



‘Return on inclusion’ is the new ROI:

Examining the social, academic, and economic benefits of including students with disabilities in all aspects of school life



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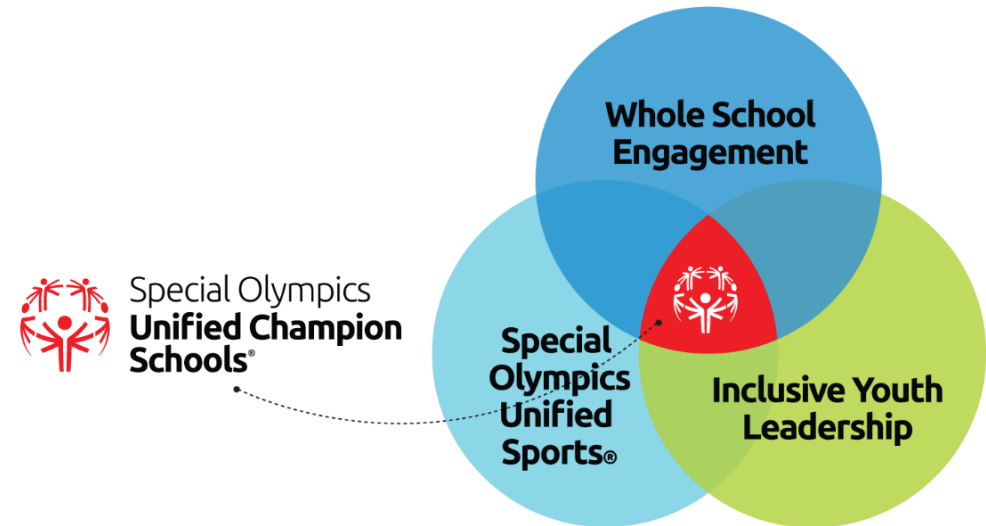
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Agenda

- **What UCS is**, as a whole-school inclusion model
- What the evidence shows about **attitudes, perceptions, and social emotional learning**
- What the evidence shows about **academic outcomes** and how that translates into a **175% return on investment**
- Key implications for implementation and **sustained impact**
- **How a robust evaluation strategy has driven this impact**
- **Opportunities in your state to bring UCS to your schools**

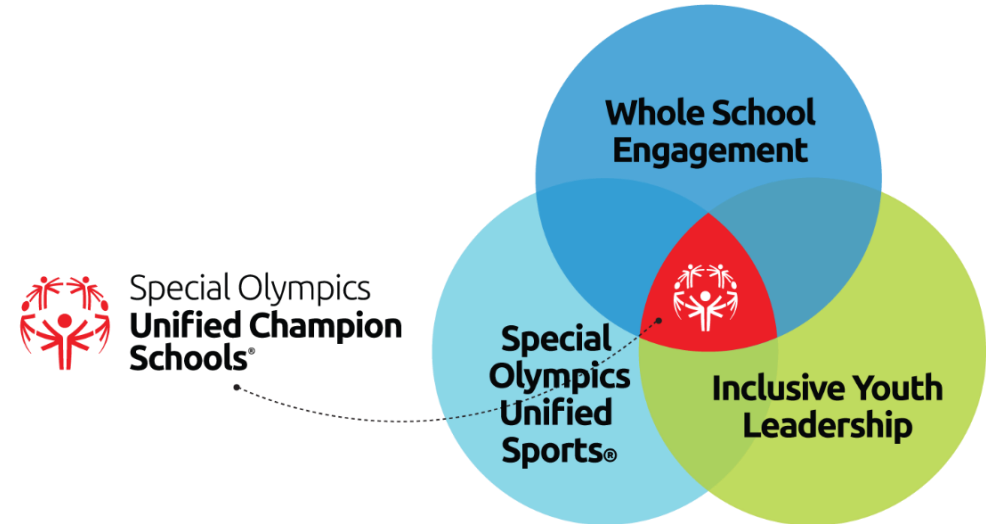
What UCS is: A multi-tiered model (1/2)

- UCS is a **whole-school structural model for inclusion** serving students from PreK through college designed to embed inclusion into the **social and cultural life of schools**.
- It is a **3-component**, multi-tiered model comprised of the **integrated components** sports, leadership, engagement).

