

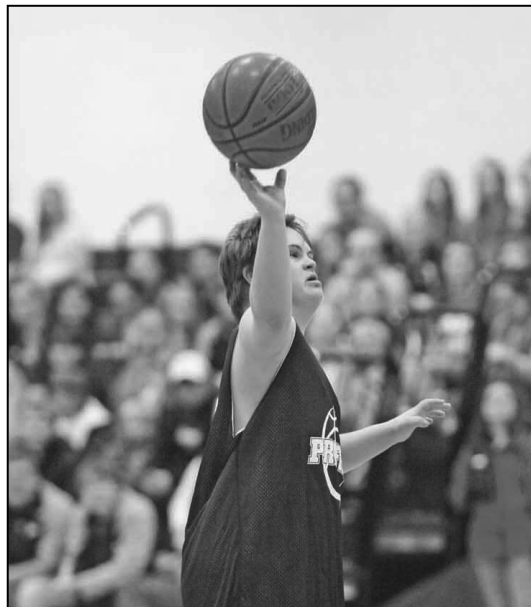


POLICY AND PROCEDURES

FOR

UNIFIED SPORTS

*Player Development
Basketball
2025-26*



Special Olympics
New Hampshire

UNIFIED SPORTS COMMITTEE

Corey Parker, Bedford, Chair; Matt Bean, Stevens; Dennis Hamilton, Nashua; Mary Jean Hippern, SONH;
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Points of Emphasis

Philosophy:

The focus of NHIAA Unified Sports is competition (not simply participation). Sports teaches so many life lessons: to work as a team, to follow rules and to be committed. Through sports we can find shared interests that allow friendships to form. Through the NHIAA/Special Olympics Unified Sports program we have an opportunity to make real positive changes in the lives of students with and without disabilities.

We must have high expectations for students with intellectual disabilities because if we do not, we are teaching another generation of regular education students that people with intellectual disabilities can't follow rules or be held accountable and as a result they will not be viable members of their community or society in general.

- Unified Sports shall be administered by the NHIAA Unified Sports Committee and the rules of the National Federation will govern the sport when applicable.
- Exception to the NFHS Uniform Rule(s): One set of uniforms per school (one color) shall be allowed.

- **Tournament Selection:**

The maximum number of teams allowed per By-Law Article IV: Classification: Sect. 10: Tournament Selection Requirements will qualify for the tournament in Player Development unified soccer, basketball, and volleyball. **EXCEPTION: If 16 teams or less participate in a Player Development sport, all teams will make the post season (effective Fall 2023)**

- **Definition of Participants: (BLA XXXVI, Sect. 3)**
 - **Unified Student Athlete:** A student with an intellectual disability who, based on **his/her** IEP is expected to be in school in accordance to state law (RSA 186-C:2)
- **Restriction of Participation – Unified Student Partner: (BLA XXXVI, Sect. 4, e.)**

Student Athletes playing the same sport will be **prohibited** from competing as a Unified Partner in Unified Sports that season. Appropriate participation for such a Student Athlete Partner may take place as an assistant coach or manager. Schools with limited enrollment or special circumstances may apply to the Executive Director for a waiver of this rule.
- **Coaches Eligibility:** In addition to the training referred to in the NHIAA By-Law Article I, Section 32: Coaches Eligibility it is suggested that a Unified Sports Coach review a PowerPoint presentation by the start of the season (PowerPoint will be distributed by October 1st).
- **Alignment of Sports: (BLA XXXVI, Sect. 5)** Unified Sport teams in basketball, soccer, and volleyball shall be aligned in two leagues as co-ed sports. Unified Track shall be aligned in one division as a co-ed sport (CM 5.2017)



Principle of Meaningful Involvement

The most important one of the "7 Criteria for the Success of a Special Olympics Unified Sports Program" is the **principle of meaningful involvement**. *Fundamentally, the principle of meaningful involvement ensures that every player is given an opportunity to contribute to the success of his or her team through their unique skills and qualities.* This means that every teammate: (a) demonstrates sufficient sport-specific skills and game understanding; (b) plays a valued role on the team that emphasizes his or her personal talents; and (c) has an opportunity to play without a heightened risk of injury.

