



Whole School Engagement

Strategic Playbook

*Building a Unified School Culture through
Awareness, Participation, and Visibility*



Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools**

WSE Strategic Playbook

Suggested use



Whole School Engagement ensures Unified is not just a club or team, but a visible part of school culture. This guide provides suggested engagement activities for each month aligned to the school calendar, national awareness initiatives, and Special Olympics New Jersey opportunities.

You'll find a specific theme supported by one awareness activity, one participation activity, and one visibility activity per month along with bulletin board ideas and student leadership suggestions.
This document is a resource – not a requirement!

Schools seeking State or National recognition should plan for multiple Whole School Engagement activities throughout the year to ensure awareness, participation, and visibility are consistently represented.

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September

Recruitment & Belonging



Theme: Back to School, Back to Unified!
Primary Goal: Recruit new members and establish a Unified presence

- **Awareness:** What is Unified Campaign
- **Participation:** Start With Hello Day
- **Visibility:** Unified Kickoff Media Push

Bulletin Board Feature: *Inclusion Starts With Hello*
Use the Start With Hello handprints to show how simple acts of connection help build a culture of belonging.

*If you only do **one** thing this month: Unified Kickoff Media Push*

October

Respect & Disability Awareness

**Special
Olympics**
New Jersey



Theme: Respect Includes Everyone

Primary Goal: Build understanding of disability inclusion and reinforce respectful school culture.

- **Awareness:** Week of Respect + Disability Awareness
- **Participation:** Fans in the Stands for Unified Fall Sports
- **Visibility:** Unified Respect Spotlight

Bulletin Board Feature: *Ability in Action: Disability Employment Awareness; highlight successful professionals with disabilities and connect to career readiness*

*If you only do **one** thing this month: Fans in the Stands for a Unified game*

Theme: Unified Through Action

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

- **Awareness:** Everyone Can Contribute Campaign
- **Participation:** Thanks4giving Turkey Dash & Splash
- **Visibility:** Unified Service Recognition campaign

Bulletin Board Feature: Leadership Looks Like...
Student impact board focused on real contributions.

*If you only do **one** thing this month: Thanks4giving Cool Schools Challenge*

December

Community & Kindness



Theme: Season of Inclusion

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

- **Awareness:** International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- **Participation:** Unified Kindness in Action campaign
- **Visibility:** Unified Community Highlights

Bulletin Board Feature: This Is Unified
Create a visual story of how Unified builds community; focus on real participation rather than written responses.

*If you only do **one** thing this month: Unified Kindness in Action*

Theme: New Year, New U-nified

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

- **Awareness:** Acceptance & Accessibility Awareness Campaign
- **Participation:** Access in Action Challenge
- **Visibility:** Unified Builds Access Highlights

Bulletin Board Feature: Inclusion By Design
Focus on how accessibility and intentional design help everyone participate.

*If you only do **one** thing this month: Access in Action Challenge*

February

Relationships & Connection

**Special
Olympics**
New Jersey



Theme: Building Inclusive Communities

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

- **Awareness:** What Does Inclusion Look Like?
- **Participation:** Inclusion Readiness Challenge
- **Visibility:** Week of Inclusion Countdown

Bulletin Board Feature: What Inclusion Looks Like
Focus on defining inclusion before celebrating it.

*If you only do **one** thing this month: start promoting and preparing for **Week of Inclusion***

February

Week of Inclusion Planning Guide

**Special
Olympics**
New Jersey



• **4 Weeks Before:**

- Set Week of Inclusion dates
- Form student planning team
- Choose spirit days, themes, and activities
- Reserve any spaces needed
- Plan promotion

• **3 Weeks Before:**

- Finalize themes
- Plan participation activities
- Assign student leadership roles
- Start promotion
- Recruit volunteers

• **2 Weeks Before:**

- Announce schedule
- Daily promotion
- Prepare materials
- Confirm special activities
- Prepare social media plan

• **1 Week Before:**

- Big announcement push for day 1
- Post daily themes
- Final leadership meeting
- Assign photo/documentation roles
- Confirm participation tracking method

Theme: Choose to Include

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

- **Awareness:** Spread the Word: Inclusion Campaign
- **Participation:** Week of Inclusion Spirit Days
- **Visibility:** Unified Inclusion Campaign

Bulletin Board Feature: Choose to Include
Focus on showing how students actively choose to include both during the Week of Inclusion and all year.

*If you only do **one** thing this month: Run a **Week of Inclusion***

March

Week of Inclusion Planning Guide



- **During the Week of Inclusion:**

- Daily announcements
- Take photos
- Recognize participants
- Encourage involvement
- Share updates

- **After the Week of Inclusion:**

- Share recaps on announcements and social media
- Post photos
- Thank participants
- Update bulletin board
- Reflect: what worked? What next?

April

Acceptance & Understanding



Theme: Unified Acceptance

Primary Goal: Promote understanding of neurodiversity and disability identity through listening, learning, and inclusion.

- **Awareness:** Autism Acceptance & Neurodiversity Campaign
- **Participation:** Unified Listening & Learning
- **Visibility:** Unified Voices Campaign

Bulletin Board Feature: *Listening to Understand*
Focus on elevating perspectives, experiences, and voices rather than awareness slogans.

*If you only do **one** thing this month: Host a **student voice or listening activity** focused on acceptance and inclusion.*

Theme: Unified in Action

Primary Goal: Celebrate Unified impact while building inclusive school communities through participation and leadership.

- **Awareness:** The Impact of Unified
- **Participation:** Unified Celebration Events
- **Visibility:** Unified Recognition Campaign

Bulletin Board Feature: The Year in Action

A visual celebration of Unified participation, leadership, and growth throughout the year.

*If you only do **one** thing this month: Celebrate student participation and leadership through a visible **Unified Community event**.*



Theme: Building What's Next

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

- **Awareness:** The Future of Unified
- **Participation:** Leadership Transition Activities
- **Visibility:** Meet the Next Generation of Unified Leaders

Student Recognition:
*Awards for promotion
or graduation
ceremonies, presented
to Unified Pairs as much
as possible*

Bulletin Board Feature: The Next Chapter
*A focus on the future with quotes and advice from the
outgoing or graduating leadership team.*

*If you only do **one** thing this month: Celebrate current leaders while preparing the next generation.*

July: Extended School Year

Inclusion Continues



Theme: Maintaining Connection

Primary Goal: Student can continue practicing inclusion, strengthening relationship, and staying connected to Unified.

- **Awareness:** Inclusion Never Takes a Break
- **Participation:** Unified Connections
- **Visibility:** Summer Spotlight

Bulletin Board Feature: Growing Together

A summer-themed display featuring student artwork, photos, or reflections about friendship and inclusion.

*If you only do **one** thing this month: Invite Unified partners to participate in a meaningful ESY activity that encourages authentic peer interaction.*



Building a Unified School Culture

Whole School Engagement is not measured by the number of activities a school hosts. It is measured by the extent to which students feel welcomed, connected, valued, and included.

*Inclusion is not a week. It is not a club nor a single event.
It is a **culture**.*

*And culture is built one action, one opportunity,
and one **student** at a time.*