

# Part Three:

# Play. UNIFIED.



Celebrating the Success of  
Young Athletes in School!



# UNIFIED GAME DAY

*The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.*

As they learn and practice new skills, students will gain confidence and pride in their accomplishments. **Unified Game Days** offer students of all interests and abilities “an opportunity to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in the sharing of gifts, skills and friendship” in an environment of fun and celebration. **Unified Game Days** provide students with a platform to demonstrate and celebrate the skills they have learned and practiced, and give the entire school community and families the opportunity to share in the joy of what students CAN do.



## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FIELD DAY AND A UNIFIED GAME DAY?

A school-wide field day is not a Unified Game Day. A Unified Game Day builds off of the skills students have been practicing in early childhood classrooms and Inclusive Physical Education as a culminating event to demonstrate skills learned and celebrate the friendships made in class. Unlike a traditional field day, in which special needs students can be isolated from their peers and travel through stations in a segregated group, a **Unified Game Day** integrates all students. Every activity is inclusive and accessible to all. Students without disabilities play alongside

students with disabilities as teammates and classmates, rather than mentors or tutors. A UGD is a key component in creating social inclusion opportunities through Special Olympics Unified Sports® and physical activity.

**Unified Game Days** are skill demonstration “game days” that can include a variety of physical activity and fun fitness stations designed to bring young people together to:

- Apply all they have learned during Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Inclusive Physical Education.
- Have a fun day of physical activity while making friends.

**Unified Game Days** are a great way to bring together an entire class, school, groups of schools and communities to celebrate the accomplishments of all students. They are designed to be:

- Festive and celebratory
- Inclusive and accessible, with modified and adapted activities interwoven to benefit all students

In addition to the Activity Planning Guides (Young Athletes UGD, Little Feet Meet) included in **Learn. Practice. Play.**

**UNIFIED.** Special Olympics New Jersey can provide some basic items to assist in the execution of a school’s UGD such as:

1. Special Olympics New Jersey participation ribbons or wristbands, based on the grade level and type of event.
2. Event specific equipment, such as adhesive race bibs for track events or pinnies for 3-on-3 tournaments.

**Contact Special Olympics New Jersey to find out if your school is eligible to receive these additional resources.**

You should feel comfortable deviating from the planning guides provided, but remember that a UGD should focus on the skills from **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** that students are learning and practicing in early childhood classrooms or Inclusive Physical Education classes. An emphasis should always be placed on social inclusion.





## SPECIAL SERVICES SCHOOL DISTRICTS:

Special Services School Districts can still plan a Special Olympics **Unified Game Day**. Use the template provided and contact Special Olympics New Jersey for recommendations of schools with peer partners.

Special Olympics Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) activities are also an option for districts with students with varying abilities. Please contact Special Olympics New Jersey to find out more information about our MATP School Activity Guide.



## UNIFIED GAME DAY PRE-GAME

### WHO

#### Participants:

- ☐ Grade level
- ☐ Inclusive PE class
- ☐ Whole school
- ☐ Other schools

#### Volunteers:

- ☐ Teachers
- ☐ Paraeducators
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Middle or high school partners club

#### Spectators:

- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Administrators
- ☐ Community leaders
- ☐ Media

### WHAT

#### Theme, structure and activities

- ☐ Stations can represent each skill presented in Young Athletes and/or **Learn. Practice. Play.**

#### UNIFIED: Practice

- ☐ Coordinate with seasonal sports, and host a fall, winter, spring or summer UGD featuring sports or skills associated with each season
- ☐ Host a **"Little Feet Meet"** (Track & Field)
- ☐ Plan a tournament with modified game play (ie. 3-on-3 basketball)
- ☐ Equipment Check: make sure you have signs, water, clear directions, and start and stop signals for station rotation or game play

### WHEN & WHERE

#### Date and location

- ☐ Plan for inclement weather – rain date or indoors
- ☐ Clear use of space with school administration
- ☐ If outdoors, plan for temperature extremes: hats, gloves, scarves for cold weather, and shaded areas and water for warm weather

#### Photo Releases:

- ☐ Will pictures be taken? Is permission needed?
- ☐ Will the event be shared on social media?
- ☐ Contact Special Olympics New Jersey for approved logo

