

I N S P I R E G R E A T N E S S[™]



Getting Started: Partners Club®/Unified Sports™

The Partners Club® is a unique Special Olympics Alaska sponsored, school based program that teams students with and without intellectual disabilities, through sports training and competition (Unified Sports™). This club offers social and recreational opportunities as well.

Special Olympics Alaska is a resource to your club and sports teams. While some clubs are specifically sports oriented, others include activities that are social and recreational. Over time clubs develop the program to offer opportunities in both areas. The support of faculty and administration in both general and special education departments is crucial in ensuring the success of students in the program.

Clubs must meet all requirements of their school policies and procedures as well as those of Special Olympics Alaska. Each member has to meet the guidelines for participation in a school club. The club sponsor or a member holding an office position of the club should contact the Activities Principal within the school to identify criteria that must be met in order to be sanctioned.

Getting Started

- Contact SO-AK and submit your Club Registration form. This will activate the start of you club allowing SO-AK to begin providing resources where needed (funding, access to other clubs, supplies and materials, equipment etc).
- Contact your Activities Principal to identify areas of support and requirements for your school district to start a sanctioned club. Recommended topics to discuss include:
 - Partners Club® activities
 - Unified Sports™
 - Criteria to be sanctioned
 - Transportation to and from activities or events
 - Students requirements for participating in school sanctioned Activities
 - Criteria for earning a “letter” or other school based recognition
 - Media release for pictures and video
 - Fundraising guidelines
- Introduce your Special Education Department to the Partners Club® concept. Enlist their endorsement and support of the club. They will be crucial to the success of the program in regards to students with special needs participating.
- Identify a general education teacher to co-sponsor or collaborate with.
- Present information/opportunities to students.
- Send information and forms home to parents.
- Hold first club meeting. Introduce Partners Club® and Unified Sports™ concept.
- Have students complete any school required forms for club and sport participation in your school as well as those required for Special Olympics Alaska.
- Identify coaches in your school that would be interested in helping start up and/or supporting Unified Sports™ Teams.

Partners Club® Registration Form

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

Name of School: _____

School District: _____

Club Coordinator: _____

Additional School Support (adults): _____

Position/Department of Coordinator: _____

Club President/Co President: _____

Coordinator/School Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Email: _____

Contact Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Date of first meeting: _____

Potential needs from Special Olympics Alaska: _____

Potential number of Athletes: _____ Partners: _____

Please return completed form to:

Nicolle Egan

Special Olympics Alaska
3200 Mountain View Drive
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Phone: 1-907-222-7625 (629)

Fax: 1-907-222-6200

Toll Free: 1-888-499-7625 (629)

nicolle@specialolympicalaska.org

Tips for a Successful Partners Club and Unified Sports Program

Student Recruitment

- Utilize existing systems (announcements, flyers, school newspaper, word of mouth).
- Enlist the assistance of the Special Education Department faculty
- Enlist the assistance of student based clubs including:
 - Key Club
 - National Honor Society
 - Student Government
 - Class Councils (Freshmen class meeting)
- Ask students to determine ways to recruit others. How have students been successfully “recruited” in the past.

Strategies for enhancing your 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®. SO-AK sponsors Bowling, Basketball, Track & Field but your program is not limited to these three seasons.
- Invite guest speakers to your meetings identifying specific topics. (Special Olympics coach of your sport, Fundraising experts to help with a project, 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 team 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 Government. Request representation at meetings
- Respect confidentiality where needed.
- Determine an individual’s interest in joining Special Olympics and sports.
- Ask SO-AK to assist when needed.

Suggested Orientation Topics

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* meeting for Partners separately. Below are topics suggested by successful Partners Clubs® around the state.

This meeting helps ensure students are aware of and able to meet their responsibility as a club member. It also provides a time to openly discuss topics such as confidentiality, the importance of a commitment to consistently attend practices and meetings, and strategies for working with fellow students. Topics might include:

- What is Special Olympics Alaska, Partners Club® and Unified Sports®?
- Responsibilities/Expectations during meetings, club activities, and sports
- Requirements for participating (School and SO-AK)
- Expectations of appropriate interaction between Partners and Athletes
- Individual needs of Athletes (when appropriate)
- Strategies for having a positive relationship when facing challenges

- Strategies for recruiting new members
- Upcoming activities, events and dates
- Benefits of being a member: develop relationships, inclusion, letters of recommendation, college application/resume recognition, fun, fitness, social interaction, etc.
- Best day/time of the week/month for meetings
- Discuss roles: Athletes/ Partners and what expectations are for participation in the club or sports if they choose.

Fundraising Strategies

As a Special Olympics Alaska sponsored club, school based fundraising is not required within a Partner's Club®. However, it is an effective resource for your group to earn money for events and an opportunity for students to learn, gain skills, build relationships and socialize. Below is a list of some fundraisers that have worked for Partners Clubs® in the past. All fundraising should be cleared with Activities Principal.

- Check with your school's student government at the beginning of the year for fundraising opportunities. For example:
 - Host a dance (Kodiak High School, Kodiak)
 - Work concessions in the school (West High School, Anchorage)
- Bake sales at school events such as conferences, back to school night etc. (Wasilla High School, Wasilla)
- Garage sale. Use resources within the school, have students/ teachers donate, or put out flyers for donations. (Service High School, Anchorage)
- Sell espressos at school (East High School, Anchorage)
- Sell Smoothies. Overhead cost is low, student interest high. (Chugiak High School, Eagle River)
- Popcorn sales. (West High School, Anchorage)
- T-shirt/Sweatshirt sale for Partners Club® members. Special Olympics can often get clothing and printing costs at a reduced price. (Chugiak High School, Eagle River)

SAMPLE Criteria for earning Awards and Letters

Your schools will require specific criteria for earning an award or letter for participation in activities (club) and athletics (sports). In many cases, members of the Partner Club® and/or Unified Sports™ will be eligible to earn this recognition. Program specific criteria might include:

- a. School letters may be awarded for student participation only in events that are school district sponsored and controlled.
- b. Student participates in % of activities (meetings, practices, fundraisers, competition, etc)
- c. Holds a lead position in the club (president, secretary, etc) for one year.
- d. Demonstrates significant value to the club: (Written justification for letter by coordinator.)