



***Special Olympics***

***Oklahoma***

**Be a fan™**

## 2010/2011 Partners Club® & Unified Sports Handbook

**Partners Club®** is a unique school-based program that teams students with and without intellectual disabilities through sports training and competition on a regular basis. This club may also offer social and recreational opportunities.

**Unified Sports™:** Combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and persons without intellectual disabilities (partners) on sports teams for training and

### **Partners Club Purpose**

- Assist in developing Unified Sports™ in the school
- Promote the R-Word campaign and Be a fan™ events

**Mission of Special Olympics:** 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 the sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics Athletes, and the community.



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Dear Coordinator,

Welcome back to school! As we start the 2010 / 2011 school year, Special Olympics Oklahoma is looking forward to a year filled with sports, recreation, friendship, and fun! And we thank you for your interest in starting a Partners® Club in your school. Yours will among the very first Partners Clubs to be initiated in Oklahoma.

Partners Club is a school-based club for students with and without intellectual disabilities. While the main purpose of the Partners Club is Unified Sports™ the club may also offer social, academic, and recreational opportunities.

Unified Sports is an initiative that combines approximately equal numbers of Special Olympics athletes and athletes without intellectual disabilities (Partners) on sports teams for training and competition. Work closely with the Special Olympics Coach.

This handbook was designed to help you start up your Partners Club. Enclosed you will find Partners Club goals, strategies for recruiting club members, sample letters to parents, ideas for activities.

The success of your Partners Club will depend on the level of student involvement in planning and implementing activities to reach the club goals and how closely you work with the Special Olympics Coach in Unified Sports. Special Olympics Oklahoma staff is here to support you and provide information and resources you may need.

Again, welcome back to school. Have a great year!

Sincerely,

*Cathi Morris*

Program Services Manager

**Cathi Morris**

Special Olympics Oklahoma

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## Partners Club®

Partners Club is a unique school-based program that teams students with and without intellectual disabilities, through sports training and competition (Unified Sports™) on a regular basis. Partner Club members may also spend time together enjoying social, academic, or recreational activities in the school or community.

Partners Club is an inclusive club for students of all abilities. Students need not be members of organized school sports teams, but may have a sports interest. A faculty advisor and officers can help network with administrators, as well as athletics, physical education, and special education departments to identify potential members.

Partners Club provides opportunities to build student character, increase acceptance of disabilities and develop leadership and other skills in an inclusive setting.

### **Goals of Partners Clubs**

1. To promote Special Olympics sports training, practice, and competition.
2. To encourage meaningful relationships and friendships between Special Olympics athletes and their peers through planned and coordinated activities.
3. To provide opportunities and activities for Special Olympics athletes to improve quality of life, learn important social and life skills, and to feel accepted in their school and community.
4. To foster greater understanding and respect for individuals with intellectual disabilities [mental retardation] and closely related developmental disabilities.
5. To provide students an opportunity to develop an appreciation for volunteering in the community, to meet service learning requirements, and to explore possible vocational interests.

## Getting Started

It is essential for a Partners Club® program to have the support of the school faculty and administration that will be involved in the program. There are several things which will help ensure that the Partners Club gets off to a good start.

- Contact the principal or person in charge of clubs to identify requirements to start a sanctioned club, criteria for earning awards and letters
- Identify a faculty advisor / sponsor. If this is a special education teacher identify a general education teacher or other faculty to co-sponsor or collaborate with.
- Introduce the Special Education Department to the Partners Club and Unified Sports™ concept. They will be crucial to the success of the program in regards to students with special needs participating. Remember: Club members will include both students without and with intellectual disabilities. However a person does not have to be a club member to participate in Unified Sports Programs.
- Contact your Special Olympics coach for information on what sport opportunities will be offered each semester.
- Recruit students, presenting them with information and opportunities.
- Send information & forms home to parents.
- Hold first club meeting. Introduce Partners Club and Unified Sports concept (if not done previously). First meeting may be an orientation for partners (without Special Olympics athletes present)
- Students & faculty complete school required forms as well as Special Olympics Oklahoma required forms. (athlete medical, unified partner form, volunteer application, complete Protective Behaviors Training if required).
- Advisor must submit the **Partners Club Registration Form** to the Special Olympics State Office.

