



Downey Unified
SCHOOL DISTRICT

UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS

FEBRUARY 10, 2026

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

Brief History of Unified Champion Schools in DUSD - Dr. Ruswick

What “Unified” Looks Like in DUSD Now - Ms. Christine Spino

Mini Testimonials

- *Gauldin Dolphins*
- *Doty Knights*
- *Warren High Bears*
- *Downey High Vikes Athletic Leadership Class*
- *Alumni*
- *A Parent’s Perspective*



Words by Ms. Kelly Pond, CEO of Special Olympics Southern California

Approval of MOU Between DUSD & Special Olympics of Southern California



WARD'S UNIFIED FIELD DAY - FEB 2026

Casey Palin, CST & Unified Champion Site Liaison
Gladys Diaz, Principal

UNIFIED SPORTS SITE LIAISONS & COACHES

2025-2026

ALAMEDA

Molly Donahue, CST & Liaison
Erik Gutierrez, Teacher & Coach
Hilary Gunsaulus, Teacher & Coach

OLD RIVER

Sussan DeMatta, Site Liaison
John Hayes, Coach
John Roche, Coach
Susana Loza, Coach

WARD

Casey Palin, Site Liaison
Kristian Bassett, Coach

SMS

Brianna Skutt, Site Liaison
Krystal Lee, Coach

GALLATIN

Viviana Maulit, CST & Liaison
Sarah McCrory, Teacher & Coach
Leticia Villalva, Psych & Coach
Algery McGuire, Teacher & Coach

PRICE

Cindy Reyes, Site Liaison
Michel Ortiz, Coach

WILLIAMS

Yahaira Magallon, Site Liaison
Sarah McGarry, Coach
Lianne Almaralez, Coach

DAT/CHS

Michael Larkin, Site Liaison
Luis Orejel, Coach
Alejandro Hernandez, Coach

GAULDIN

Leah Haynes-Pinal, Site Liaison
Valorie Gutierrez, Coach
Patricia Marin, Coach
Marcela Parra, Coach
Vanessa Mount, Coach

RIO HONDO

Lydia Soto, Site Liaison
Robert Pulido, Coach
Cindy Gentil, Coach
Melanie Fitisemanu, Coach

DMS

Kendra Creed, Site Liaison
Kylie Brazill, Coach

DHS

Kysha Green, Site Liaison
Margarita Hinostro, Coach
Kevin Capps, Coach

GARCIA

Laura Rojas, Site Liaison
Elizabeth Raimundo, Coach
Michelle Ahkuoi, Coach
Chris Bauer, Coach

RSG

Susan Serrato, Site Liaison
Shannon Woodard, Coach
Samantha Uribe, Coach

LEWIS

Irene Marquez, Site Liaison
Tracy Tufnell, Coach

UNSWORTH

Ashlin Lord, Site Liaison
Kayla Macias, Coach

MSMS

Daniel Estrella, Site Liaison
Michael Nametz, Coach
Renee Baustista, Coach

Special Thanks

Samantha Miyahara, WHS AD
Mark Rand, DHS AD

A DISTRICT MISSION & A SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

THE VISION

ALL students graduate with a 21st Century education that ensures they are **COLLEGE & CAREER READY, GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE** and **CITIZENS OF STRONG CHARACTER.**

THE EQUITY PLAN

THEME OF EQUITY PLAN GOAL 1: *Belonging*

PRINCIPLE UNDERLYING EQUITY GOAL 1: *DUSD is a place where all belong. All children, staff, and families are valued and welcomed.*

EQUITY GOAL 1: *DUSD implement practices addressing diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion for all students, staff, and families.*

HISTORY & TIMELINE

WHS:

- 2008: Teen Connection Established at WHS
- 2014: Staff v Students Kickball Game at WHS
- 2015: Abilities Awareness Week @ WHS Introduced
- 2016: Partnership with Special Olympics was Formed
- 2018: Unified PE and Art Built into Master Schedule
- 2019: WHS Became a Special Olympics National Banner School & Received ESPN Recognition
- 2019: CIF Established Unified Track & Field
- 2021: Current WHS Students Sam Lara & Kate Gonzalez Become Special Olympics U.S. Youth Ambassadors
- 2022: Two WHS Unified Pairs Compete in Track & Field at the Special Olympics National Games in Florida



