



# Considerations for Unified Club and Inclusive Youth Leadership During Distance Learning

*Addendum to "How to Create and Sustain a Special Olympics Unified Club"*

**Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®** is a strategy for schools Pre-K through university that intentionally promotes meaningful social inclusion by bringing together students with and without intellectual disabilities to create accepting school environments, utilizing three interconnected components: Special Olympics Unified Sports®, inclusive youth leadership, and whole school engagement.

## What is a Unified Club?

A Unified Club is for students with and without intellectual disabilities to come together for sports, games, community service, school events, and most of all, to have fun! The goal of a Unified Club is to give students of all abilities the opportunity to work together and socialize in an inclusive environment.

Every Special Olympics Unified Champion School and every Unified Club will need to adapt in a unique way, adjusting to the distance learning environment and the possibility of not meeting either in or outside of school. What may work for one school may not at another. However, the below list consists of modifications you can consider to keep your Unified Club engaged.. Remember your Unified Club's primary goal is to provide an inclusive environment for all students. This environment can be virtual and this list includes just a few suggestions to get your wheels turning.

Decide what works best for you and come up with ideas on your own  
Before utilizing any of the suggestions below, make sure you are communicating with your school's administration and following all policies and guidance set for your school to prioritize the health and safety of all Unified Club members. This may include wearing face coverings, avoiding the sharing of materials, and keeping physical distance. Make sure to abide by all policies that your school has set in regards to the suggestions below.

### What will your Unified Club setting be?

- **IN-PERSON:** If your school is meeting in person, consider all social distancing suggestions when having your Unified Club meetings. Try to maintain 6 feet distance at all times, and avoid sharing equipment, materials, and writing instruments to prevent the spread of the virus. Even if your school is meeting in person, you may also consider having your club meetings virtually!
- **VIRTUAL:** If your school has not resumed typical, in-person operations, move your Unified Club to a virtual setting. Consider the following things:
  - What video meeting platform would work best for you all? Google Meet, Zoom, Facetime? Is there a platform that you already use for e-learning? If these platforms are new to you and your club members, consider having a group demo on how to use the platform together so that everyone feels comfortable.
  - Make accessibility a priority. It can be difficult to transition to virtual meetings, and ensuring all students are able to understand and add to the conversation is key.

## How will you collaborate on projects and activities?

- **IN-PERSON:** Even if you are meeting in person, it is still important to maintain social distancing. For example, rather than having everyone brainstorm by writing on posters or writing ideas up on a whiteboard/chalkboard, utilize one note-taker or use an online group collaboration app like Google Drive.
- **VIRTUAL:** If your meetings are happening virtually, you still want to be able to collaborate in real time. Consider applications like Google Drive (Google Doc) so that everyone can add their ideas to a document and seeing the live changes. Certain video meeting platforms like Zoom also have collaboration tools like the “whiteboard” or “polls” that you can utilize.

## What will your activities be?

Depending on your school’s choice for learning this year, it will be important to come up with leadership activities and whole school engagement plans that are flexible. Below are some activities and ideas that can be adapted to any setting:

### → **LEARN ABOUT LEADERSHIP TOGETHER**

- As a group, take the [Foundational Inclusive Youth Leadership Training](#) to learn about your individual leadership styles and how to lead as a team. This four-part leadership training can be done virtually or in person.
- Your club and your academic advisor can also take advantage of the [Inclusive Youth Leader Training Facilitator’s Guide](#) and [Youth Engagement Resource](#) to build a training that is unique to you. These guides have the same principles as the online Foundational Training, but with more activities and adaptations.

### → **DISCUSS MEANINGFUL INCLUSION**

Use the [Inclusion Tiles Game](#) on GenerationUnified.org to have group discussions about your individual inclusion journeys and what it takes to reach meaningful inclusion. These tiles are not only useful for talking about ability, but also about race, gender, identity, or any other differences! Use the [Inclusion Tiles Facilitator’s Guide](#), [Inclusion Tiles Student Guide](#), and/or [Inclusion for All Toolkit](#) to guide you through these discussions.

### → **PLAN A WHOLE SCHOOL SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN**

There are more ways to get your whole school involved than just pep rallies and assemblies! Consider a social media challenge or campaign to teach and promote inclusion that every student can be a part of. Check out these social challenges from the @SONorthAmerica Instagram for inspiration:

- [Inclusion Spirit Week](#)
- [Celebrating International Dance Day](#)
- [#UnifiedGeneration Bucket List](#)

Beyond all leadership trainings and engagement plans, it is most important that your Unified Club is a place for students to be connected, feel supported, and see their friends. Use this time to check in with your club members and support them in any way you can. Not everyone will adjust to our new normal in the same way, but having a strong support system will help.

For more information about Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® visit [www.GenerationUnified.org](http://www.GenerationUnified.org).