



# Project Title: Co-Production of Mixed Abilities Education Curriculum for Youth with and without Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

Unified Special Olympics Sport is an inclusive program that brings together athletes with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to train and compete as teammates. The goal is to promote understanding, friendship, and inclusion while fostering physical fitness and teamwork. It's about breaking down barriers and showing that everyone can succeed, no matter their abilities.

This research project was led by Dr. Kelly Arbour-Nicitopoulos and her team, in collaboration with Special Olympics Ontario (SOO). The goal was to understand what youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), youth without IDD, and school staff think about the importance and benefits of Unified Physical Education (PE) programs in schools. The study involved 3 youth with IDD, 6 youth without IDD, and 11 school staff (teachers and administrators) at a school in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. The project was done in two parts:

1. In the first phase, students shared their thoughts on what makes unified physical activity at school better for each student's physical activity level and well-being, using a framework called Quality Participation (QP).
2. In the second phase, the group worked together to develop a Unified PE curriculum. This process included input from 5 youth with and without IDD, and 5 teachers or school staff. The new curriculum was based on the QP framework and covered 6 different topics.

## KEY MESSAGES

**High school students with and without IDD want to learn PE together.** Both students with and without IDD said they'd be excited to take PE together. Students without IDD also wanted to learn more about their peers with IDD, as they didn't have many chances to do so in school.

**Support is needed to make Unified PE work.** Teachers and school leaders need training, equipment, and guidance to make Unified PE successful. It's also important that the school supports and is committed to the program.

**Unified PE is achievable and meaningful for all.** The five-unit Unified PE curriculum focuses on leadership, fitness, team sports, and celebration. It was created with support from Special Olympics and schools to benefit students, teachers, and the wider community.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Unified PE curriculum created in this project is designed to help teachers learn how to teach Unified courses and understand Unified programs in Special Olympics. It's a starting point for communities that are new to Unified Champion Schools and a way to learn more about Unified programs. The curriculum is still being updated, but it may be available upon request (contact Kelly at [kelly.arbour@utoronto.ca](mailto:kelly.arbour@utoronto.ca)). At the end of the project, the project team also created 2 academic presentations, 1 published abstract, a draft of the Unified PE curriculum, and promotional materials for the curriculum.

For a video summary of the project, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrkALjK9OOA>