



# UCS

Unified Champion Schools

## Newsletter

In a Year 9 national UCS study, school staff that were empowered to implement the UCS program reported the UCS program created a more socially inclusive school environment (94%), increased opportunities for students to work together (95%), raised awareness about students with ID (94%), increased the participation of students with ID in school activities (92%), and reduced bullying, teasing, and offensive language (88%).

### We Choose to Include

#### Being Part of a Unified Team

By: Xander Sheehan  
(14)

It's hard to find words to describe what it was like to experience the USA games as a Unified Partner. I was honored to be selected as a partner but I had no idea of the magnitude of the event I was about to participate in. Upon arriving in Seattle and getting the welcome we did at the airport it started to dawn on me that this was something bigger than I had ever experienced before.



## THE REVOLUTION IS INCLUSION



Special Olympics South Dakota's 1st Interscholastic Unified Basketball Team capturing gold at Special Olympics USA Games in Seattle, Washington

The week in Seattle was much more than just about competing in basketball, it was about making friendships, supporting all athletes regardless of where they were from and learning just how much competing means to the athletes regardless of whether they win or lose. Competing and being a part of a team makes them feel included and that's what Special Olympics is about....inclusion.

The biggest thing I took away from the week was sportsmanship. I have competed in sports all my life, but there is nothing like the sportsmanship that takes place in Special Olympics. Everyone cheers for everyone else, even if it happens to be the team you are currently competing against. Everyone is happy



Castlewood celebrates homecoming with a Unified Champion Schools float featuring Special Olympics athlete and homecoming king, Jarred Dahl

### 2017-2018 UCS Highlights

- Unified Rivalry Series Game between Augustana University and Northern State University
- 25 Schools Participating (4 pending)
- 3 Universities Participating
- 115 Schools active statewide with Spread the Word to End the Word campaign

for the accomplishments of the athletes and you can't help but smile yourself when you see the reaction of an athlete who just scored a basket or made a good play. This was especially apparent during our championship game when a Minnesota athlete scored a 3 point basket and ran over and hugged his mom. You couldn't help but be happy for him. And after we won the game, the Minnesota players congratulated us and told us how well we played defense. Never had I experienced that while playing my other sports, it's always about winning and losing. I think everyone who participates in sports could learn a few things from Special Olympics, I know I sure did.

(Xander is part of Hamlin School's UCS)