



More Ways to Promote Inclusive Youth Leadership

- **Ensure that existing leadership opportunities are inclusive.**

Does your school have classroom representatives for student government? How about a school news club or safety patrol? While clubs such as these may be open to all students, it might take deliberate efforts to ensure that students with and without disabilities feel welcome. Have current club members invite friends with intellectual disabilities to join. Having co-leaders—one with and one without an intellectual disability—is an effective approach.

- **Involve students in planning Unified Champion School activities.** As events are planned, invite students with and without intellectual disabilities to share their opinions and preferences. It will lead to the growth of their leadership skills and help ensure that the activities will be embraced by all students. For example, students can take the lead on planning the Respect Campaign.

- **Promote student leadership during Unified Sports experiences.**

Have students

- weigh in on which sports they want to do each semester.
- set up skill stations for sports practices.
- lead warm-up drills.
- serve as peer coaches.
- decide how to promote an upcoming event, such as Unified Sports Day.
- take leadership in running various activities for younger students in the Young Athletes program.

- **Have leadership lunches.** Establish a regular meeting time such as every Friday during lunch. Over several lunches, show an interested group of students with and without intellectual disabilities a movie with a leadership theme, such as *The Lorax* or *Dolphin Tale*. (Since every group of students is different, preview your movie selection to ensure that it is a good fit for your group.) After each viewing, follow up with a group discussion. Ask students questions such as the ones below.

- What did you learn about leadership?
- How does the plot relate to real life?
- Would you have acted differently than the main character? Why or why not?

- **Start a peer mentoring program.** Pair older students with younger students who have intellectual disabilities. Have the mentors help the younger students complete whole school activities or train for Special Olympics competitions.