**Once the event is scheduled, please notify Special Olympics New Jersey of the date and details so that support materials can be provided if necessary.**

# UNIFIED GAME DAY EVENT PLANNER

District: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Rain Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Students: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Other Schools: \_\_\_\_\_

Equipment Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Volunteers Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Invited Families ☐

Notified administrators ☐

Notified district ☐

Notified local press ☐

Plans to post on social media ☐

Notified Special Olympics ☐





# YOUNG ATHLETES UNIFIED GAME DAY ACTIVITY PLANNING GUIDE:

Hosting a *Young Athletes Unified Game Day* is reason for celebration! Invite parents and community members to share in the achievements of young athletes in an inclusive setting. This event can be held in the gym, multipurpose room or playground. Enlist the help of middle school or high school volunteers as well. **Be sure to provide ample practice time during Inclusive Gross Motor Education or Inclusive Physical Education to ensure success on Game Day!**

## Opening Ceremony (approximately 5-10 minutes):

- Students parade into play or game area
- If multiple classes are participating, each class can design its own t-shirt or banner to hold when marching in
- Play ceremonial or Olympics music
- Pledge of Allegiance, opening remarks, review rules and expectations for students and spectators

## Athlete Oath (optional):

Special Olympics athletes always begin events by reciting the Athlete Oath that was introduced by Eunice Kennedy Shriver at the first Special Olympics Games in 1968. Have students recite the oath in sections, repeating after you say it:

**“Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me  
be brave in the attempt.”**

## Skill Stations (approximately 50 minutes):

- Set up 5 skill stations around play or game area
- Each class/group rotates after 10 minutes
- Allow time for transition between stations

Customize stations to students' abilities, and coordinate with the skills and activities included in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** Add competitive elements or modified game play if appropriate. See the following page for examples of skill stations.

## Closing Ceremony:

- Closing remarks from administrator
- Students are presented with participation ribbons individually or by class
- March out of play area to music

## Picture Station (Optional):

- Set up a backdrop for team or individual photos
- Include props/equipment from Young Athletes
- Students can create their own frames for their photo

## Equipment Needs:

- Items provided in the Young Athletes Classroom equipment kit should be used at the skill stations
- Water coolers/cups dispersed through play/game area
- Signs
- PA system



**LEARN. PRACTICE. PLAY. UNIFIED.**

# YOUNG ATHLETES UNIFIED GAME DAY ACTIVITY STATION IDEAS

Refer to the Young Athletes skills and activities presented in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** for modifications or alternate activities.

## Station One: Kicking

**Soccer Skills:** Set up cones or soccer nets. Students kick soccer balls into the nets or between the cones. Use a soccer trainer or a volleyball floater for modifications or adaptations.

**Partner Pass:** Have students pass the soccer ball to each other or dribble the ball to one another.

## Station Two: Obstacle Course

**Obstacle Course:** Set out an obstacle course using tunnels, cones, floor markers, hurdles and balls. Use sidewalk chalk or gym floor tape to create direction signs or positive messages along the way.

## Station Three: Catching & Trapping

**Bubble Catch:** Have students stand in a circle on floor markers. A student or adult volunteer stands in the middle and blows bubbles towards the students. Students try to catch the bubbles with one or two hands while staying on their markers.

**Roll, Throw, Catch:** Students sit in a circle and roll or throw the ball to each other based on the teacher's commands. Students are encouraged to catch the ball or trap it.

## Station Four: Balancing & Jumping

**Balance Beam Walk:** Set out balance beams, either in a long row or zigzag configuration. Guide athletes to walk along the beams.

**Hurdles:** Using bricks and bars, create a series of hurdles for the athletes to jump over.

**Coach Says:** (see page 56 in Young Athletes activities in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Play**)

## Station Five: Walking & Running

### Water Balloon Relay (if outdoors):

Athletes are divided into two teams. At the starting line of each team there is a bucket of water balloons. At the finish there is either a bucket or hoop. The objective is for each member of the team to get his water balloon from the start of the race line to the hoop or bucket at the finish without breaking it. If the student drops the balloon, he needs to start over. The team that finishes first wins.

\*If needed the athletes can work in pairs. You can make the race more difficult by adding obstacles, like hurdles.