All team members must be engaged and provide their own individual abilities and strengths. In so doing, athletes and partners may have different perspectives. The athletes on the team may not be accustomed to the experience of having their contributions accepted and respected. In addition, partners may need to be encouraged to play to their own personal bests while being a good teammate to others.

Consequently, when Unified Sports teams are created, it is extremely important that both athletes and partners are assessed as to their abilities and game play. While there could be noticeable differences in their skills, the coach will be able to observe their overall performance to determine if they have the requisite skills and understanding to safely participate on this team. The goal is that every teammate should play a meaningful role and have the opportunity to contribute his or her strengths to their Unified Sports team. There should be a quality of social interaction and communication among teammates that allows everyone to participate fully and enjoy a positive experience.

Indicators of Meaningful Involvement

- Teammates compete without causing undue risk of injury to themselves or others.
- Teammates participate according to the rules of competition.
- Teammates have the ability and opportunity to contribute to the performance of the team.
- Teammates adjust their skills according to those of other players, resulting in improved performance by team members with lesser ability.

Meaningful involvement is **not achieved** when certain team members ...

- Display superior sports skills without involving their teammates.
- Serve predominantly as on-field coaches rather than teammates or mentors.
- Control most aspects of the game, especially during the most critical periods.
- Do not train or practice regularly and only show up on the day of competition.
- Lower their level of ability dramatically so that they do not hurt others or control the entire game.

Note: It is important that all coaches and program leaders understand the Principle of Meaningful Involvement prior to the selection of team members.

As you can see, Unified Sports further meets the mission of Special Olympics and embraces the philosophy and principles of Special Olympics Unified Sports.

"I don't see many differences. Athletes and partners both want to compete. And everyone wants to have fun." – Don Hess, Unified Sports coach

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The NHIAA Unified Sports Program seeks to provide meaningful opportunities for student engagement in athletics based upon the needs of all involved. Due to the fact that the qualifications to be considered a unified athlete include students with vastly different needs and abilities, the Unified Sports Committee has engaged in a discussion to provide two opportunities that member schools may choose which will maximize the meaningful participation opportunities for their athletes and partners: the Unified Sport's Player Development League or Varsity Program and the Unified Sports Recreation League or Junior Varsity Program. This model is taken directly from Special Olympics and reflects current best practices in unified sports across NFHS States.

Unified Sports Player Development Special Olympics	Unified Sports Recreation Special Olympics
<p>Basic Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive sports program - Approximately equal number of athletes and partners train and compete - Similar age of athletes and partners - Training and competition scheduled for a season - Not required to be of similar ability; teammates of higher ability serve as mentors to assist players of lower abilities. - Rules modifications define players' roles, ensure meaningful involvement and prevent player dominance - Team never comprised solely of individuals with disabilities - Program has a choice of providing awards 	<p>Basic Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive recreational sports program - Composition of teams should be at least 25% athletes or partners - Does not require athletes and partners to be of similar age and ability - Preferably, participation is regularly scheduled - Does not follow any prescribed training, competition and or team composition requirements established by Special Olympics - Team never comprised solely of individuals with disabilities - No awards

Basketball – Player Development

- All participants have a *basic* understanding of the NFHS playing rules
- All players on the floor *have the ability* to dribble, pass, and shoot
- Follows a regular practice schedule as needed and set by the coach and or AD
- Only athletes can score (should a team be in a bonus situation and a partner is fouled; the partner can take the foul shots)
- Score is kept
- Sportsmanship is a top priority
- No back court guarding
- Standings will be kept
- Coaches will ensure that all participants on the team will have “meaningful involvement” in each game as outlines by the Special Olympics document entitles “Principle of Meaningful Involvement”
- Season culminates in a championship tournament following NHIAA Tournament By-Laws
- All other rules contained in the NHIAA Policy and Procedure Manual apply
- NFHS Rules govern play. Only slight modifications are acceptable for success, to include:
 - Traveling called if a player has a clear advantage because of the travel
 - Double dribble called if a player has a clear advantage because of the double dribble
 - Athletes who use a wheelchair/walker may participate to the extent to which the chair/walker does not poses a safety risk to other competitors (i.e. inbounding a ball)

