

UNIFIED SPORTS®
COACHES HANDBOOK

NEBRASKA SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION
&
SPECIAL OLYMPICS NEBRASKA

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COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. How many players do I need?

A. Unified Sports, Bowling requires a minimum of 3 team members (at least 1 athlete and 2 partners). You may have up to 5 members on a team (2 substitutions). Schools may have unlimited number of teams and participants.

Q. How do I start?

A. Start by speaking to the special education teacher(s)/admin. at your school to determine if you have at least 1 student who qualifies via the definition of eligibility to be an athlete. (see attached eligibility criteria on page 6.

Q. With whom do I work?

A. Approach your principal, activities/athletic director, and superintendent with the idea of initiating a Unified Sports® Program in your school. Share information on the program as well as the number of schools in nearby towns that are already involved.

Q. Are all of the Unified Sports® coaches physical educators?

A. Coaches range from special educators, physical educators, classroom teachers, special services teachers, to community leaders. The most common practice is a coaching partnership between special educators and a sport coach working together to best serve the needs of the children.

Q. What if I do not feel qualified to teach the various sport skills?

A. Seek out a faculty member, physical education teacher, school coach, parent, or community person who has familiarity with sports to assist you. Coach's training is offered by the NSAA at the start of each season via NFHS online education course: "Coaching Unified Sports."
www.nfhslearn.com

Q. How do I get the support of the parents?

A. Prepare an informational flyer to be mailed to the parents of all the children who qualify as athletes. Collect the data on student interest (survey, see "How to Launch Unified Sports") and then recruit a matching number of students to be the partners. Plan a meeting for the parents at a time convenient to them.

Q. What do I present at the meeting?

A. Material for the parent meeting can be obtained from the Unified Sports® Handbook: <http://www.specialolympics.org/uploadedFiles/UnifiedSports.pdf> Speakers are also available from the NSAA office by contacting Dan Masters at 402-489-0386.

Q. When do we start?

A. Unified Sports, Bowling season starts in mid-October and runs through early December. See the manual for specific dates.

Q. When are practices scheduled?

A. Schools vary in their scheduling of Unified Sports® practices. The majority of schools choose one or two days a week, after school, to hold team practices. Balance facility availability, transportation needs, and local program needs.

Q. Will students interested in participating in Unified Sports® need to complete a sports physical and NSAA parent consent form?

A. Yes, like any other NSAA sport, both the physical and NSAA consent form will need to be completed and on file.

Q. How do I recruit the partners?

A. Successful programs have recruited partners through a variety of efforts. Some teachers hand-select the appropriate students who have similar skill levels. Sometimes Student Council, National Honor Society, or another school club adopts Unified Sports® as a project and contributes the partners. The goal is to attract those students who do not already participate in sports. Similar skill ability levels between the partners and athletes is necessary to have a balance among the players so that all players can meaningfully participate in the team's activities. Unified Sports® teams should never be comprised solely of people with disabilities.

Q. Can students participate in a different NSAA sport during the same season?

A. Yes, the NSAA Board of Directors approved dual participation ONLY for students that participate in Unified Sports, Bowling.

Q. What do I need for equipment?

A. Typical bowling equipment is needed: bowling balls, shoes (rental), team uniform. You may be able to coordinate such things through your local bowling proprietor, athletic department, or school physical education teacher.

Q. Do my players need uniforms?

A. It is extremely important that all athletes and partners are appropriately attired for athletic competition. Teams are asked to have a matching t-shirt, polo, or team uniform top for Unified Sports, Bowling. See the manual for details.

Q. When do I sign up for competition?

A. Each summer, your school activities/athletic director should register your school for Unified Sports, Bowling by July 1st. Cooperative agreement applications, with up to as many as 4 schools, for fall sports are due by June 1st.

