Be Cool.

TAKE THE PLUNGE.

2027 LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN POLAR PLUNGE FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS ILLINOIS

COOL SCHOOL



COOL SCHOOL FUNDRAISING *Toolkit*

WHAT IS POLAR PLUNGE

The Polar Plunge is the largest and most iconic Law Enforcement Torch Run/Special Olympics Illinois fundraisers. Each winter, thousands of participants across the state brave icy waters to support Special Olympics Illinois athletes. Each Plunge across the state offers a festive atmosphere with costumes, team spirit and community celebration.

WHAT IS THE COOL SCHOOL CHALLENGE

The Cool School Challenge brings the fun of the Plunge right to your school's campus. Across the state, schools, students, and faculty participate in the Illinois Law Enforcement Torch Run Polar Plunge via the Cool School Challenge to support the athletes of Special Olympics Illinois.

HOW DOES IT WORK

It's simple. You work with us to host a Cool School Challenge Polar Plunge on your school's campus. Specific extracurricular groups or the whole student body (and faculty of course) work together to raise money and support the athletes of Special Olympics Illinois.

WHY IT MATTERS

Taking on The Cool School Challenge Polar Plunge creates whole-school engagement and an exciting way to give back, all while teaching students about the importance of inclusion and making a positive impact.



WHAT CAN YOU PROVIDE FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS ILLINOIS UNIFIED PROGRAMMING

$100 – Sends one athlete to State Basketball Tournament

$250 – Sends a Unified Pair to a competition

$500 – Sends one athlete to Winter Games

$1,000 – Sends a Unified Team to a State Championship

$5,000 – Funds Unified Generation Summit kits for our statewide Unified Champion Schools

GETTING STARTED



GETTING REGISTERED

- Once your school is signed up to host a Cool School Plunge, you can promote registration to students, teachers, faculty and community members.
- Remember, you must raise at least $100 per plunger.

GOFUNDME PRO HOW-TO

- Not sure how to register or customize your page? Check out our **online registration guide** here.

INCENTIVES

- Don't forget that you're eligible to earn incentives by hitting different fundraising milestones. Check out our **2027 Polar Plunge Incentives here.**

SCHOOL WIDE FUNDRAISING IDEAS

Cool School Plunge is a way to get your whole school in on this COOL fundraiser and inclusive opportunity. Looking for ways to fundraise for your team at your school? Check out some of our great ideas.

DRESS LIKE A POLAR BEAR DAY

- Pick a day and ask everyone to wear white to dress like a polar bear or their favorite Plunge memorabilia to get everyone excited and promote your cool school plunge.

PLUNGE WALL

- Work with your school to create a visual that will promote your plunge. Identify a bulletin board that you could utilize and decorate it with polar bears or other plunge items to promote your plunge.
- Get creative. Want to take it one more step – print out some empty polar bears and then write the names of each plunger and add them to the board as people register to show how many of your classmates are participating.

SCHOOL WIDE FUNDRAISING IDEAS

PENNY WARS

- Challenge your school to a Penny War! Set up Cool School Plunge themed containers in the classrooms and let the games begin. Use this as an opportunity to send Unified Pairs to talk to different classes about your plunge and why you are asking them to take part in this challenge.

MIRACLE MINUTE AT SPORTS GAMES

- At a school sporting event, with school permission, host a "miracle minute" where Unified pairs and members of the Cool School team race through the stands during a donation jar and collect donations before time is up!

TEACHER, PRINCIPAL OR SUPERINTENDENT TAKES AN ICY DIP

- Work with your school to see if your Principal, Superintendent or faculty team member will agree to take the plunge if your school reaches a specific amount.

ICON SALES

- Supporters donate to get themed paper icons, write their name, and display them to show support for Special Olympics Illinois. Just **print icons from our resources**, set a donation amount ($1, $5, or $10), and sell them in busy spots like local businesses or school offices. Track donations, build a "Wall of Support," and thank participants to raise awareness and community spirit.

RESPECT WEEK CAMPAIGN

Respect Week (March 1–5, 2027) is a great time to spotlight inclusion and rally your school around your Cool School Plunge. Use this week to build excitement with whole-school activities like signing the Inclusion Pledge or hosting fun competitions. It's a meaningful way to connect your celebration of Respect with your plunge.

IT'S NOT JUST ONE DAY, GET YOUR SCHOOL INVOLVED LEADING UP TO PLUNGE.

TWO MONTHS BEFORE!

SPREAD THE WORD

- About two months out from your event, start spreading the word around school that your plunge date is set! Encourage people to use time over the holidays when they are seeing friends and family to ask for donations.
- Get your Cool School flyer created and send it home with everyone to ensure that lots of people have eyes on it.
- Once you are registered for plunge, update your page with information regarding your plunge and personalize it to make it your own.

