



Special Olympics  
Unified Champion  
Schools®

# COOL SCHOOL CHALLENGE TOOLKIT



What's inside? Learn about changes made to the event and see how your school can brrrave the wave with this collaborative fundraiser.





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## WHAT DOES COLLABORATIVE FUNDRAISER MEAN?

The Cool School Challenge is a collaborative fundraiser, which means you can raise funds for your school and support Special Olympics Virginia's efforts to build inclusion at the same time! **All participating schools can keep 50% of the funds your team raises.**



# LET'S GET THIS PENGUIN PARTY STARTED

- **Register**

- Gather your flock, create your team and sign up today! **Please note:**
  - To participate **in-person at the Cool School Challenge in Virginia Beach**, register [here](#).
  - To participate **in-person at a regional Plunge**, find yours and register under the School Team Registration option [here](#).
  - To **Plunge Your Way at your school**, please choose the Plunge Your Way option under the Cool School Challenge [here](#).
- Remember, you must raise at least \$100 to take the Plunge!

- **Classy How-To**

- Find yourself frozen trying to register? Don't worry! Check out our [Classy resources here](#).

- **Incentives**

- Not only do you get to take the plunge with some of the *coolest* kids around, but you can also earn incentives along the way! Check out the official 2026 Cool School Incentives [here](#)! Participants in regional Plunges will earn event specific swag too!



# ALLOW US TO INTRODUCE OURSELF

The Cool School Challenge is a **statewide collaborative fundraiser** that offers unique engagement opportunities for students, faculty, staff and even family and friends. This friendly competition helps to raise critical funds for your school and Special Olympics Virginia athletes of all abilities!

## WHERE DO WE WADDLE NOW?

Are you ready to brrrrave the wave?! This year, we are welcoming students back to do one of three options:

1. Plunge in-person at the **Virginia Beach Cool School Challenge**
2. Take a dip at one of the four **other regional Plunges**
3. **Plunge Your Way at your school** by signing up for the Plunge Your Way option under the Cool School Challenge



# SCHOOL WIDE FUNDRAISING IDEAS

## MAKE A SPLASH, TOGETHER

Bring your flock together to help raise funds for your Cool School team! Plan these out as a class or get the whole school involved and you'll reach your fundraising goal in no time. We got you covered with some ideas to get you out of the ice!

Don't forget, you earn community service hours for every minute you spend on your Plunge mission!







1

**Dress like a Penguin day:** Raise awareness about WHY your team is participating in the Cool School Challenge and share the opportunity with the rest of the school.

2

**Penguin Wall:** Using a bulletin board in a main hallway or just part of a wall in your school, create a visual wall of Penguins to represent how much money your team has raised! Or allow students and faculty to add a penguin to the wall when they join your team or make a donation.

3

**Practice Plunges:** Film yourself, a classmate or teacher taking a practice Plunge! Talk about why you are braving the icy waters and what Cool School means to you. Then share it with your school at an assembly or fundraising event to ask for donations to your team page. Watch some YLC members demonstrate for you!

4

**Looking for some more ideas?** Visit our school fundraising page for more ways to include your classmates and reach your fundraising goals! Click [HERE!](#)



**COSBY HS PENGUIN WALL**



## **PENNY WARS**

Challenge the school (grades or clubs/teams) to a Penny War! Set up Cool School 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 Cool School and why you are asking for them to take part in this challenge.

## **MIRACLE MINUTE AT SPORTING EVENTS**

At a school sports game, with the school's permission, hold a "miracle minute" in which Unified pairs and members of the Cool School team race through the stands with donation jars and collect donations before the "minute" is up.

## **PRINCIPAL OR SUPERINTENDENT**

Once you reach your goal, your Principal or Superintendent has to take the icy dip and Plunge for your school!

## **INTERVIEWS & VIDEOS**

Does your school have a broadcasting or journalism club? Engage with them to create some Unified interviews informing others about the Penguin Plunge, doing funny skits to raise awareness or to ask for donations.

## **DUNK A TEACHER**

As a team, find the magic number for a team goal and a willing teacher or faculty member that will take the Plunge via a dunk tank, kiddie pool or bucket pour when the goal is met. Put teachers' faces on the thermometer in your lobby so students can see how they can raise funds to plunge their favorite teachers!

## **CONCESSION STAND**

Offer to run the concession stand for 10% of the profit for the night.





# SAMPLE CALENDAR OF IDEAS

## IT'S MORE THAN FEBRUARY

The Cool School Challenge is happening all winter long! Check out some ideas on how to engage your school during the months of December - February.





# DECEMBER

If you haven't already, start spreading the hype about Cool School. Winter break is the perfect time to ask for donations and engage family and friends.

