

Parents and Guardians,

We are excited to announce the start of two new programs at our school -- Panther Pals and Unified Track & Field. This is a great opportunity for students with and without disabilities to make our school a more inclusive place and join life-changing groups!

### **Panther Pals**

Panther Pals is similar to Best Buddies. It will be a group that meets once a month after school to foster one-to-one friendships and leadership development for people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities. Additionally, there will be some bigger events held at night.

This club will hold its first meeting after school on Thursday, February 7. All are welcome, but we are asking that students and parents complete sign up on FamilyID prior to the first meeting.

[www.familyid.com/organizations/ayer-shirley-regional-school-district](http://www.familyid.com/organizations/ayer-shirley-regional-school-district)

Click on the registration link for Panther Pals and follow instructions from there. It should take between 15-20 minutes. There is NO COST for Panther pals.

### **Unified Track & Field**

Unified Track & Field is an MIAA-sanctioned sport in which students with and without disabilities compete in a number of events, including the 100, 400, one mile, turbo javelin, shot put and long jump. The events are tiered, so everyone competes against people of equal ability. It is designed for people who traditionally do not participate in spring sports, though all are welcome. You do not have to be a traditional "athlete" to compete, as the tiered system allows everyone to have a shot to help the team succeed.

The season will start the first week of April and continue through May. The commitment is three days per week after school, which includes 1-2 practices and 1 meet (3 practices the first week). There will be 4 meets total, plus the district and state meets.

The cost for Unified Track is \$50. Register starting now at

[www.familyid.com/organizations/ayer-shirley-regional-school-district](http://www.familyid.com/organizations/ayer-shirley-regional-school-district)

Contact Athletic Director and Panther Pals advisor Steve Kendall at [skendall@asrsd.org](mailto:skendall@asrsd.org) or 978-772-8600 ext 1370 with any questions.

Presentation made to students on January 30. Thank you to Sydney from Nashoba Regional's Best Buddies program, Brendan Aylward from Unified Health & Performance (<https://unifiedhp.com>) and Alexa from Nashoba and Boston University for sharing their experiences with both of these amazing programs. Get involved!

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1wkTKz4MqReNHRoiy7hFK-Of15a1qDePH7Z-l-BuvdW8/edit?usp=sharing>