



December 8, 2016

To: Members and Leaders of the Sumter High School Community

Special Olympics South Carolina is pleased to announce that Sumter High School will be named a *Banner Unified Champion School* for its efforts to provide inclusive sports and activities for students with and without disabilities. Sumter High School is receiving this honor as a result of meeting national standards of excellence in the areas of inclusion, advocacy and respect. An award presentation will take place at the school during before the end of the 2016-2017 school year; date will be determined by Special Olympics and school personnel.

Sumter High School will be amongst a select number of schools to receive this distinction. They will be presented with a banner to hang in their school and be included on a list of other schools around the country who have achieved this distinguished status.

More than 200 schools are currently participating in Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools programming in South Carolina, as part of more than 5,000 schools across the country engaged in the program. Special Olympics has a global goal of creating 100,000 Unified Champion Schools by 2020.

The Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools model is supported by the U.S. Department of Education. This model has been proven to be an effective and replicable means to providing students with and without disabilities the opportunity to form positive social relationships and promote a socially inclusive school climate. A Special Olympics Unified Champion School has an inclusive school climate and exudes a sense of collaboration, engagement and respect for all members of the student body and staff. A *Banner Unified Champion School* is one that has demonstrated commitment to inclusion by meeting 10 national standards of excellence. These standards were developed by a national panel of leaders from Special Olympics and the education community.

The primary activities within these standards include: Special Olympics Unified Sports® (where students with and without disabilities train and compete as teammates), Inclusive Youth Leadership and Whole-School Engagement. *Banner Unified Champion Schools* should also be able to demonstrate they are self-sustainable or have a plan in place to sustain these activities into the future.

Special Olympics South Carolina extends congratulations and appreciation for the dedication Sumter High School has exuded in creating a school culture where EVERY student, with and without intellectual disabilities, is accepted, respected and valued.

Sincerely,

Barbara Oswald
Senior Director of Programs
Special Olympics South Carolina