

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Four Pennsylvania Schools Receive National Recognition from Special Olympics for Achievements with Inclusion

(Norristown, PA, September 21, 2026) – Special Olympics has announced that four Pennsylvania Unified Champion Schools are receiving national banner recognition for their efforts to provide inclusive sports and activities for students with and without intellectual disabilities. The schools are receiving this distinguished status because of meeting [10 national standards of excellence](#) in the areas of inclusion, advocacy, and respect. A national panel of leaders from Special Olympics and the education community developed these standards. National banner schools have also demonstrate they are self-sustainable or have a plan in place to sustain these activities in the future.

The Unified Champion Schools® model is a strategy for schools Pre-K through university that intentionally promotes meaningful social inclusion by bringing together students with and without ID to create accepting school environments, utilizing three interconnected components: Special Olympics Unified Sports®, inclusive youth leadership, and whole school engagement.

There is a total of six new and recertified 2026 National Banner Unified Champion Schools selected including the following from Pennsylvania:

NEW NATIONAL BANNER UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS

Palisades High School – Bucks County
Shenango Area High School – Lawrence County
Governor Mifflin High School – Berks County
Abington Heights High School – Lackawanna County

Every four years, the National Banner Unified Champion Schools need to re-apply and be evaluated by a national panel to keep this prestigious honor. This year, two Special Olympics Pennsylvania National Banner Unified Champion Schools were recertified:

RECERTIFIED NATIONAL BANNER UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS

General McLane High School – Erie County
North Penn High School – Montgomery County

"We are proud to have our Unified Champion Schools in more than 65 counties and 530 schools across the state, and we are thrilled to add four schools in Pennsylvania to our 31 current schools who have achieved national banner status and see two schools earn their re-certification," said Nate Garland, Interim President & CEO of Special Olympics Pennsylvania. "These schools are on the forefront of building inclusivity inside the school and our communities."

The 530+ Unified Champion Schools in Pennsylvania are part of more than 12,000 schools across the country including, 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, engaged in the program.

The Unified Champion Schools® model is supported by the U.S. Department of Education and locally in Pennsylvania the program is supported by Aramark, Dicks Sporting Goods, Pennsylvania Department of Education and the PIAA. This model has been proven through research to be an effective and replicable means of providing students with and without disabilities the opportunity to form positive social relationships and promote a socially inclusive school climate.

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About Special Olympics Pennsylvania

Founded in 1970, Special Olympics Pennsylvania is part of a global movement to end discrimination against people with intellectual disabilities. We foster acceptance of all people through the power of sport and programming in education, health, and leadership. With more than 15,000 athletes and Unified Sports partners statewide and more than 16,000 coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics Pennsylvania delivers more than 20 Olympic-type sports and over 1,000 competitions every year. Engage with us on: [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [TikTok](#) and [Twitter](#). Learn more at SpecialOlympicsPA.org.

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