



Shrewsbury Public Schools

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Dear Members of the School Committee,

We are writing to provide an update on the current state of the Unified Program at Shrewsbury High School, as well as our most recent recognition as an official Special Olympics National Banner Unified Champion School. Shrewsbury High School is 1 of only 16 schools in the state of Massachusetts and 1 of only 179 schools nationwide to have been awarded this honor.

Unified Model

The Unified model centers around three components, which must be demonstrated in order to become a National Unified Champion School. These standards are designed to foster the development of Inclusive Sports, Youth Leadership, and Whole School Engagement.

Inclusive Sports

In 2014, Shrewsbury High School partnered with Special Olympics® to launch the first Unified Track & Field Team at SHS. This inclusive sports program brought together individuals with intellectual disabilities (athletes) and those without intellectual disabilities (partners). Throughout the past six seasons, students have trained, competed, and socialized as equals. During Unified Track & Field's most recent season, SHS took 1st place (out of 19 schools) in Sectionals, and placed 2nd (out of 26 schools) at the Division 1 State Championship.

In 2015, Shrewsbury High School furthered their inclusive sports efforts, and created the Unified Basketball team. The Unified Basketball team has consistently attended and participated in the end-of-the-season jamboree, competing against teams from all over Massachusetts. Over the past four seasons, the Unified Basketball Team has had a 42% increase in participation since they began in the Fall of 2015.

In 2016, Shrewsbury High School began participating in an annual Unified Bocce tournament. This effort has been led by Student Council members, and is another prime example of the inclusive culture that Unified has created in the SHS community.

Youth Leadership

In 2018, Unified Club at Shrewsbury High School was officially approved. It was designed to provide a variety of leadership opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities. The club is presently run by a student-led leadership committee comprised of 5 members.

Members of the Unified Club are mentored by club advisor Meghan Wallace, in order to develop and implement inclusive opportunities throughout Shrewsbury High School (i.e. Spread the Word to End the Word campaign, Fans in the Stands, Unified lunch tables, etc).

It should also be noted that Shrewsbury High School has participated in the annual Youth Leadership Summit held by the Special Olympics Commission since 2014. This annual summit provides two students - one with intellectual disabilities and one without intellectual disabilities - the opportunity to network with students from other districts around inclusion efforts in their respective schools.

Whole School Engagement

Since 2014, Shrewsbury High School has carried out an annual *"Spread the Word to End the Word"* campaign during the month of April (to coincide with Autism Awareness Month). The *"Spread the Word to End the Word"* campaign is designed to raise awareness of the harmful effects of the "R" word and encourage people to pledge to stop using it.

In April of 2019, Unified Club members created a *"Spread the Word to End the Word"* public service announcement, featuring students with and without intellectual disabilities, athletes, teachers, administrators, and our own superintendent taking the pledge. The public service announcement was aired to all students during video announcements, and posted to the @SHS_Unified Twitter account, where it received over three thousand views.

Shrewsbury High School has also run a *"Fans in the Stands"* initiative since 2014, where students with and without intellectual disabilities, athletes from other in-season sports, student council members, faculty, as well as unaffiliated members of the high school community participate in cheering the Unified Basketball team and/or Unified Track & Field team. This takes place during each home game and/or home meet.

National Unified Champion School Recognition

In order to be officially recognized as a National Unified Champion School, each school must provide strong evidence of the 10 standards listed below:

1. Unified Sports is offered in at least 2 seasons throughout the school year.
2. Unified Sports participation occurs regularly over the course of each sport season or school term and includes competition.
3. An adult coach for each sport who has received training on Special Olympics Unified Sports.
4. Unified Sports is officially recognized by the school in a similar style as other athletics/activities.
5. A Unified Club or student group offers leadership opportunities/training for students with and without intellectual disabilities.
6. The inclusive club/group meets at least once per month throughout the school year.
7. The inclusive club/group has an adult liaison and is officially recognized by the school in a similar style as other clubs/activities.
8. At least two whole-school engagement activities are implemented per school year.
9. Students with and without disabilities are involved with planning and leading the awareness activities.
10. The school is currently self-sustainable or has a plan in place to sustain the three components into the future.

In the Spring of 2019, Shrewsbury High School felt confident enough in its inclusive practices to apply for the National Unified Champion School banner. On August 26th, 2019, Shrewsbury High School was awarded this tremendous honor. A school-wide event will be announced in the coming weeks, in order to celebrate this accomplishment and accept the banner from the Special Olympics committee.