Basketball – Recreational

- All participants have a *limited* understanding of the NFHS playing rules
- All players on the floor *have a limited ability* to dribble, pass and shoot
- Follows a regular practice schedule as needed and set by the coach and or AD
- Only athletes can score
- Score is kept
- Sportsmanship is a top priority
- No back court guarding
- Coaches will ensure that all participants on the team will have “meaningful involvement” in each game as outlines by the Special Olympics document entitles “Principle of Meaningful Involvement”
- Season may culminate in a jamboree type activity
- All of the athletes have a disability where, based on his/her IEP, is expected to be in school in accordance to state law (RSA 186-C:2)
- No standings kept
- Coaches meet prior to the game to share specific athlete needs
- NFHS Playing rules are highly modified for success. Modifications include but are not limited to the following:
 - Wheelchairs/walkers are allowed on the court
 - Traveling and double dribbles are allowed
 - One-on-one para or aides are allowed on the court to assist an athlete
 - Coaches are allowed to coach from the court
 - Running Time
 - Modifications of court and or basket
 - Teams do not switch goals/baskets at halftime

Unified Basketball: Player Development

2025-26 Teams (10)

Bedford	Hanover	Nashua North
Berlin	Keene	Nashua South
Dover	Londonderry	Oyster River
Exeter		

- Dates:** Schedules will be created between the schools and the Unified liaison.

*Schedules Due:	October 24, 2025
First Day to Practice:	December 1, 2025
First Day to Play:	December 12, 2025
Last Date to Schedule:	January 29, 2026
Last Date to Play:	January 30, 2026

*Schools are responsible to submit a schedule for their school.

These schedules will be on the NHIAA website as all other schedules are and scores will need to be reported.

- Schedule Requirements:**

- a. Minimum Games 4
- b. Maximum Games 8

- Tournament Selection: (BLA XXXVI, Sect. 9)**

The maximum number of teams allowed per By-Law Article IV: Classification: Sect. 10: Tournament Selection Requirements will qualify for the tournament in Player Development unified soccer, basketball and volleyball (CM 1.2018). **EXCEPTION: If there are 16 teams or less competing in Player Development, all teams will qualify for the post season. (Effective Fall 2023)**

- Authorization:** Unified Sports shall be administered by the NHIAA Unified Sports Committee through the Policy and Procedures guidelines and the rules of the National Federation will govern the sport when applicable.

- Legal Lineup:** A team must have at least three (3) Unified Student Athletes and no more than two (2) Unified Student Partners on the floor at all times.

- Tournament Rosters:**

In all team sports: If a team is going to make the tournament, a team photo in uniform (no worm-ups and no mascots allowed) must be submitted with a photo lineup. If no photo is received a logo will be supplemented.

Basketball: All tournament teams will be limited to a maximum of 18 players, 2 coaches, and 1 manager.

- Equipment/Court:** A women's regulation basketball (28.5) will be used. All game balls at all levels of play shall have the NFHS Authenticating Mark imprinted.

- Participation:** Unified Student Athlete may only play five (5) quarters in one (1) day. Participation in a quarter, regardless of time, will be considered one (1) quarter. Overtime is considered and extension of

the fourth quarter. Team scorers are to keep an accurate record of quarters played. Penalty for Violation: Forfeiture of game. For sub-varsity tournaments the Participation Rule does not apply.

9. **Game Length:** A regulation game will consist of four (4) quarters of eight (8) minutes time. In the event of a tie at the end of regulation, a four (4) minute overtime will be played until a winner is decided. This procedure will be repeated if necessary.
10. **Game Officials:** One enrolled NHIAA official will be used and paid at the sub-varsity rate.
11. **Awards:** Official NHIAA championship and runner-up plaques, in addition to twenty one (21) individual medals will be awarded to the respective champion and runner-up teams.

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1. Introduction to Unified Sports: (BLA XXXVI, Sect. 2)

The vision of the joint NHIAA/Special Olympics sports project is to allow high school students with and without intellectual disabilities the opportunity to represent their high school by participating on a Unified Sports team providing the students with a quality experience of sports training and competition.

2. Definition of Participants: (BLA XXXVI, Sect. 3)

- a. **Unified Student Athlete:** A student with an intellectual disability who, based on **his/her** IEP is expected to be in school in accordance to state law (RSA 186-C:2)
- b. **Unified Student Partner:** Any student that meets the criteria outlined in NHIAA By-Law Article II: Eligibility.

