Special Olympics Young Athletes™

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools

A More Inclusive Future for Washington's Youngest Athletes

Learn how the 'Young Athletes' program is empowering children, with and without intellectual disabilities, to thrive in schools across Washington State.

In 1968 Special Olympics ignited a global revolution, meant to drive greater inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

As our movement has grown, we've learned a lot about what makes sports and competition such a powerful catalyst for equity.

- Creates Empowerment
- Builds Purpose
- Drives Confidence
- Makes Friendship
- Creates Agency

Reaching young children with IDD at an early stage has become one of our top priorities.

While many are too young to participate in competition, our community wanted a way to give them access to the same **opportunities** and **resources** that's made Special Olympics such a powerful agent for change.

To date, over 142,000 children across approximately 100 countries have completed the Young Athletes program with life-changing results.

These include measurable improvement in a wide range of skills, including:

- Gross Motor Movement
- Adaptive Thinking
- Social Communication
- Analytical Thinking
- Self Confidence

As Special Olympics Washington enters its 50th year, we're more committed than ever to leveraging our reach and impact to grow opportunities for young children with IDD here at home.

That means working with **Washington educators,** like you, who are committed to ensuring that every child has access to inclusive learning opportunities.

As part of that effort, we’re reaching out to partners in early education across the state to help grow adoption of the Young Athletes program.

By 2025, our goal is to **establish Young Athletes programs in at least 60 new schools**, serving children aged 2–7 across Washington State.

We’re making it easy to embrace and implement inclusive programming.

- 1:1 Support from Special Olympics
- Library of Video Resources
- Free Training Provided
- Multi-Language Support
- Fits Washington SHAPE Standard

See what other educators, caregivers, and administrators are saying about Young Athletes:

“It has been amazing to see him and the other children grow. Everyone has a chance just to be themselves.”

Solny Ingibjorg Palsdottir, Young Athlete Parent

“Young Athletes can lead to the improvement of so many skills in your students that you can’t imagine when you first start. It leads to more self-confidence, concentration, and understanding.”

Biljana, Co-teacher at the Star Garden kindergarten

“Children without disabilities get used to interacting with the children, see them as children and not as people without something, but rather as people with different needs.”

Anca Beudean, Sustainability Director of Fundatia Motivation Romania

Getting Started is Easy!

For more information, to preview the curriculum, please visit our website or contact me below and I will get back to you shortly.

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