# LITTLE FEET MEET ACTIVITY PLANNING GUIDE 1

## PRE-K OR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EVENT

Whether on a track, blacktop or in a gymnasium, a **Little Feet Meet** offers a chance to experience the joy of competing and succeeding. A track and field meet can include a variety of events and is a great way to have students train and compete together. **The plans here include ideas for several activities, but do not feel the need to include all of them in the Little Feet Meet.** Invite parents, administrators and community members to celebrate the success of the students in an inclusive setting. Enlist the help of middle and high school students to help run the event. **Be sure to provide ample time during Inclusive Gross Motor Education and Inclusive Physical Education to ensure success on the day of the meet!**

### Opening Ceremony (approximately 5-10 minutes):

- Athletes parade onto track area
- If multiple classes are participating, each class can design its own t-shirt or banner to hold when marching in
- Play ceremonial or Olympic music
- Pledge of Allegiance, opening remarks, review rules and expectations for athletes and spectators

### Athlete Oath (optional):

Special Olympics athletes always begin events by reciting the Athlete Oath that was introduced by Eunice Kennedy Shriver at the first Special Olympics Games in 1968. Have students recite the oath in sections, repeating after you say it:

**“Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”**

### Events (Approximately 60 minutes):

- 25-meter Run/Walk or 25-meter Wheelchair event
- 50-meter Run/Walk
- 100-meter relay (team event)
- 25-meter Hurdles (Young Athletes Equipment)
- Tennis/Softball throw
- Standing long jump
- Mini jav

Customize events to the students’ abilities and coordinate with the skills and activities included in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED.** See the following pages for examples of events.

### Closing Ceremony (Approximately 5-10 minutes):

- Closing Remarks
- Students are presented with participation ribbons individually or by class
- March out of track area to music

### Optional Activities:

**Champion Photo Station:** Set up a backdrop for team or individual photos. Students can create their own frames for their photos in their classroom.

**School-wide Acceptance or Respect Week:** The **Little Feet Meet** can be the celebration at the beginning or ending of a school’s Respect Week activities or Disabilities Awareness Week.

### Equipment Needs:

Depending upon the events chosen, the following items may be needed:

- tape measure
- tennis balls, softballs, foam reaction balls or beanbags
- long jump mats
- batons or rings for relay
- stop watch
- clip boards
- “Student Success Cards” (template provided at the end of this section): Each student should receive a “Student Success Card” and travel with it to the various events. For run and walk events, relays or hurdles, the student will be awarded a star sticker for completing each event. For events such as the tennis ball throw, mini jav or standing long jump, students can receive a “score” for the distance they threw or jumped.
- Special Olympics New Jersey can provide additional equipment such as adhesive race bibs, ribbons or wristbands for eligible schools.

### Securing Volunteers:

Teachers and paraeducators will work with the students to make sure they get to the various events. Some may be able to run an event, but it is likely that additional volunteers will need to be recruited.



## LITTLE FEET MEET TRACK EVENTS OVERVIEW

- 25-meter Run/Walk or 25-meter Wheelchair event
- 50-meter Run/Walk
- 100-meter relay (team event)
- 25-meter Hurdles (Young Athletes equipment)

### Activity Directions and Helpful Hints:

- The starter gives the commands to start each race.
- The commands for the starter are: “On your marks,” “Set,” and when all students are ready, the starter blows the whistle or says, “Go.” **Make sure this is practiced in class first.**
- If using a track, designate the starting and finish lines. Volunteers may use green “Start” signs and red “Finish” signs as a visual cue for athletes.
- Use a tape measure and tape to mark out lanes if using a black top or gym.
- Poly spots can also be used to designate starting positions.
- Young Athletes steeple bricks and long poles can be used to create hurdles. Poly spots can be used to designate targets for stepping or jumping over hurdles.

### Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Stage and line up the students in the proper lane. Collect the “Student Success Cards”.
- Model running at start signal and stopping at finish line.
- Starter gives the commands to start each race.
- Place sticker, or draw star on the “Student Success Card” for each student.