Q. What types of meets can my team participate in?

A. Teams may enter into a variety of meets with other member schools in Nebraska: single meet (2 schools, teams play 6 games), doubleheaders (2 schools, teams play 12 games), triangular (3 schools play two, pre-determined meets), and tournaments (4 or more schools where winners continue to advance or compete, straight bracket or pool play).

Q. May I send more than one team to competition?

A. Yes, you may send as many teams as you have numbers to support, in conjunction with the host school. Co-ed teams are permitted. You are encouraged to create different ability groups among your teams.

Q. How much will this program cost to operate?

A. Special Olympics Nebraska can provide some seed money, attached to specific requirements/dates. See the "Grant Money, Intent Form." There are also reimbursable costs associated with Unified Sports via the Nebraska Department of Education. See the manual for details. Many coaches have been able to supplement their expenses by requesting a budget from their school, either under special services or athletics. Coaches should plan on expenses related to: rental fees, uniforms, equipment, and transportation.

Q. Are there any additional insurance needs that our school district should consider?

A. The NSAA will provide catastrophic insurance, as they do for any other sport. The local school district should communicate with their liability insurance carrier to verify appropriate liability insurance coverage of practices, facilities usage, transportation, etc.

Q. What if I want to recognize my team locally?

A. Many coaches in other states have included their teams in the school's athletic awards program, pep assembly, or local media outlets. You are encouraged to recognize the efforts of your team members in an appropriate manner for your school (school letter).

Other questions? Call Dan Masters, NSAA Assistant Director, at 402-489-0386.

WHAT TO DO TO GET YOUR TEAM UP AND RUNNING

1. ____ Get faculty on board. (Principal, Special Education Dept., Athletic Dept.)
2. ____ Choose Assistant Coaches/Aides.
3. ____ Determine practice time and place via athletic department.
4. ____ Meet with Special Education Dept. to identify athletes.
5. ____ Hold an organizational meeting with parents, athletes, partners, coaches and AD.
6. ____ Have all coaches complete all coaching requirements. (see the manual)
7. ____ Get your partners on board. (National Honor Society, Student Council, etc.)
8. ____ Order uniforms.
9. ____ Secure transportation.
10. ____ Confirm all necessary medical information and administration sheets are turned in. (physical sheet, NSAA consent form, local school forms)
11. ____ Obtain volunteers for home meets.

ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY FOR UNIFIED SPORTS®

1. To be eligible for participation in Unified Sports, an outgrowth of Special Olympics, a competitor must agree to observe and abide by guidelines and rules set forth by the NSAA.
2. Unified Sports and its parent-arm, Special Olympics, were created and developed to give individuals with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to train and compete in sports activities.
3. Eligibility for participation in Unified Sports:
 - a. General Statement of Eligibility: Every person with intellectual disabilities who meets NSAA eligibility requirements outlined in the Constitution & Bylaws shall be eligible to compete.
 - b. Age Requirements: Students must be in high school and meet the age requirements as shown in Approved Ruling and Interpretations 2.3.1 and 3.11.13
 - c. Degree of Disability: Participation in Unified Sports training and competition is open to all persons with intellectual disabilities who meet the age requirement of this Section regardless of the level or degree of that person's disability, and whether or not that person also has other mental or physical disabilities, so long as that person registers to participate in Unified Sports as required by these general rules.
 - d. Identifying Persons with Intellectual Disabilities: A person is considered to have intellectual disabilities for purposes to determining his or her eligibility to participate in Unified Sports if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:
 - i. The person has been appropriately determined by an agency or professional as having intellectual disabilities as determined by such professionals (Individualized Education Program); or
 - ii. The person has a cognitive delay, as determined by standardized measure such as intelligent quotient or "IQ" testing or other measures which are generally accepted within the professional community in that Accredited Program's nation as being a reliable measurement of the existence of a cognitive delay; or
 - iii. The person has a closely related developmental disability. A "closely related developmental disability" means having functional limitations in both general learning (such as IQ) and in adaptive skills (such as recreation, work, independent living, self-direction, or self-care). However, persons whose functional limitations are based solely on physical, behavioral, or emotional disability, or a specific learning or sensory disability, are not eligible to participate as athletes, but may be eligible as a partner.

