



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Special Olympics Washington and Seattle Public Schools Team Up to Bring Unified Champion Schools Programming District-Wide

*Media Invited to See Unified Programming in Action on Saturday Morning, April 22 at Unified Soccer League Play at Ingraham High School*

Seattle, WA – April 22, 2023 – [Special Olympics Washington](#), one of the leading advocates for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Washington, announced today a partnership with [Seattle Public Schools](#) that will bring its Unified Champion Schools programming to students throughout the district. With more than 50,000 students across 104 schools, Seattle Public Schools (SPS) is the largest K-12 school system in Washington State.

The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools program **promotes meaningful social inclusion by bringing together students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities** to create accepting school climates. This is accomplished through three interconnected components that promote respect, equity, and acceptance:

- **Unified Sports** which join students with and without IDD on the same sports team to encourage friendship and understanding.
- **Inclusive Youth Leadership** in which students of all abilities are given opportunities to be leaders in their schools and in turn, agents of change in their communities.
- **Whole School Engagement** activities that involve all students, teachers, staff, and administrators. 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.

Currently, nine SPS schools have implemented some to all three components of Unified Champion Schools programming. Over the next 3-5 years, SPS's goal is to activate programming in all 104 schools in the district.

"At Seattle Public Schools, our goal is to ensure that every child, no matter their ability, can achieve to their highest level," said Dr. Concie Pedroza, Associate Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools. "Key to this is creating positive and inclusive environments for all students in our schools. Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools programming aligns perfectly with that mission."

"We're excited to help Seattle Public Schools transform our city's youth into leaders, advocates and relentless supporters of inclusion in our community," said David Wu, President and CEO of Special Olympics Washington. "One of our key priorities under our Beyond Gold campaign is to expand our

Unified Champion Schools program to urban schools. Partnering with Seattle Public Schools is a huge leap forward as we work to build a more inclusive future for Washington.”

## **Unified Soccer League Play on Saturday, April 22**

As part of its partnership with Special Olympics Washington, on Saturday, April 22, Seattle Public Schools will host Unified soccer league play at Ingraham High School (1819 N 135th, Seattle). Matches will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

More than 175 athletes with and without IDD on 12 Unified soccer teams from the Auburn, Issaquah, Kent, Mercer Island, and Seattle school districts will compete.

Media are invited to cover the event.

Representatives from Seattle Public Schools and Special Olympics Washington will be onsite for media interviews from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

## **About Seattle Public Schools**

Seattle Public Schools, the largest K-12 school system in Washington state, has a deep commitment to every student’s journey—to ensure that each student will graduate ready for college, career and life.

## **About Special Olympics Washington**

We are a catalyst for inclusion! Special Olympics Washington provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports, inclusive health programs, and community building for more than 11,900 children and adults with and without intellectual and developmental 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. Learn more at [SpecialOlympicsWashington.org](https://www.SpecialOlympicsWashington.org).

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