Unified Sports Opportunities

INTERSCHOLASTIC

NJSIAA-SONJ Interscholastic Unified Sports (High Schools Only)

Special Olympics New Jersey is heading into the second year of its partnership with the NJSIAA in an effort to bring interscholastic Unified Sports to high schools throughout the state. During the 2017-18 school year, the NJSIAA will offer state-level competitions in Unified bowling, basketball, and track & field (indoor and outdoor). Teams must register with SONJ and the NJSIAA along with meeting minimum practice and competition standards prior to participating in a state-level event.

These interscholastic Unified teams should be able to compete with little-to-no modifications of the established game rules and should be organized through your athletic department and recognized as part of your athletic program just as you would for any team. Special services and others should provide the support needed to ensure successful participation. Unified athletes proudly wear the same school uniforms and represent their school in Unified Sports. They practice and travel as part of the school's athletic program as appropriate.

Bowling

Schools who would like to field interscholastic Unified bowling teams will have the opportunity to advance to NJSIAA sectional and state-level competitions this year, depending on participation totals throughout the state. Interscholastic Unified bowling teams are made up of 5 bowlers: 3 competitors and 2 subs. The 3 competitors may consist of 2 students with intellectual disabilities (athletes) and 1 without (partner); or 1 student with ID and 2 without. These teams can practice at the same time as their existing high school bowling teams, or as new interscholastic Unified teams.

Basketball

Basketball will be the primary winter Unified sport that the NJSIAA offers. Teams should have about 10-12 players on their rosters, with approximately half being students with intellectual/developmental disabilities and the other half being students without disabilities. A ratio of 3 students with disabilities and 2 students without must be maintained on the court at all times during game play. Schools should schedule games against other schools in order to be eligible to advance to the NJSIAA sectional and state championships.

Track and Field

After a successful launch in 2017, expanding Unified Track & Field will be a focus this school year. Unified Track & Field events include the 100m, 200m, 400m, 4x100, and 4x400 relays, shot put, and running long jump. Unified Track & Field is only contested as a team sport and should include anywhere from 6-20 members, approximately half with disabilities and half without. Unified Track & Field will culminate at the NJSIAA Meet of Champions on June 9, 2018. Indoor Unified Track & Field competition will also be available at the Relay Championship in January in the 4x100, 4x200, 4x400 and shot put relays only.
Play Unified Club Sports (High/Middle Schools)

Play Unified Clubs organize inclusive social and sports activities, and whole school events that promote a culture and community of respect, acceptance, teamwork and friendship. Club sports and intramurals can be organized through athletics, or run as part of the Play Unified Club in collaboration with athletics and other school clubs.

The students should play a leadership role in organizing practices, competitions and recruiting players and fans. Club/intramural sports are best suited for teams that fit the Player Development and/or Recreational models of Unified Sports. These programs can culminate with an in-school competition, an interscholastic competition with other club teams, or at SONJ’s *Unified Cup* Championships.

**Play Unified Club Competitions**

Pick a sport and coordinate with other Play Unified club teams in your area to organize competitions. SONJ will help to facilitate if needed. Your program can offer one sport per year or one each season.

**Unified Cup Championships (formerly Shriver Cups)**

SONJ organizes state competitions for soccer (fall), bowling and basketball (winter/spring). All teams must practice a minimum of six times together before attending a Unified Cup event.

**Intradistrict Competitions**

Establish a Play Unified sports club or intramural program with the goal of hosting a competition that brings Unified teams from all schools in the district together for a fun event.

**Field A Unified Cup Team!**

- Create teams of up to 12 students with and without disabilities for soccer and basketball and teams of 4 for bowling.
- Practice at least once a week for 6-8 weeks.
- Depending on the number of registered teams, SONJ can assist with organizing regional games and tournaments with other schools prior to the Unified Cup.
- Participate in the soccer (fall), bowling and/or basketball (winter/spring) Unified Cup championships. Soccer and basketball are for high school teams only. Bowling will have a division for middle schools.
SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY BASED SPORTS

After-School Sports Club
Take sports beyond the school day and establish an after-school, weekend or evening sports club, where students can explore and play a variety of sports in a social and inclusive recreational setting. This is a great way to introduce students to team play and game rules in a more recreational and less competitive setting. If the turnout is large enough, you can group by age and/or ability, and offer both a developmental and competitive option.

Junior Division Soccer and Basketball (3rd-8th grade)
Junior Division Soccer and Basketball are new SONJ training and competition opportunities to meet the needs of emerging athletes in 3rd through 8th grades, who are not ready for competitive league play. It offers skill development and modified, small-sided game play with culminating competitions at three SONJ state run competitions. The goal is to introduce sports to younger athletes and provide a fun, social experience to build friendships and understanding among children of all abilities in your school community.

Unified Young Athletes (Pre K – 1)
Young Athletes is a foundational sports play program for students in Pre K and Kindergarten. Classroom teachers and PE teachers introduce developmentally appropriate skills, allowing young children to improve gross motor skills and learn important social and cognitive skills through play. Equipment and training is provided. Schools host a culminating Unified Game Day so that all students can come together to celebrate and demonstrate their accomplishments and friendships.

Unified Rec Night
Once a week or once a month, for 6-8 weeks, schedule a Unified Rec night for pick up soccer, basketball, kick-ball or a multi-sport fun night. Host a culminating event at the end of each session. The Rec Night can be sponsored and promoted by your Unified Club. Unified Rec is open to all ages and is a great way to involve the PTO’s and families in your district.

Unified Game Day
Celebrate and demonstrate the skills your students have learned in Unified PE, or offer a fun opportunity for students to interact as teammates by hosting a Unified Game Day. These events can be done anytime during the school year.

Unified Recess
Play Unified to Live Unified. Get your students together on the playground during recess and let them just play! It’s a natural way to start breaking down barriers and building friendships. Unified Club members can organize inclusive activities and stations during recess.

Unified Sports Clinics
Have your district Varsity athletes organize and run sports and fun fitness clinics for the students with disabilities in their school/district. They can also assist as coaches for your Special Olympics training and competition or Play Unified Club teams. Schools can use grant money to help with equipment and other costs for the clinics.
**UNIFIED PHYSICAL EDUCATION (ALL SCHOOLS)**

**UNIFIED PE Elective Course**
A for-credit opportunity for students of varying ability levels to learn together, through fitness, sports, leadership and wellness activities. It is a meaningful alternative to recruiting student volunteers to help in an adaptive PE class, or to incorporating students with disabilities into regular PE classes, where they are confronted with large class sizes and a challenging learning environment.

**Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED: Inclusive PE**
Create an inclusive PE program where all students have access to fun, positive and meaningful experiences. Engage a school team in creating the appropriate environment and support for every student, and introduce an equitable peer partner strategy where all students participate as teammates and leaders. Professional development for staff, paraprofessionals and related service providers is available. Download the guide at this link: [http://www.sonj.org/inclusive-physical-education-guide.html](http://www.sonj.org/inclusive-physical-education-guide.html).