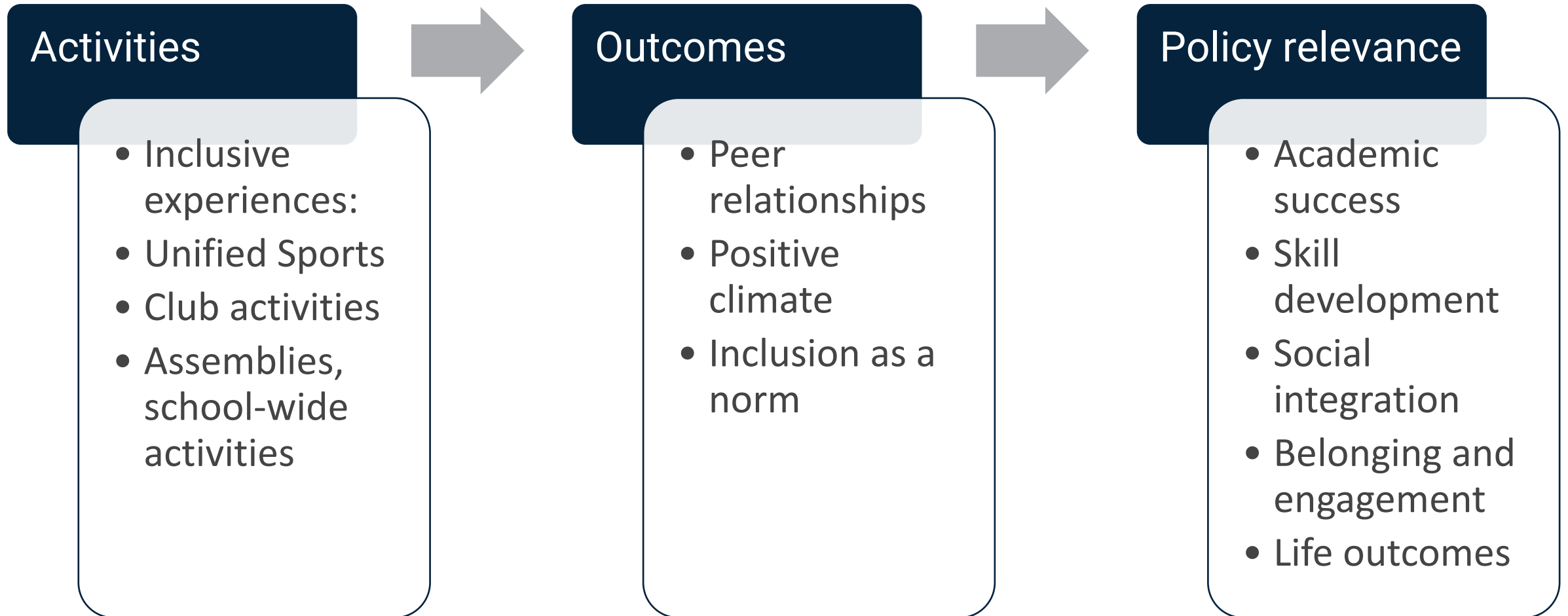


What UCS is: A multi-tiered model (2/2)

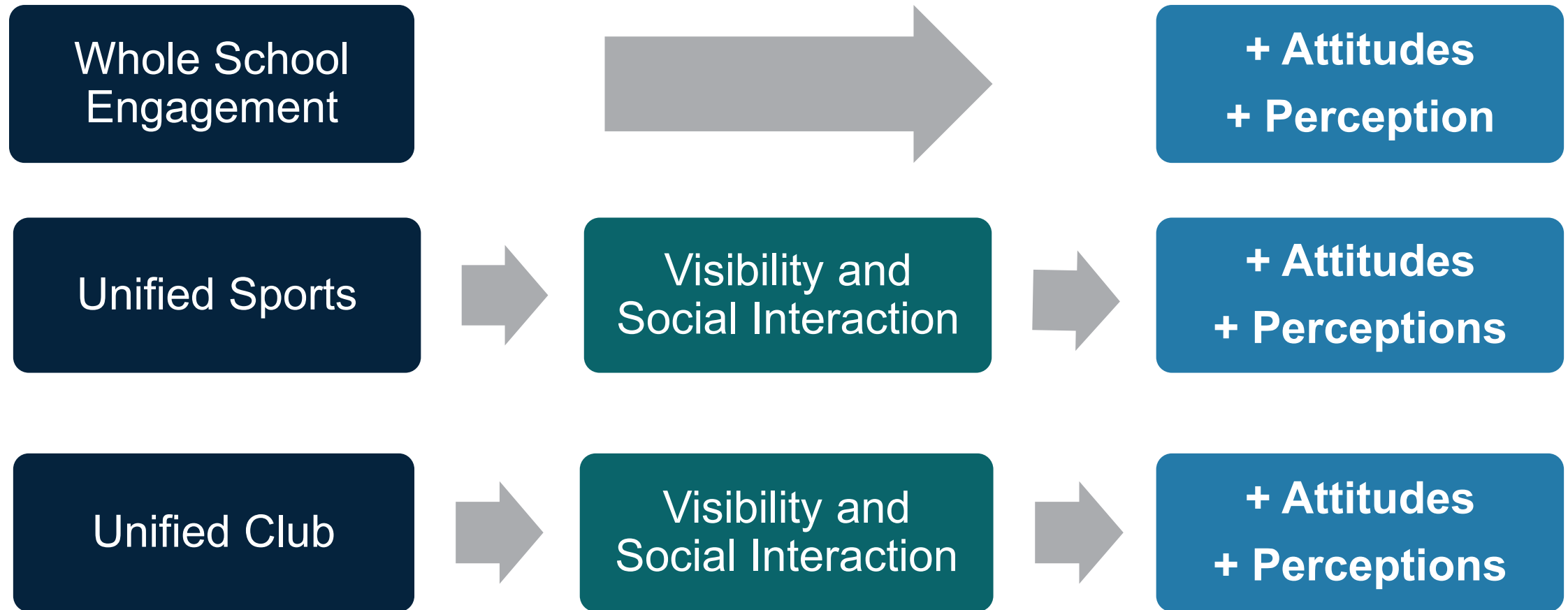
- Implementation depth matters (1 vs. 2 vs. 3 components).
- UCS is not a single intervention; it is **meant to be embedded in the fabric of a school and thought of as a strategy**, not an activity or program.