SCHOOL WIDE FUNDRAISING IDEAS

MAKE THEMED DAYS

- Identify a day of the week at your “Plunge Day” and have different all school activities that people engage with. Example: Frozen Friday – Every Friday, there is a special announcement that includes information on your plunge and a fact about Special Olympics Illinois!

ONE MONTH BEFORE!

CONTINUE TO BRING THE EXCITEMENT WITH THEME DAYS

- Utilize a bulletin board to showcase past plunges and people who have taken the plunge multiple years in a row, maybe showcase your top fundraisers, get creative!.

POLAR BEAR SCAVENGER HUNT

- Gather excitement with a little challenge in your school. Grab some stuffed polar bears or find some fun ones you can print out and hide around your school. Then gather some ideas (with school approval) on what you can give to those who find them.

USE SCHOOL/HOME COMMUNICATION TO SEND OUT AN UPDATE

- Does your school have a parent newsletter or another type of communication? Work with your school administration to come up with a promotional piece that you can include in the newsletter to educate everyone about the plunge so they can get involved.

MONTH OF THE PLUNGE

- Now it is time to turn up the excitement! The days leading up to your plunge, do a theme week with days related to Special Olympics Illinois or Polar Plunge. Example: Plunge Spirit Day, Wear Red for SOILL
- Pro tip. Turn your Plunge Spirit Day into a fundraiser by asking people to bring $1 or $5 to participate!



GET SOCIAL

Social media is a great way to promote your plunge and build excitement. Stay in the loop with Special Olympics Illinois and Unified Champion Schools! Be sure to follow us and tag us in your posts so we can reshare.

@SOILLUnifiedChampionSchools

@SpecialOlympicsIllinois

@SO_Illinois



SOCIAL MEDIA CAPTIONS

Post #1

I'm proud to be a part of the Cool School Challenge, raising money for Special Olympics Illinois! It's more than just a cold jump, it's about supporting thousands of athletes across the state. Want to help me reach my goal of $XX? Click the link below to donate and help us build a more inclusive world. <insert donation link> #PlungeIllinois #CoolSchoolPlunge

Post #2

This year, I'm plunging into icy water with my classmates to support Special Olympics Illinois and I need your help to reach my goal. Your donation helps fund year-round opportunities in competitive sports, health education, leadership and personal development for thousands across the state. <insert donation link> #PlungeIllinois #CoolSchoolPlunge

EMAIL TEMPLATE

Hi [Name/Friends],

I'm excited to share that I'll be participating in the Cool School Plunge with my classmates (yes, jumping into icy water!) in the name of inclusion and support for Special Olympics Illinois.

This isn't just an icy dip for fun, it's a chance to raise awareness and funds for individuals with intellectual disabilities across Illinois. Special Olympics Illinois provides year-round opportunities in competitive sports, health education, leadership and professionals development for more than 18,000 athletes.

I'd be so grateful for your support as I take the plunge! Every donation, big or small, helps make a difference. You can donate to my fundraising page here: [insert donation page link]

Thank you for helping me support this amazing cause!

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLES

Utilize your school's social media account to promote your cool school plunge! Use one of our social media graphics located here or get creative and make your own.







CLICK HERE to download the full set of social graphics.

NEW THIS YEAR! Download your personal QR code right from your fundraising page! Click share and then QR code to generate an image you can share!

TIPS FOR FUNDRAISING OUTREACH

MAKE IT PERSONAL

When you are reaching out to ask for donations, be sure to use our templates above but edit them to make them your own! Have you been plunging for multiple years? Add that in your email! Do you participate in Unified Sports? Include a photo of your most recent competition! The more personalized your ask is, the more likely you are to receive a donation.

SHOW YOUR PREVIOUS COMMITMENT

Have you taken the plunge before? Be sure to include photos from your plunge last year to show your donors what Cool School Plunge is all about.

MAKE IT FUN

Don't just use our boring examples! Be sure to put your own twist on the emails and captions above to make it your own.

FOLLOW-UP

Most donors require at least one follow up to make their donation, it never hurts to remind someone that you are taking the plunge and are close to your fundraising goal.

HOW TO RAISE $100 IN 5 DAYS

DAY	THE ASK	TOTAL PER DAY	GRAND TOTAL
1	Parental contribution	$10	$10
2	Ask 4 neighbors for a $5 contribution	$20	$30
3	Call 3 family members and ask for a $10 donation	$30	$60
4	Send an email to 2 family friends for a $10 contribution	$20	$80
5	Ask a community member for $10	$10	$90
6	Personal contribution of $10	$10	$100



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PLUNGEILLINOIS.COM

#PlungeIllinois

GET IN TOUCH WITH SPECIAL OLYMPICS ILLINOIS

Interested in learning more about Cool School Plunge?
Reach out to Debbie Kelly at dkelly@soill.org or your local Plunge Director to learn more.

Teachers & Faculty –Want to get in on the action?
Complete our Cool School Interest Form to get your school signed up today.

Questions about your fundraising page?
Reach out to polarplunge@soill.org