# LITTLE FEET MEET FIELD EVENTS OVERVIEW

- Tennis/Softball Throw
- Standing Long Jump
- Mini Jav

## Softball/Tennis Ball Throw:

### Activity Directions and Helpful Hints:

- Refer to the Track & Field section in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities: Practice**
- Students can use a tennis ball, softball, foam reaction ball or beanbag.
- Students can throw overhand or underhand, but overhand is preferred.
- Using tape or chalk, create a throw line which all students will stand behind.
- Use floor markers to designate a place for each student to stand.
- Have a tape measure available to measure the distance once object is thrown.
- A hoop can be used as target for foot placement to encourage shifting of weight.

### Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Model throwing the ball from behind the line with emphasis on shifting weight and bending elbow.
- Collect the “Student Success Cards” and call the name of each student when it is his turn to throw.
- Measure and record the best distance.

## Standing Long Jump:

### Activity Directions and Helpful Hints:

- Refer to the Track & Field section in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities: Practice**
- Use tape or chalk to create a takeoff line OR use a long jump mat.
- Use floor markers to designate where students place their feet.

### Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Model jumping with emphasis on bending knees and using arms.
- Collect the “Student Success Cards” from students and call the name of each student when it is her turn to jump.
- Record the best of two jumps.

## Mini Jav:

### Activity Directions and Helpful Hints:

- Refer to the Track & Field section in **Learn. Practice. Play. UNIFIED. Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities: Practice**
- Use floor markers to designate a place for each student to stand.
- A hoop can be used as target for foot placement to encourage shifting of weight.

### Volunteer Responsibilities:

- Model throwing the mini jav.
- Collect the Student Success Cards from students and call the name of each student when it is his turn to throw.
- Record the best of two throws.



# LITTLE FEET MEET 2 ACTIVITY PLANNING GUIDE

## PARTNERING WITH A PLAY UNIFIED HIGH SCHOOL

At a Little Feet Meet, inclusive preschool classes or inclusive elementary school classes can come together at a local high school and experience the excitement of a track meet!

**There are two parts to creating a Little Feet Meet at a host high school that must happen simultaneously:**

1. The participating pre K or elementary school(s) needs to be practicing skills in Inclusive Gross Motor Education or Inclusive Physical Education class as part of the Special Olympics New Jersey Play Unified School Partnership.
2. The high school must also be a Special Olympics New Jersey Play Unified School Partner, involved in inclusive sports, and agree to host and run the event.
3. The high school students are trained prior to the event.

### Planning and Implementation Timeline:

1. District selects a point person at each participating elementary school and high school. These staff members will then coordinate with each other and Special Olympics New Jersey staff.
2. Select a date (and rain date) and secure transportation and funding well in advance.
3. Schedule Inclusive Physical Education in-service trainings and peer partner trainings for faculty and students.
4. Physical Education teachers incorporate training into Inclusive Physical Education while high school leaders plan the event.
5. Schedule a meeting at least six weeks out with Special Olympics staff (first time schools), school point person and high school leadership. Discuss responsibilities of Little Feet Meet host (checklist included on following page).
6. Pre K or elementary school(s) sends home permission slips and provides Special Olympics New Jersey with needs for ribbons.
7. Once the date arrives, celebrate the accomplishments of the students!



### Equipment Needs:

**Depending upon the events chosen, the following items may be needed:**

- tape measure
- tennis balls, softballs, foam reaction balls or beanbags
- long jump mats
- batons or rings for relay
- stop watch
- clip boards
- Student Success Cards (template provided at the end of this section): Each student should receive a Student Success Card and travel with it to the various events. For run and walk events, and relays or hurdles, the student will be awarded a star sticker for completing each event. For events such as the tennis ball throw, mini jav or standing long jump, students can receive a "score" for the distance they threw or jumped.
- Special Olympics New Jersey can provide additional equipment such as adhesive race bibs, ribbons or wristbands for eligible schools.