## What's Next

- Work with the Special Olympics coach to determine which Unified Sports will be offered each semester and to help form the sport teams & develop practice times
- Plan R-word campaign and Be a fan campaign projects
- Plan other activities
- Set and publish a schedule of events/ activities for the year. This will help ensure that Partners Club activities don't conflict with other school events, and that students, parents, teachers and administrators have advanced notice.
- Maintain communication with the area &/or state Special Olympics office. They can support school events, and can also share information about upcoming events, competitions and trainings that may be of benefit to the schools.

## **Tips for Recruiting Club Members – where / who to recruit**

- Utilize existing systems (announcements, flyers, orientation days, school newspaper, word of mouth)
- Enlist the assistance of Special Education Department faculty, counselors, life skills teachers, school sport coaches, community leagues
- Enlist the assistance of other school based clubs (Key Club, National Honor Society, Student Council, PAL – Peer Assistance League, Fellowship of Christian Athletes)
- Students in inclusive classroom settings, who would like to expand their participation with classmates.
- Many schools have a general meeting to recruit students to the Partners Club In this meeting students should be provided basic information about Special Olympics, the objectives of the club, and possible activities that the club would be doing.

## **Strategies for Enhancing your Partners Club®**

- Utilize your school sports teams, PE department and/or the Adapted Physical Education teacher to assist with sport related activities. Consider paralleling sports and fitness activities occurring in PE and/or extracurricular programs when determining sports for Partners Club.
- Invite guest speakers to your meetings to identify specific topics. (Special Olympics coach of your sport, fundraising experts to help with a project, or an athlete from the community to speak about your sport).
- Recruit school sports teams to help with sport training (Bowling team - provide a clinic at a bowling practice).
- Conduct a clinic put on by school sports teams or youth community league members as the trainers.
- Identify various roles. *Make a distinction between those who participate in the Partners Club® and those who wish to participate in sports.*
- Connect with your school's Student Council. Request representation at meetings.
- Respect confidentiality where needed.
- Determine an individual's interest in joining Special Olympics and sports.

## Orientation Meeting for Partners

While clubs are encouraged to conduct all meetings, sports training, and activities with both partners and athletes present, many have found it valuable to hold an *orientation* for Partners separately. Below are suggested orientation topics:

- What is Partners Club® / Unified Sports™
- Responsibilities/expectations during meetings, club activities
- Requirements for participating (school & Special Olympics)
- Individual needs of athletes / health issues / emergencies
- Strategies for having a positive relationship when facing challenges
- Benefits of membership: develop relationships, inclusion, letters of recommendation, college application/resume recognition, fun, fitness, social interaction, etc
- Upcoming activities, events
- Best day/time of the week/month for meetings
- Individual practices / social activities

## Ideas for Activities

R-Word Campaign: The goal of the R-word campaign is to bring awareness to schools, communities, and the general public of the negative use of the R-word [retard/retarded] as in “that’s retarded” or “what a retard”. The desired outcome is that people will stop using the R-word.

- Poster Contest / Essay Contest
- Pledge Day (sign pledges similar to Red Ribbon Week pledge), take the pledge at [www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org)
- Post messages on billboards, school marquee
- Interview athletes & siblings for school newspaper or school TV station
- Hold assemblies, talk to other student organizations
- In the community: speak at civic organizations, ask merchants to let you post flyers,

## Be a fan™ campaign / branding:

- Use the Be a fan logo on all Project UNIFY printed material
- Invite student body / parents / community to Special Olympics competitions, practices too
- Local radio live broadcast at Unified Sports events
- Document events and post to social networking sites
- Develop a web page on school site or on Area Special Olympics Website

### Academic Support

- Pair partners and athletes to be study buddies
- Partners can serve as peer mentors

### Social Activities/Special Events

- Camp outs or lock-ins
- Dances
- Attend sporting events
- Go shopping!
- Attend concerts or civic events
- Holiday parties
- Secret Santa, or other type of exchange
- Miniature Golf
- Go to a movie/play
- Go to the zoo, a museum, or other historic site

### Traditional Special Olympics Sports

- Offer to assist the Special Olympics coaches with traditional sport training/practice time (athletics, basketball, etc).
- Ask about working with the Primary School students on Young Athletes activities

### Other Notes on Activities

- Promote Year-Round Involvement: Activities should be provided throughout the school year to keep the members active and in contact with each other. This allows the partners and the athletes an opportunity to be directly involved with each other and develop a stable relationship and friendship.
- Sport Training & Competition: All Partners Clubs are required to work with the Special Olympics coach to coordinate training and competition opportunities. As a Project UNIFY Partners Club you will need to:
  - ✓ Coordinate with Special Olympics coaches
  - ✓ Plan Activities related to practices
  - ✓ Pair partners and athletes
  - ✓ Attend Special Olympics competitions and events
  - ✓ Form a Unified Sports Team



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**Partners Club® 2010 / 2011 Registration Form**

**The Special Olympics Oklahoma requires that each school submit a Partners Club® Registration Form each year to officially register.** This activates your club at Special Olympics Oklahoma for the year, allowing you to use the Special Olympics Oklahoma/ Partners Club®/Unified Sports® name and resources, and receive support and information regarding school related programs.

