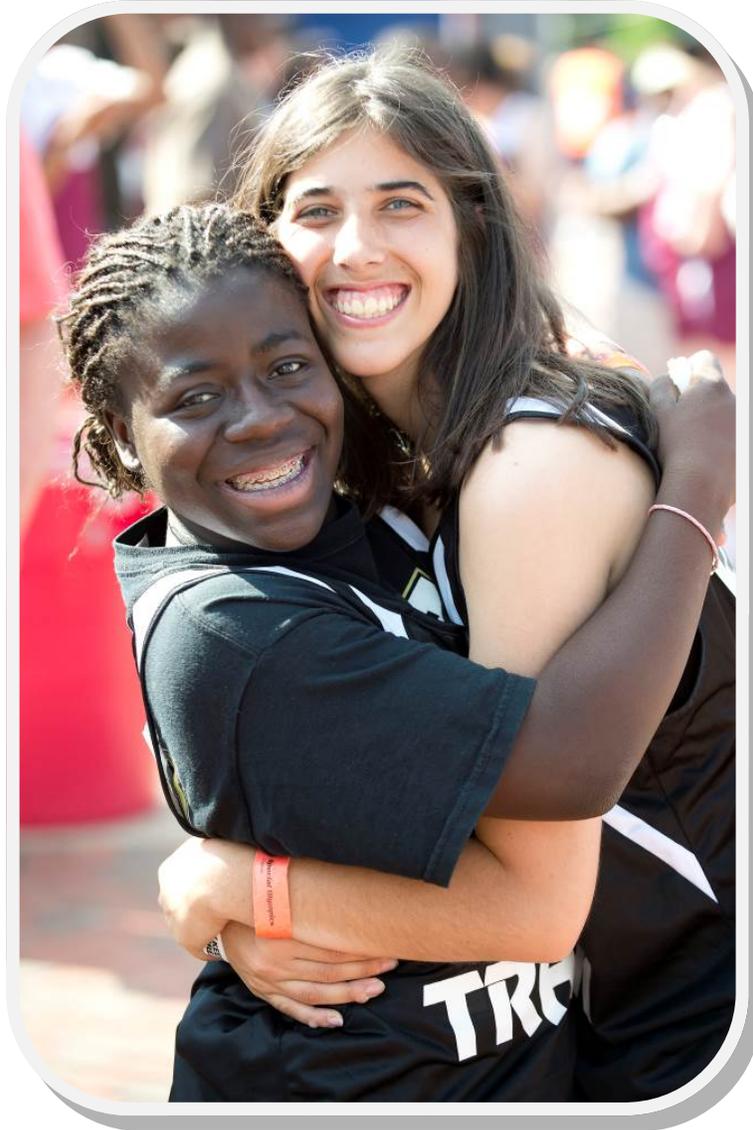




Special Olympics
Unified Sports®

Interscholastic Track and Field



Community, friendship, sports, fun!

**Special
Olympics**
Virginia





Special Olympics Virginia

Special Olympics Virginia is a year-round sports training and competition program for persons with intellectual disabilities or closely related cognitive delays. By using sport as a vehicle for social change, Special Olympics Virginia strives to create opportunities for meaningful interaction and self discovery for every member of the community. Such interaction will open the heart and mind of every Virginian to the value and abilities of persons with intellectual disabilities.

Virginia High School League

The Virginia High School League is an alliance of Virginia's public high schools that establishes and maintains high standards for school activities and competitions. Few experiences enrich the lives of boys and girls as much as participation in interscholastic athletics and academic activities. For nearly 100 years, the Virginia High School League has provided opportunities for Virginia's youth to engage in a variety of activities and competitions that promote education, personal growth, sportsmanship, leadership and citizenship.

Unified Sports®

Special Olympics Virginia and the Virginia High School League are working together to build communities of acceptance and inclusion through the engagement of young people in Virginia schools. Unified Sports® give students with and without intellectual disabilities the opportunity to train and compete as team-mates on the field of play – paving the way for social inclusion community-wide. Unified Sports® is a proven model for improving sports skills, fitness, confidence, friendships and social inclusion. It is effective in improving attitudes of youth and creating community acceptance of all abilities. For more information about successful Unified Sports® programs, watch this video: <http://tinyurl.com/unifiedsports>.

Interscholastic Unified Track and Field

High schools are encouraged to offer Unified Sports® track and field as an additional interscholastic sport experience for all students. Teams will have proportionate numbers of athletes with and without intellectual disabilities. Unified Partners, the participants without intellectual disabilities, may be students without competitive athletics experience, student athletes that are not involved in a spring sport or students with physical disabilities. All students would participate as equal members on the Unified Sports® track and field team.

Teams are formed and managed through the school athletics department. Unified Sports® track teams will practice a minimum of twice a week for eight weeks in the spring. Practices may be held in conjunction with the school's varsity track team or at a different time. An adult must serve as the head coach. Students, particularly track athletes, may serve as assistant coaches.

Track and Field Events

A variety of track events geared for all ability levels will be offered. A Special Olympics Virginia track and field guide is available at:

<http://www.specialolympics.org/athletics.aspx> to assist in planning practice sessions.

Suggested Events

100M run

400M run

Softball throw

Shot put

Long jump

4 x 100M Unified Sports® relay (2 athletes with ID and 2 partners without ID)



Events for Students with Physical Disabilities

25M wheelchair race

30M motorized wheelchair slalom race

25M assisted device walk race

Tennis ball throw for wheelchair users

Competition Format

Schools may determine how many events each athlete and partner can enter. Schools should division their athletes and partners by ability, meaning that you may have four 100M heats starting with a heat of students who have the slowest entry times and concluding with a heat of students who have the fastest entry times. Athletes and partners should be divisioned together based on entry scores.

Schools may consider including the Unified Sports® track events into existing interscholastic track dual meets. The Unified Sports® track results would be calculated separately from the varsity track results. The same scoring mechanism can be used such as 5 points for first place, 3 points for second place and 1 point for third place to determine the school winner of the Unified Sports® track meet.

Each Unified Sports® track team must compete at least once against another Unified Sports® track team. This competition may happen in conjunction with the varsity track team's meet or scheduled at another time.

The season may culminate with a Unified Sports® track and field experience during the Virginia High School League's Track and Field Championships on Saturday, June 6. The purpose of participating in the VHSL Track and Field Championship is to promote awareness of the Champions Together program..



Funding

Special Olympics Virginia will work cooperatively with schools to help raise the funds required for equipment, uniforms and transportation to implement Unified Sports® track and field. Run with the Law is one mechanism that schools can use to raise funds. Law enforcement personnel, students and staff collect pledges for running the Special Olympics Flame of Hope around the school track. Special Olympics Virginia will provide the format and resources to make this event a success for your school.

Possible Inclusion Activities

The r-word campaign (www.r-word.org) encourages students to stop using the words “retard” and “retarded” in a derogatory manner. Special Olympics launched the r-word campaign to oppose prejudice and discrimination by continuously working to dispel the negative stereotypes associated with people with intellectual disabilities — the use of the r-word being one such stereotype. R-word materials are available for schools at no cost.

Special Olympics Get Into It curriculums are designed to engage students in lessons about diversity, inclusion, perseverance, leadership and community service. Online age-appropriate resources including lessons, activities, videos, athlete stories and supplemental materials are available for grades 9-12. The lessons are designed to be taught in the context of class periods and activities with ties to service learning are completed in a classroom or community setting. For more information visit: <https://getintoit.specialolympics.org/>.