# LITTLE FEET MEET HOST SCHOOL CHECKLIST

- 1. Select high school faculty point person to work with the Play Unified Youth Leadership Club for assistance and guidance in planning.**
- 2. Consider the logistics of your location:**
  - Where will the buses load and unload students?
  - Where are the bathrooms?
  - What staff will be needed to assist?
  - Will we want to engage other school clubs (photography, additional volunteers)?
- 3. Have high school faculty point person meet with the Play Unified Youth Leadership Club to plan event and outline needs:**
  - Who will recruit volunteers?
  - Who plans and conducts the Opening Ceremony?
  - Who is in charge of school equipment needs (tables, chairs, trash bins, water coolers, cups, signs directing students to track or restrooms)?
  - Who plans and conducts Awards Ceremony?
  - Who plans and runs the event stations?
  - Will community leaders or local press be invited?
- 4. Faculty point person, student leaders and Special Olympics New Jersey staff meet to finalize plan, order ribbons and secure athletic equipment.**
- 5. Update school and district administrators during planning and prior to event.**
- 6. After event, debrief and make notes for next year's event.**

## LITTLE FEET MEET EVENT OVERVIEW

### Track Events

- 25-meter Run/Walk or 25-meter Wheelchair event
- 50-meter Run/Walk
- 100-meter relay (team event)
- 25-meter Hurdles (Young Athletes Equipment)

### Field Events

- Tennis/Softball throw
- Standing Long Jump
- Mini Jav

Refer to Little Feet Meet Individual School Event on previous pages for directions.

- The host school is not obligated to provide lunch, but should provide water.
- Parents are welcome to attend the Little Feet Meet.
- Have the high school track team help train the athletes or lead them in a warm up.



## LITTLE FEET MEET STUDENT SUCCESS CARD

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Field Events:

Standing Long Jump: \_\_\_\_\_

Tennis/Softball Throw: \_\_\_\_\_

Mini Jav: \_\_\_\_\_

### Track Events

(circle when complete)

25M or 50M Run/Walk

Hurdles

## LITTLE FEET MEET STUDENT SUCCESS CARD

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Field Events:

Standing Long Jump: \_\_\_\_\_

Tennis/Softball Throw: \_\_\_\_\_

Mini Jav: \_\_\_\_\_

### Track Events

(circle when complete)

25M or 50M Run/Walk

Hurdles

## LITTLE FEET MEET STUDENT SUCCESS CARD

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Field Events:

Standing Long Jump: \_\_\_\_\_

Tennis/Softball Throw: \_\_\_\_\_

Mini Jav: \_\_\_\_\_

### Track Events

(circle when complete)

25M or 50M Run/Walk

Hurdles

## LITTLE FEET MEET STUDENT SUCCESS CARD

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Field Events:

Standing Long Jump: \_\_\_\_\_

Tennis/Softball Throw: \_\_\_\_\_

Mini Jav: \_\_\_\_\_

### Track Events

(circle when complete)

25M or 50M Run/Walk

Hurdles





# UNIFIED YOUNG ATHLETES IN THE COMMUNITY

Community based Unified Young Athletes programs are 45 minute guided play sessions led by a trained volunteer Young Athletes coach. Young athletes, unified partners, siblings and family members play together, using the skills in Young Athletes to prepare them for future participation in sports.

## Young Athletes and Young Athletes Sport Community Programs:

- Offer families the opportunity to share in the success of their future athlete.
- Provide an experience that will lead to an appreciation of fitness and sport for the whole family.
- Are inclusive programs that promote social development.
- Enable families to learn about the potential of their child through sport.



Special Olympics New Jersey offers community programs throughout the state. Check the SONJ website at [www.sonj.org](http://www.sonj.org) to find locations so that you can share the information with your students' families. You may also consider hosting a community Young Athletes program at your school or partner with a local Recreation Center, YMCA or Youth Sports Organization.

## Traditional Young Athletes

- Ages 2 – 7 (2 – 5 option)
- Skills follow the guide (see additional template)
- Parents must participate
- All athletes are registered as Special Olympics New Jersey Young Athletes and receive a free kit of equipment with the activity guide at home

## Young Athletes Sport

- Ages 5 - 7
- Skills previously learned in Young Athletes in a sport specific content
- Resources and equipment provided
- Introducing sports seasonally (Fall: soccer or golf, winter: basketball or floor hockey, spring/summer: tennis, softball or track & field)
- Connecting parents and Special Olympics local Area Directors to form new Local Training Programs
- All athletes are registered young athletes or have a completed and signed Special Olympics New Jersey medical form on file