2023-2024:

- The District Establishes a Unified Sports District Lead & Two High School Lead Positions
- DEA “Better Together Grants” Match Special Olympics Grant Funding
- Negotiations Take Place for Stipends for Site Liaisons and Coaches
- Unified Sports is Introduced to DUSD Middle Schools
- Doty Middle School Adds Unified PE to Master Schedule
- Elementary Schools Begin Inclusion & Abilities Awareness Weeks



2024-2025:

- Negotiated Stipends for Site Liaisons and Coaches go live!
- All four Middle Schools and DHS become “Unified Champions” Schools
- PBS Films a Segment for “Inside California’s Schools” on Unified Sports in DUSD
- DUSD Wins CSBA Golden Bell Award for Unified Sports in the Category of “Equitable Resource Distribution”



2025-2026:

- 19 DUSD Schools are Considered “Unified Champion” Schools
- Formalizing MOU with SOSC in an effort to become a “Unified Champions” District!!
- April 2026: Biggest Unified Track Meet in Planning Process - 16 Middle & High Schools
- May 2026: DHS Athletic Leadership Hosting 1st Annual DHS/WHS Unified Sports Banquet



WHAT IS A UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOL?

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools aim to promote social inclusion through intentionally planned and implemented activities affecting systems-wide change in TK-12 schools and beyond.

Three Core Components

1. Inclusive Sports (aka: “Unified Sports”)
2. Inclusive Youth Leadership Opportunities
3. Whole School Engagement

What a Unified Champion School “looks like” can vary greatly from school to school, based on the needs, goals, schedules, and other factors unique to each school.

HOW 19 DUSD SCHOOLS BECAME UNIFIED CHAMPIONS SCHOOLS

- *Staff Members Possess a Vision & Desire for Inclusion at their School Site*
- *Staff Choose to Become Unified Champion Site Liaisons or Coaches*
- *Each Site Completes a Work Plan for the School Year & Submits this to SOSC*
- *SOSC Reviews & Approves Each Work Plan (sites receive a SOSC Shield, a banner, and often receive grant \$\$\$!)*
- *The School Site Implements Their Work Plan*
- *The School Site Culture Benefits*
- *The Cycle Repeats*



BELONGING

WHAT “UNIFIED” LOOKS LIKE NOW IN DUSD

Ms. Christine Spino

*Unified Champions Schools District Liaison
Downey Adult Transition Teacher*



UNIFIED EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

2025-2026

ALAMEDA

Unified PE, Lunch Mix-Up,
Unified Spirit Week

GALLATIN

Unified Sports,
Abilities Awareness Week

GAULDIN

Lunch Pals,
Deaf/Autism Awareness Days,
Unified Sports Day,
Read Across America Week

GARCIA

Daily Walk and Talk, Unified Cheer,
Unified Robotics, Unified E-Sports,
Unified Field Day

LEWIS

Reading Buddies,
Unified Social Activities,
Unified Field day,
Abilities Awareness Week

OLD RIVER

Unified P.E., P.E. Buddies
Winter Field Day,
Lessons on Belonging
Unified Art Club

PRICE

Inclusion Club, Recess Buddies,
Unified Cheer, Unified Field Day,
Abilities Awareness Week

RIO HONDO

Unified Minecraft Club,
Unified Art,
Abilities Awareness Week

RSG

Unified Cheer, Unified P.E.
Playground Buddies, Monthly Rallies
Spread the Word Campaign, Inclusion
Pledge, PeaceKeepers, Unified Robotics,
Character Counts Council

UNSWORTH

Social Club, Recess Buddies,
Unified Field Day,
Abilities Awareness Week,
Pep Rallies

WARD

Unified PE, Unified Robotics,
Unified Field Day,
Abilities Awareness Weeks

WILLIAMS

Unified Play/Recess buddies,
Abilities Awareness Week,
Unified Field Day

DMS

Unified Sports Club, Unified PE,
Reverse Inclusion, Unified Sports,
Unified Field Day,
Abilities Awareness Week