3. Participant Eligibility: (BLA XXXVI, Sect. 4)

- a. **Age Requirement:**
 - i. A student with an intellectual disability **who, based on his/her IEP** may participate in Unified Sports as long as **he/she** is registered with the school.
 - ii. **Unified Student Partner:** Refer to NHIAA By-Law Article II, Sect. 1: Age of Contestant.
- b. **Scholastic Standing:**
 - i. **Unified Student Athlete:** Special Education Students: Students receiving service under I.D.E.A., 89:313, R.S.A. 186: C and related State Board of Education regulations, to include students receiving service pursuant to Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, may be declared academically eligible by their principal provided that all other eligibility requirements are met or is a registered student at a school working towards a diploma or certificate.
 - ii. **Unified Student Partner:** Refer to NHIAA By-Law Article II, Sect. 2: Scholastic Standing.
- c. **Semester Rule:**
 - i. **Unified Student Athlete:** Special Education Students: Students receiving service under I.D.E.A., 89:313, R.S.A. 186: C and related State Board of Education regulations, to include students receiving service pursuant to Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, may be declared academically eligible by their principal provided that all other eligibility requirements are met or is a registered student at a school working towards a diploma or certificate.
 - ii. **Unified Student Partner:** Refer to NHIAA By-Law Article II, Sect. 3: Semester Rule.
- d. **Medical/Physical Requirements:** Refer to NHIAA By-Law Article III, Sect. 2: Medical Statement or local school requirements; whichever are higher.

- e. **Restriction of Participation – Unified Student Partner:** Student Athletes playing the same sport will be **prohibited** from competing as a Unified Partner in Unified Sports that season. Appropriate participation for such a Student Athlete Partner may take place as an assistant coach or manager. Schools with limited enrollment or special circumstances may apply to the Executive Director for a waiver of this rule.
4. **Coaches Eligibility:** In addition to the training referred to in the NHIAA By-Law Article I, Sect. 32: Coaches Eligibility it is suggested that a Unified Sports Coach review a PowerPoint presentation by the start of the season (PowerPoint will be distributed by October 1st).
5. **Alignment of Sports: (BLA XXXVI; Sect. 5)** Unified Sport teams in basketball, soccer, and volleyball shall be aligned in two leagues as co-ed sports. Unified Track shall be aligned in one division as a co-ed sport (CM 5.2017)
6. **Officiating: (BLA XXXVI; Sect. 6)** All sanctioned Unified Sports contests in soccer, basketball and volleyball will have a minimum of one (1) NHIAA enrolled official. Athletic Directors will obtain their own officials for the regular season and shall pay them the sub-varsity rate. Track & Field is still to be determined.
7. **Tournament Selection: (BLA XXXVI; Sect. 9)**
The maximum number of teams allowed per By-Law Article IV: Classification: Sect. 10: Tournament Selection Requirements will qualify for the tournament in Player Development unified soccer, basketball and volleyball. **EXCEPTION: If there are 16 teams or less competing in a Player Development sport, all teams will qualify for that tournament. (Effective Fall 2023)**
8. **Scheduling Calendar:**
 - a. Soccer Schedule is due July 27th
 - b. Basketball Schedule is due October 24th
 - c. Volleyball Schedule is due February 28th
 - d. Track & Field Schedule is due February 28th
9. **Completed Schedule and Forfeit:** All teams must complete their entire schedule submitted to the NHIAA. Any scheduled game(s) not played must be reported (in writing by both schools) to the NHIAA immediately. If a scheduled game can't be played both teams shall receive a forfeit loss.
10. **Mouth Protector Rule:** The NHIAA highly recommends the use of mouth guards in basketball. Refer to By-Law Article III: Sports Medicine; Sect. 8: Mouth Guards.

