

# Interscholastic Unified Sports

The New York State Public High School Athletic Association and Special Olympics New York are proud to offer Unified Sports to NYSPHSAA member schools. Currently, nine out of eleven sections and 130 schools are participating in Unified Sports in New York State.



In the spring of 2018, Section IV will introduce its first Interscholastic Unified Sports Basketball Teams, and the Horseheads Central School District will be participating.

The program was presented to the Horseheads Board of Education in December 2017. The district will be competing with other schools in Section IV Athletics for their first year of inclusive spring sports. The district is hoping to see the program grow to include other sports in the future.

We are currently in the process of putting together the Youth Activation Committee (read more about the YAC below). The YAC will be part of the recruitment process for players and the basketball team will be finalized in late March. Practices will begin on April 9.

## PROJECT UNIFY

***Special Olympics Project UNIFY is built on the premise that in order to have the greatest impact, the change needs to start with young people.***

Unified Sports® is a registered program of Special Olympics that combines equal numbers of athletes with and without intellectual disabilities on sports teams for training and competition. It is an educational and sports based strategy that increases athletic and leadership opportunities and creates communities of acceptance for all students.



All Unified Sports® players, both athletes and special partners, are of similar age and matched sport skill ability. Unified Sports® teams are placed in competitive divisions based on their skill abilities. Besides providing a similar competitive experience to regular school interscholastic sports, players also gain physical fitness, develop friendships and demonstrate appreciation and respect for each other both on and off the playing field.

## UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOL COMPONENTS

### Whole School Engagement

Unified Sports provides a vehicle for

- Activities that improve achievement and lead to lifelong success for all students
- Building awareness and understanding in staff and the entire student body

## **Inclusive Sports**

The purpose of a Unified Sports team is to provide authentic, competitive opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to participate in athletics. Active inclusion through athletics provides educational benefits to all participants.

## **Inclusive Youth Leadership**

Students with and without intellectual disabilities will have opportunities to educate, motivate and become agents of change in their communities through

- Youth Summits
- Youth Activation Committee (YAC)
- Partners Clubs



## **WHOLE SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT**

*An important feature of creating a socially inclusive school climate is engaging the entire school community in the process.*

Whole School Engagement activities positively impact school climate by including all students, teachers, staff, and administrators. An inclusive school climate that fosters understanding and respect for all can influence how students think and act within and beyond the school. School-wide opportunities focused on social inclusion raise awareness and create an educational environment where respect and acceptance are the norm and all students feel included and engaged. This welcoming community cultivates a positive school climate and enhances other school-wide efforts.

Whole school activities also offer a platform to demonstrate the power of young people to positively impact their school community by promoting social inclusion.

## **INCLUSIVE SPORTS: *Section IV Unified Basketball***

Athletes practice at least two times per week for three to four weeks. There are six games of interscholastic play, with both home and away games.

### **Team Selection Process:**

- Teams are comprised of students with intellectual disabilities (athletes) and without intellectual disabilities (partners). Players of a similar ability level participate in authentic competition
- The game line-up has an equal number of those with and those without disabilities.

## **INCLUSIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP: *Youth Activation Committee***

The Youth Activation Committee (YAC) is made up of youth leaders with and without intellectual disabilities from the same school. Its purpose is to educate, motivate, and activate youth to become agents of change in their communities through advocacy for respect, inclusion, and acceptance for all people.

Through the YAC, students plan and implement activities that create a culture of inclusiveness in the school. The purpose is to create a whole school environment where authentic social inclusion and learning happens through meaningful activity providing for respect and dignity for all.

Scroll down to the next page for the YAC application. Completed applications are due to the Athletic Office by January 26.

## Questions?

Please contact one of our Unified Sports Committee members:

- Megan Blitz – [mblitz@horseheadsdistrict.com](mailto:mblitz@horseheadsdistrict.com)
- Crissie Russo – [crusso@horseheadsdistrict.com](mailto:crusso@horseheadsdistrict.com)
- Alisha Tenbus – [atenbus@horseheadsdistrict.com](mailto:atenbus@horseheadsdistrict.com)



Special Olympics  
**Unified Champion  
Schools**



**Horseheads Unified Sports Youth Activation Committee (YAC) Application**

Horseheads Unified Sports Youth Activation Committee members will be responsible for the youth leadership roles, planning the activities that the membership will participate in, work with the coaches and committee members, and planning the senior banquet for the unified sport athletes. You will need to attend a YAC leadership conference on February 2, 2018, for the entire school day. You will be required to make up any missed academics.

**Name of student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other School and Community Organizations or Teams that you participate in:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Why do you want to Participate in the Horseheads Unified Sports Youth Activation Committee?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Three Teacher References are required:**

I recommend the above named student to participate in the Horseheads Unified Sports Youth Activation Committee. This student is a leader of their peers, is responsible, and is in good standing academically.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_