- Send students home for break with 'Business Cards' to share with others. Or a flyer from our resource page!
- Make sure the team page is all set up to make it easier for students to register themselves while they have time over break.

At school, make every Friday "Freezin' Friday" (or another Plunge theme day)

- Students can dress like penguins or wear their old Plunge shirts to school!
- Use the day to make school wide announcements about Cool School, do Plunge activities to build excitement, give updates about team leaders and encourage other students to register and join your team.





# JANUARY

Keep doing Freezin' Fridays or other Plunge theme days if your students enjoyed them! Here are some more examples:

## 1ST FRIDAY

Create a **Plunge board or window** with photos of all the Plungers to show how many people are participating from different social groups.

## 3RD FRIDAY

Use existing school-community-home communication channels to continue to get the word out about the school's Plunge team. **Send out an update** or use one of our sample letters on pg. 12.

## 2ND FRIDAY

**Penguin Scavenger Hunt:** Hide 5 (or more) Penguin print outs around the school in common areas. Students can receive a prize (candy, school store voucher, extra free time, etc.) for reporting back the locations!

## 4TH FRIDAY

Let students **make a video or photo shout out** with teammates during downtime or in homeroom. Then use them to post on social media to share with followers about why they are doing the Plunge!



# FEBRUARY

It's crunch time! Plunge week is here! Plan activities and theme days every day leading up to your icy dip or Plunge event at your school.

## Tuesday: Camo/tuxedo day!

Penguin fact of the day: The black and white tuxedo look dawned by most penguins is a type of camouflage called counter shading.

## Thursday: Beach/swim gear day!

Penguin fact of the day: Penguins are excellent swimmers and divers! The Gentoo penguin can swim as fast as 22 miles per hour.

## Monday: Wear your favorite hoodie or sweater!

Penguin fact of the day: A penguins thick skin and coat is how they stay warm in artic conditions.

## Wednesday: Crazy hair day!

Penguin fact of the day: Many species of penguins like the Macaroni Penguin, Southern Rockerhopper and the Fiordland Penguin are known for their impressive hair style.

## Friday: Cool School Day!

If you are taking the Plunge in-person on a Saturday, use the Friday before to get your team and school hyped up! If you are planning a Plunge Your Way event for students, use a Friday as event day to build the excitement all week long.





# PERFECT PENGUIN EXAMPLES

## A+ STUDENTS

Curious about how other schools have brought these fundraising examples to life? We have 2 'Perfect Penguin' examples of schools that broke the ice with their Cool School Challenge efforts.



# 1

## LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL (Fauquier)

Our first 'Perfect Penguin' example comes from Liberty High School in Fauquier, VA. Their team captain shared:

"Our student members of Champions Together planned the activities leading up to the day of the Plunge.

- They made banners and planned a spirit week, which included dress up days like "Bundled Up Day" and "Blizzard Day."
- They worked to fundraise individually and collectively during lunch at our Cool School Penguin Plunge table.
- Students and staff could donate to get their name on a penguin on the Penguin Board. We called it Penguin Wars.
  - The winning class (freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior) earned a "cool" treat (ice cream).
- We also had a school-wide Penguin Scavenger Hunt.

To begin the Cool School Penguin Plunge celebration and watch party, we did a Penguin Launch to start the fundraising process where Champions Together members met and did a Tasty Tuesday activity to get us started. The event finished with the watching of the penguins on Plunge Day as a group in the auditorium."

# 2

## PLAZA MIDDLE SCHOOL

Plaza Middle School is the 'perfect penguin' example for any schools wanting to host their own Plunge event but aren't sure where to start. While they are normally first in line on the beach to take the in-person Plunge, Plaza had to pivot this past year.

The 2022 Cool School top fundraising team put together a mini-Plunge complete with an icy blow up pool, a costume contest, pizza and hot cocoa! You can read up on their success here: [polarplunge.com/cool-school-celebration](https://polarplunge.com/cool-school-celebration).





# SOCIAL MEDIA & OUTREACH EXAMPLES

## SOCIAL HANDLES

Follow us and reshare  
our posts!

## SAMPLE POSTS

Copy and paste for an  
easy post.

## COOL SCHOOL BUSINESS CARDS

Pass these cards out to family and friends so  
they can make donations to your page. We  
can even personalize it with your link!

## TIPS & TRICKS

Learn how to take  
advantage of social media.

## TEMPLATES

Use our template in a  
letter, email or text!



Polar Plunge Virginia

January 21, 2020 · 🌐

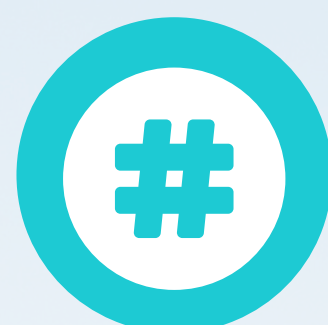
Meet Cool School Challenge plungers Kendahl, Casey, Abby and Sadie from Plaza Middle School. Last year during the Cool School Challenge they, along with their classmates, raised over \$13,000 AND took home the title of Top School Fundraiser.