The NSAA does not determine whether or not a person has an intellectual disability, but determines eligibility based on identification made by an agency, professional, and/or local school.

4. NOTIFICATION FROM NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ON SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND UNIFIED SPORTS®

Unified Sports® and Special Education

The IDEA requires that each child with a disability participate with nondisabled children in programs and activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of that child. Physical education services, specially designed if necessary, must be made available to every child with a disability receiving a free appropriate public education, unless the school district does not provide physical education to children without disabilities in the same grades. Additionally, each school district must take steps to provide nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, including athletics, in the manner necessary to afford children with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation in those services and activities. For students served under IDEA, the student's IEP must include, among other things, a statement of the special education and related services, and supplementary aids, services, and other supports that are needed to meet each child's unique needs in order for the child to: (1) advance appropriately towards attaining the annual goals; (2) be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and (3) be educated and participate in such activities with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children.

Participation in Unified Sports® may be considered a special education service if the child's IEP team determined that the activity was necessary to provide the child with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and to afford the child with a disability an equal opportunity for participation in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities. If participation in Unified Sports® is included on the child's IEP, a portion of the costs could be reimbursed to the school district from state and /or federal special education sources. Reimbursable costs may include:

- Salaries for certified instructional staff holding an Adaptive PE Education Endorsement or other special education categorical endorsement as outlined in 92 NAC 51-010.061D;
- Special education transportation costs associated with the activity;
- Any assistive technology device(s) or service(s) as determined appropriate and necessary for the child to participate in the nonacademic setting; and
- Paraprofessional(s) who are appropriately trained and supervised by qualified special education personnel and are assisting in the provision of the service included on the child's IEP.

PARTNER ELIGIBILITY FOR UNIFIED SPORTS®

Though Unified Sports, Bowling allows for partners with disabilities other than intellectual disabilities, Unified Sports® was developed to provide Special Olympics athletes with the choice of a sports program that brings about meaningful inclusion with their non-disabled peers. The desired objectives of a Unified Sports® experience are best fulfilled when partners on a team are individuals without disabilities. Even though an individual with a disability may make an appropriate partner, "Special Olympics Unified Sports teams should never be composed solely of people with disabilities." – Timothy Shriver

UNIFIED SPORTS, BOWLING MEET ENTRY FORM (SAMPLE)

School Name: _____

Phone: _____

Name of Coach/Advisor: _____

Cell/Home Phone: _____

ENTRY FORMS SHOULD BE EXCHANGED PRIOR TO MEET PLAY

Please list below all participating students. Please indicate "A" after the name for Athlete, or "P" for Partner. (Each team must have at least 1 athlete and always compete with a team composition of 2 partners and 1 athlete) Please list their shoe size and any additional notes about assistance devices.

Team #:			
Name	A/P	Shoe Size	Assistance Devices
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Team #:			
Name	A/P	Shoe Size	Assistance Devices
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Team #:			
Name	A/P	Shoe Size	Assistance Devices
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

5 players is the maximum roster size, per team, 2 players would be substitutes. Schools should pre-communicate the number of teams one school may enter into a meet.

PRE-MEET CHECKLIST (HOST ADMINISTRATOR)

ACQUIRE AND COMMUNICATE THE FOLLOWING TO THE HOST FACILITY:

- **Additional facility needs for both teams**
- **“Meet Entry Forms” from visiting team(s)**
- **Total number of needed lanes**
- **Participant shoe sizes/numbers for pre-meet organization**
- **Lane assignments, including team number, for pre-meet programming**
- **Obtain volunteers (hand out shoes, program lanes, organize bowling balls, lane hosts (keep kids in proper order, etc.), track scoring, etc.)**