11. Medical Coverage at Athletic Events (By-Law Article III, Sect. 1): The importance of the long-range safety of high school athletes cannot be overstated. Consequently, the NHIAA and its member schools will favor medical safety over any other countervailing concerns including competitive advantage. Every high school in New Hampshire must make provisions for **licensed** medical personnel at all practices and contests. The types of provisions that are acceptable are (the provisions are in alphabetical order, not preferential order):

- a. Athletic Trainer
- b. Board Certified Sports Physical Therapist
- c. Emergency Medical Technician
- d. Nurse
- e. Nurse Practitioner
- f. Physician
- g. Physician Assistant
- h. Systems developed to call medical personnel to the site of the athletic event

At the athletic competitions where medical coverage is either provided or mandated by the NHIAA, injuries sustained by athletes will be evaluated by the designated medical personnel. The clearance to re-enter competition after an injury will be made by the designated medical personnel only. Absent unanimous agreement between the designated medical personnel to allow continued participation, an injured player will not be allowed to return to the game. Their decision is final and cannot be overturned by the coach, coaching staff, parents/guardians, or any non-designated personnel.

When the NHIAA provides qualified medical personnel and member schools also provide qualified medical personnel, it is expressly understood that the NHIAA provider shall defer to the school designated qualified medical personnel if requested. If the member school does not provide qualified medical personnel or if no deferral is requested, the NHIAA provider will act as the designated medical personnel. In choosing who should act as the designated medical personnel, all medical personnel are expected to act in the best interests of the student athletes and participate to the extent that his or her expertise will increase the quality of the care delivered. Prior to the start of the event the NHIAA assigned medical personnel, in conjunction with the designated site manager, should review this requirement and determine the procedures/chain of command to be identified during the event to ensure compliance with the provisions stated in this By-Law.

Note: Student trainers, high school or college, cannot be used to meet the provisions of this By-Law.

12. Blood Spillage and Body Fluids: The NHIAA Sports Medicine Committee suggests that each school develop a local policy in cooperation with their local medical personnel, on how to handle blood spillage.

13. Housekeeping Procedures for Blood and Body Fluids: Disposable latex gloves should be worn to avoid contamination of the hands of the person cleaning spillages involving blood or other body fluids and secretions. Persons involved in cleaning contaminated surfaces should avoid exposure of open skin lesions or mucous membranes to blood or body fluids. A freshly prepared solution of dilute household bleach (one quarter cup of bleach diluted in one gallon of water) or other disinfectant labeled as virucidal, Tuberculocidal, staphylocidal is useful. Allow the disinfectant to stand wet for a minimum of one minute to start killing pathogens and disinfecting the area (10 minutes of disinfection time guarantees surface sterility). Whenever possible, disposable towels, tissues, and gloves should be used and properly discarded and mops should be rinsed in disinfectant.

14. **Interpretation of Excessive Bleeding:** National Federation Rules call for a player, who is bleeding, has an open wound or excessive blood on the uniform, to leave the court/field. The NHIAA interprets “excessive blood on the uniform” to mean that part of the uniform is saturated with blood. Saturated does not mean a wet spot. Saturated means a major portion of the garment is covered and soaked with blood. For this to occur, significant bleeding would have had to take place. For any blood on uniform less than “saturated”, the uniform does not have to be changed. School personnel have the responsibility of treating the blood area with the appropriate disinfecting solution before the athlete may participate. If the uniform is “saturated” with blood, the uniform must be changed before the athlete may participate. This interpretation is to be followed in the conduct of all NHIAA athletic events.

15. **NFHS Authenticating Mark:** All game balls at all levels of play shall have the NFHS Authenticating Mark imprinted.

The following procedure is to be followed:

- a. Prior to the start of the game the head official is to inspect the game ball(s) to ensure the NFHS Authenticating Mark is imprinted. If the home team’s ball does not have the mark the visiting team’s ball with the Authenticating Mark is to be used.

- b. In the event neither ball has the mark, the game is to be played and the head game official is to report the matter to the Supervisor of Officials, who in turn will notify the NHIAA office.

16. **NHIAA Guidelines On Ozone Pollution And Physical Activity:** See NHIAA By-Law Article III Sports Medicine: Sect. 11.

- **NFHS Guidelines for Management of Concussions:**

The NHIAA mandates the following of the NFHS guidelines for management of Concussions.

Concussions: Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.

For additional information and potential symptoms, please be sure to visit By-Law Article III; Sports Medicine: Sect. 13: Concussions and the New Hampshire SB402 and its language as written.