Now in its 10th year, the Cool School Challenge has allowed students and teachers to come together to raise money for Special Olympics Virginia.

When asked what their favorite part of Cool School was, these plungers shared that it was ... [See more](#)







# SOCIAL MEDIA HANDLES

Stay in the loop about all of the latest Cool School and Special Olympics Virginia happenings! Follow us on the channels below:

- Facebook
  - [@plungevirginia](#)
  - [@SpecialOlympicsVirginia](#)
  - Join the Unified Champion Schools-Educators Group to connect with other teachers statewide. Search [Special Olympics Virginia Unified Champion Schools-Educations](#)
- Instagram
  - [@polarplungeva](#)
  - [@specialolympicsva](#)
  - [@sova\\_youthleadership](#)

Have a personal story? Share it with your followers and let them know why you Plunge. And be sure to tag us in any photos/videos/resources you make! Our hashtag is #PlungeVa

## FACEBOOK TIP

- Start a [Facebook fundraiser](#)
- Put the link to your page in your Instagram bio
- Post a picture of a QR code that goes to your team page (We can help you make those!)

## SUPPORT MY SCHOOL

I am taking the Plunge in February and need your support! Please scan the QR code to donate to support my school and the 21,000+ athletes of Special Olympics Virginia.



## BUSINESS CARDS

Use these business cards to pass out to family and friends when talking about why you are doing the Cool School Challenge and to ask for donations.

Reach out to a SOVA Penguin Pal and they can personalize this for you with the link to your page or even a QR code to make donating a breeze!



# SAMPLE POST FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Help me support the 18,000+ athletes who participate in Special Olympics Virginia. Please donate to my Cool School Challenge page! #PlungeVa <insert link to personal Plunge page OR add a photo of a QR code that takes you there>

You can make a difference! Help me reach my fundraising goal as I take the Cool School Challenge for Special Olympics Virginia. #PlungeVa <insert link to personal Plunge page OR add a photo of a QR code that takes you there>

'Tis the Cool School Challenge season! Help me support Special Olympics Virginia by donating to my page! #PlungeVA <insert link to personal Plunge page OR add a photo of a QR code that takes you there>



# TEMPLATES FOR EMAILS, TEXTS AND LETTERS

Email is an incredibly effective fundraising tool and is a great way to spread the word about Cool School, ask others to join your team and ask for donations to your cause. Don't have email? Write some personalized letters to family and friends.

## Tips:

- Make it personal. Tell your story and share with others why you participate, whether it's because you're participating for fun or because you love Special Olympics Virginia.
- If you've Plunged before, share a picture of your previous jump!
- If it's your first time, share your nerves and excitement!
- Have fun with it! Make a contest or game out of it; maybe the first person to donate or the largest donation gets a gift from you!
- Follow-up. Be sure to say thank you to donors after they make their donation, and again after you take the Plunge. Send them a picture of you after your icy dip!

# DOWNLOAD RESOURCES

Visit our [Cool School resource page](#) and download your own business cards, email templates and social posts to copy and paste. [Click here!](#)





# HOW TO RAISE \$100 IN 6 DAYS



DAY	THE ASK	TOTAL PER DAY	GRAND TOTAL
1	Kickstart your fundraiser by asking your parents to make a \$10 contribution.	\$10	\$10
2	Ask 4 neighbors for a \$5 donation.	\$20	\$30
3	Call 3 grandparents, aunts, uncles or other family members and ask for a \$10 donation.	\$30	\$60
4	Send an email to 2 family friends and ask them for a \$10 contribution.	\$20	\$80
5	Ask a sports coach, club leader or someone at your favorite restaurant, coffee shop or local hangout spot for \$10.	\$10	\$90
6	Take it home with a personal contribution of \$10 to reach your goal!	\$10	\$100





## RESOURCES

Looking for some flyers or other resources to download quickly? Check out our Cool School website resources:

- [General Cool School Resources](#)
- [Fundraising Ideas](#)
- [Classy Help](#)

Not finding what you need? Let us know! We can help create personalized resources for your team.

## CONTACT YOUR PENGUIN PAL

Your Special Olympics Virginia Penguin Pals are here to help! We can answer any questions you have, provide more information on the topics in this tool-kit, create personalized resources for your students and so much more!

Not sure where to start? Reach out to Izzy!

- Izzy Nelson
- (e) [inelson@specialolympicsva.org](mailto:inelson@specialolympicsva.org)
- (c) 804.929.2344

