion examples
- **High School:** Student-led inclusion messages; inclusive practice spotlights; peer leadership examples; ESY inclusion discussions

Additional Considerations - Keep awareness efforts simple and connected to the routines already established within ESY. Summer programming may include different students, schedules, staffing, and support needs than the traditional school year, so activities

should remain flexible and responsive to the students participating. Avoid making students with disabilities responsible for teaching others about inclusion. The goal is to reinforce a shared expectation that everyone contributes to creating an inclusive environment.

Unified Connections

Purpose - Create opportunities for students with and without disabilities to participate together in meaningful activities during ESY. Rather than developing separate Unified programming, schools can invite Unified partners or other peers to join activities already taking place and create authentic opportunities for interaction.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What existing ESY activities naturally support peer participation? Are Unified partners or other peers available during the summer? Which activities provide opportunities for genuine interaction and collaboration? What supports will help everyone participate meaningfully? How can students have choices in how they participate?

- **Materials Needed:** Supplies for selected ESY activities; activity instructions; invitations or communication for participating peers; recreation, art, STEM, or project materials; accessibility supports as needed; space appropriate for the activity

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can participate alongside peers, welcome students into activities, help facilitate games or projects, encourage participation, and model teamwork. Returning Unified participants can also help create a comfortable environment for students who may be meeting new peers or participating in a Unified experience for the first time.

How to Implement

- **Start With What's Already Happening:** Identify an existing ESY activity that could naturally include additional peers
- **Invite Peer Participation:** Welcome Unified partners or other students to participate alongside ESY students
- **Choose Shared Experiences:** Use recreation, art, STEM, gardening, service, or other activities that encourage interaction and collaboration
- **Support Meaningful Participation:** Make sure everyone has an authentic role and appropriate ways to engage
- **Let Connections Develop Naturally:** Focus on students participating together rather than forcing structured friendship or mentoring

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Cooperative games; art activities; garden projects; summer recreation
- **Middle School:** Inclusive game day; STEM activities; service projects; collaborative art projects
- **High School:** Partner recreation; service projects; collaborative activities; summer celebration event

Additional Considerations - Unified Connections should complement existing ESY programming rather than create additional programming requirements for staff or students. Peer participation should be purposeful and based on shared activities, not structured around

students without disabilities serving as helpers for students with disabilities. Consider transportation, scheduling, accessibility, and summer availability when inviting Unified partners to participate. Even one well-designed shared experience can provide a meaningful opportunity for authentic peer interaction.

Summer Spotlight

Purpose - Make inclusive moments visible throughout ESY by celebrating participation, teamwork, and positive peer interactions. Simple recognition helps reinforce that Unified principles remain part of the school community throughout the summer.

Before You Begin

- **Pre-Planning Questions:** What inclusive moments could we highlight during ESY? How does our school or district communicate with families during the summer? What permissions are needed for photos or student features? How can students help identify moments worth celebrating? What visibility efforts are realistic for our ESY schedule?

- **Materials Needed:** Photos, where appropriate; student quotes or captions; bulletin board or classroom display materials; family newsletter access; school or district communication platforms; recognition cards or templates

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can identify positive moments, help create displays, write captions, recognize classmates, and share examples of inclusion they notice during ESY. Students can also help document shared activities and celebrate peers who contribute to a welcoming summer community.

How to Implement

- **Notice Inclusion in Action:** Look for authentic examples of participation, teamwork, friendship, and support
- **Capture Meaningful Moments:** Collect photos, student quotes, artwork, or short stories from ESY activities
- **Share the Highlights:** Use classroom displays, newsletters, social media, or other available school platforms
- **Celebrate Participation:** Highlight students engaging, collaborating, and contributing in different ways
- **Keep It Simple:** Choose visibility strategies that fit naturally within the shorter ESY schedule

School Level Examples

- **Elementary School:** Summer photo display; inclusion moment of the week; student artwork showcase; classroom celebration board
- **Middle School:** ESY activity highlights; student inclusion spotlights; summer photo collage; family newsletter features
- **High School:** Student leadership highlights; ESY inclusion stories; social media features; summer activity recap

Additional Considerations - Visibility efforts should celebrate authentic participation without turning everyday interactions between students with and without disabilities into something extraordinary or inspirational. Follow school policies regarding

student photos, names, and social media, particularly when summer programming includes students from multiple schools or programs. Include different types of participation and contribution rather than highlighting only the most visible students. Keep recognition manageable and appropriate for the shorter ESY calendar.

Bulletin Board Feature:

Growing Together

Inclusion happens all year!

Purpose - Create a simple visual celebration of the participation, relationships, and inclusive experiences happening throughout ESY. The display can grow alongside summer programming while helping students see how everyday shared experiences contribute to an inclusive community.

Display Ideas

- **Feature:**

- Photos from ESY activities
- Student artwork
- Shared projects
- Friendship and teamwork highlights
- Examples of inclusion in action
- Summer accomplishments
- Messages looking ahead to the new school year
- **Possible Headings:**
 - Summer Connections
 - Inclusion Happens All Year
 - Unified All Year
 - How We Connected
 - Summer Together
 - Inclusion in Action

Student Leadership Opportunities - Unified students can help select photos, create captions, contribute artwork, highlight classmates, and update the display throughout ESY. Students can also identify moments that demonstrate participation, teamwork, and inclusion and contribute messages about what they are looking forward to in the coming school year.

Additional Considerations - Keep the display flexible and easy to maintain throughout the shorter ESY schedule. Focus on authentic shared experiences rather than trying to recreate a traditional school-year Unified bulletin board or campaign. Include students participating in different ways and avoid framing interactions between students with and without disabilities as acts of charity or service. If students attend ESY outside their regular school building, the display can also help create a temporary sense of community within a new environment.

Unified Activity Planning Template

Educator/Leader Planning

What are we doing? _____

Why are we doing this? _____

Who are we trying to engage? _____

Student Leadership Roles:

-
-

-
-

Accessibility & Participation Considerations: _____

Materials/Resources needed:

-
-
-
-

Promotion & Visibility: _____

Timeline & Key Dates: _____

Reflection and follow up *How will we know it was successful? What happens next?.*