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

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

Club Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Position of Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional School Support (adults): \_\_\_\_\_

Club President/Co President: \_\_\_\_\_

School Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of first meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Potential number of Partners: \_\_\_\_\_

Potential number of Athletes: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return completed form to:**

**Cathi Morris**  
Special Olympics Oklahoma  
6835 S Canton Ave, Ste A  
Tulsa, OK 74136-3433

Phone: 1-918-481-1234 x 222  
Fax: 1-918-496-1515  
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cathi@sook.org



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**Sample letter to parents**

**Date**

Dear Parent,

The Partners Club® is a unique school-based program that teams students with and without intellectual disabilities through sports training and competition. This club may offer social, recreational, and academic opportunities as well.

Partners Club provides opportunities to build student character, increase acceptance of disabilities, develop leadership and other skills in a service learning environment, and enhance their school community. It is a program that teaches beyond the classroom and expands students' social horizons.

This first year of Partner Club development is supported through a Project UNIFY grant from Special Olympics Oklahoma. The Partners Club determines activities and events they wish to participate in throughout the school year.

The Partners Club purpose is to:

- assist in developing Unified Sports™ in the school
- promote the R-word campaign and Be a fan events.

Unified Sport opportunities being offered this year will include ***[fill in the sports]***. Clubs meet on a regular basis during the school day or after school ***[you might want to specify for your club]***.

Attached you will find the permission slip and forms required for your son/daughter to participate in the Partners Club this year. Please review the forms and contact me if you have any questions. Return the completed forms to me as soon as possible ***[or you might want to give them a deadline date]***.

Sincerely,



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**PARTNERS CLUB® STUDENT PARTICIPATION FORM**

**Name of Club:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Partners Club**  
School Name

The Partners Club is an inclusive, school-based club for students of all abilities. With the support of Special Olympics Oklahoma, students with and without intellectual disabilities have the opportunity to train and compete together in sports as well as participate together in social and recreational activities.

**Complete the following (please print):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
STUDENT FIRST NAME MI LAST NAME

Male  Female Birth date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT / GUARDIAN NAME PARENT / GUARDIAN PHONE

\_\_\_\_\_  
EMERGENCY CONTACT EMERGENCY CONTACT PHONE

I hereby consent to my child's participation in the \_\_\_\_\_  
Partners Club. (SCHOOL NAME)

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT / GUARDIAN SIGNATURE DATE



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## **Forms**

- **End of Semester activity summary:** This form will be provided upon registering your club. (Contact Cathi Morris).
- **Volunteer Application:** Partners Club members (including club advisors) are considered Class A Volunteers (persons having close regular contact with Special Olympics athletes). Each club member is required to have on file a completed application.
- **Unified Partner Form:** Club Members that become Unified Partners for sport training and competition will be required to complete this form. The Special Olympics coach will get these forms to you.
- **Athlete Medical:** This is required of all Special Olympics athletes. Coaches have these but the Partners Club advisor should keep copies as well.

## **Other Resources**

- **SO Get Into It Curriculum:** This is a free curriculum. It is a service learning curriculum which teaches about disabilities with Special Olympics in mind. Request the curriculum through Special Olympics Oklahoma.
- **Young Athletes Program:** In Oklahoma we call this Stars of the Future. Guidebooks available by request from Special Olympics Oklahoma. Special equipment may be loaned out from SOOK office.
- **Special Olympics Oklahoma website:** [www.sook.org](http://www.sook.org) is a great resource for information, especially about upcoming events.
- **Global Messengers:** Global Messengers are athletes who have attended workshops to learn how to write speeches and give presentations for all types of outreach. To schedule a Global Messenger to speak to your Partners Club or at a club activity contact Cathi Morris ([cathi@sook.org](mailto:cathi@sook.org)).