



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: June 12, 2020
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads
Route To: Special Education Directors, Principals
From: Peggy McDonald, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student Services
Deadline: Applications accepted through November 30, 2020

Districts Encouraged to Apply to Participate in Unified Champion Schools Project

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is pleased to announce the launch of a new five-year partnership with Rowan University (RU) and Special Olympics New Jersey (SONJ) designed to promote, support and advance Unified Champion Schools programming across the state. The collaboration between the NJDOE, RU, and SONJ will assist school districts in developing school-based programming through the Special Olympics UCS, which includes inclusive youth leadership, whole school engagement, and professional development activities.

Consistent with the NJDOE's mission to advance equity across the state, Unified Champion Schools utilize evidence-based strategies which are designed to bring students with and without disabilities together on a level playing field as peers, teammates, and classmates. Whether together in school or through virtual educational, social and fitness activities, these meaningful interactions foster friendships and positive attitudes that create a school culture free from bullying, exclusion, and negative perceptions. Unified Champion Schools strives to build inclusive communities where every student is empowered to succeed and has access to equal opportunities to participate meaningfully, safely and successfully in school. During these uncertain times, we encourage schools to apply to participate in this project as a means to connect students, as we move through Governor Murphy's phases of reopening, to maintain the relationships, activity and social and emotional supports they need to continue to thrive during these challenging times.

To participate in the Unified Champion Schools program, school districts are encouraged to apply on the [SONJ website](#).

In addition to applying for the program, RU/SONJ invites school districts to learn more about Special Olympics New Jersey and Unified Champion Schools through social media platforms: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

For questions, please contact Keshia Trotman, RU/SONJ Program Officer, at Keshia.Trotman@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D., Commissioner
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group