



## Start a Unified Club

Create a nonacademic school-based club that brings students with and without intellectual disabilities together. Whether you call it a Unified Club, a Respect Club, a Friend Club, or something else, set the goals of promoting acceptance, socially inclusive friendships, and student leadership. The club will become an influential core group of students who promote social inclusion. Since district policies on school clubs vary, be sure to share your plans with your school principal.

- **Schedule:** Establish a schedule that works with the school’s structure and schedule. Consider scheduling meetings before school, after school, or during lunch.
- **Management:** As the club gets up and running, gradually hand over more responsibilities to students to help plan meetings or lead parts of them. You might designate a student to be a timekeeper, for example. As students develop leadership abilities, you’ll be giving them the tools they need to advocate for unity and respect.
- **Activities:** What kinds of activities would the club do? The possibilities are limitless, but the goal is for students to help plan and participate in social and community activities that increase understanding, acceptance, and respect of individual differences. For example, club members might help adults plan parts of various whole school engagement activities. (See ideas starting on page 60.)
- **Social connections:** While students will get to know each other as they plan activities, it’s important to ensure that there are other opportunities to develop friendships, too. Consider these options:
  - **Icebreakers:** Start each meeting with a brief activity that helps students get acquainted.
  - **Lunch mates:** On a designated day each month, arrange for club members to sit together at lunchtime.
  - **Family fun:** Periodically arrange a get-together—such as a picnic or hike—outside of school for club members and their families.

### School Schedule

M T W T F

#### Student applications or not?

Some Unified Champion Schools have experienced success with an application process for **general education students** who are interested in joining a **Unified Club**. It helps ensure that students take the responsibility seriously and want to join the club for the right reasons. However, an application process might deter students who aren’t popular or “star students” from applying which is counter to the unified strategy. Each school should consider its school community and decide what will work best. Ideally, a school would reach out to all students in some way.