GMS

Unified Pep Squad, Unified Sports
Unified P.E., Unified Club
Unified Kickball Tournament
Abilities Awareness Week

MSMS

Unified Sports Club, Unified Cheer,
Unified Robotics, Unified Lego Club,
Unified Spirit Week,
Abilities Awareness Week

SMS

Unified PE,
Pioneer Adventure Club

DAT/CHS

Unified Intramural Sports,
Unified Socials

DHS

Amigos Club, Unified PE/Sports,
Unified Dance,
Unified Botany, Unified Field Day,
World Down Syndrome Day

WHS

Unified Socials, Sports Tailgates,
Unified Sports (Rec and Competitive),
Unified Art, Unified JROTC,
Staff v. Student Basketball game,
Abilities Awareness Week,
Unified Track Meet



CIF SANCTIONED UNIFIED SPORTS

Unified Flag Football



Unified Swim



Unified Track





UNIFIED SPORTS EVENT CALENDAR WINTER/SPRING 2026



FEBRUARY 4th
WARD's UNIFIED FIELD DAY
8:15am: Pep Rally
8:30am to 12pm: Field Day Activities



FEBRUARY 9th
ALAMEDA's UNIFIED FIELD DAY
8:15am: Pep Rally
8:30am to 11:10am: Field Day Activities



FEBRUARY 27th
GAULDIN's UNIFIED FIELD DAY
9am: Opening Ceremony
9am to 12pm: Field Day Activities



MARCH 4th
UNSWORTH's UNIFIED FIELD DAY
Details TBD



MARCH 12th
GRIFFITH's KICKBALL TOURNAMENT
Details TBD
DMS, GMS, MSMS, and SMS Competing



MARCH 13th
GARCIA's UNIFIED FIELD DAY
Details TBD



MARCH 19th
DHS UNIFIED FIELD DAY
Details TBD
DHS & WHS Participating



APRIL 24th
WHS UNIFIED TRACK MEET
Details TBD
16+ Schools Competing



MAY 16th
6pm @ The Arc



1st ANNUAL DHS/WHS UNIFIED SPORTS BANQUET

Sponsored by The DHS Athletic Leadership Class of 2025-2026

GAULDIN ELEMENTARY



Ms. Sylvia Estrella
Principal

Leah Haynes-Pinal
Social Behavior Communication (SBC) Teacher
Unified Sports Site Liaison

Lucas Palma
Gauldin Student

Myles Mount
Gauldin Student

DOTY MIDDLE SCHOOL



Mr. Scott Fleming

Principal

Kendra Creed

Adapted Physical Education Teacher
Unified Sports Site Liaison

Kylie Brazill

Life Skills Teacher
Unified Sports Site Coach

Joshua Gonzalez

Doty Student

Aliyah Gonzalez

Doty Student

Adalina Balderas

Doty Student

WARREN HIGH SCHOOL



Dr. Cari White

Principal

Nadia Roldan

Art Department Chair

Unified Sports Site Liaison

NATALIA VELA

WHS c/o 2026

JOAN RAMIREZ

WHS c/o 2027

DOWNEY HIGH SCHOOL



Ms. Julie Main

Assistant Principal

Mr. Brian Barnes

Integrated Math III Lead Teacher
Athletic Leadership
Baseball Assistant

Nathan Cazares

DHS c/o 2026

Luna Esquivias

DHS c/o 2026

Isabel Serrano

DHS c/o 2026

ALUMNI TESTIMONIAL



Samuel Lara

WHS c/o 2022

Downey Adult Transition Student

Kate Gonzalez

WHS c/o 2022

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
GLOBAL MESSENGERS**

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS NORTH AMERICA
US AMBASSADOR PROGRAM ALUMNI**

**SPECIAL OLYMPICS INTERNATIONAL
GLOBAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL ALUMNI**

The White House, December 2024

A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Ms. Raquel Pena

Gauldin Parent

Mother of Nathan “Thomas” Gomez

Ms. Samantha Rivera

Gauldin & Doty Parent

Mother of Gabriel Rivera

KELLY POND, CEO Special Olympics Southern California



BELONGING

If we have no peace,
it is because
we have forgotten
that we belong to eachother.

Mother Teresa