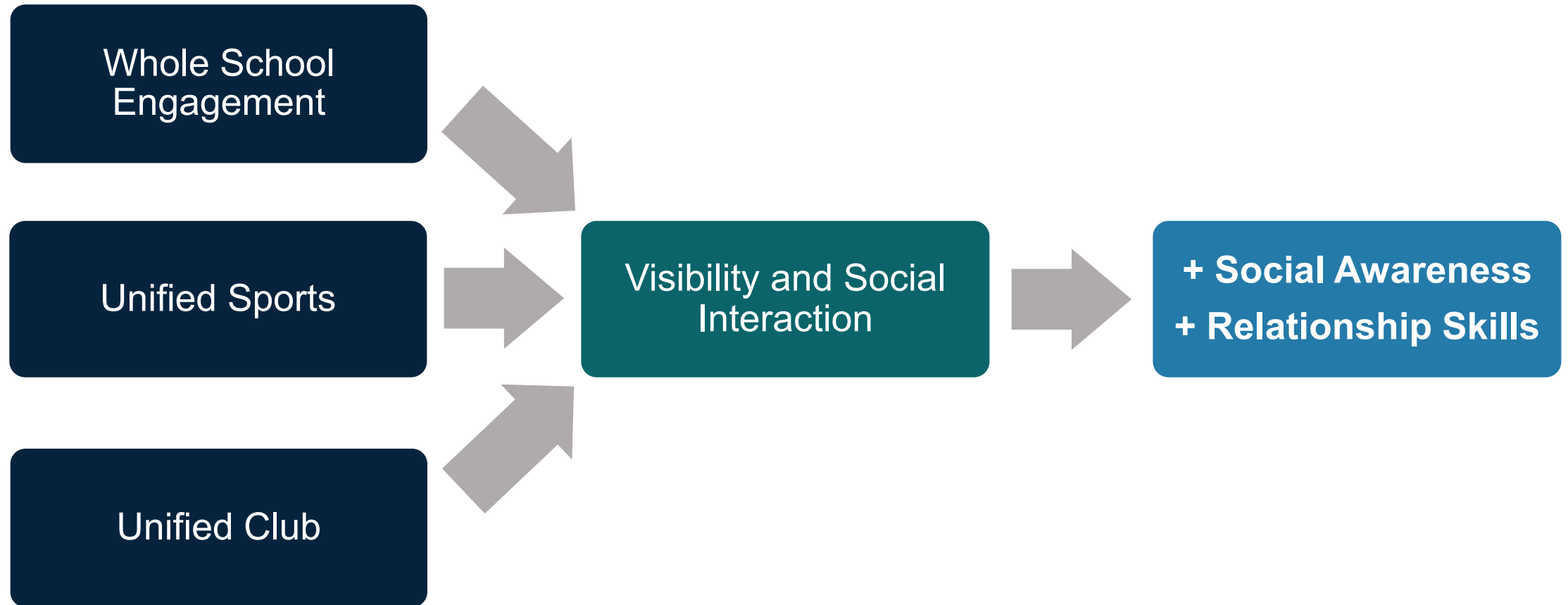
UCS theory of change



Evidence: Student attitudes and perceptions



Evidence: Social and emotional skill development



Evidence: Graduation rates

- 2155 high schools across the US between 2010-2016
- Linked data across annual UCS liaison survey, NCES data, and school level graduation rates
- Compared UCS to non-UCS schools before and after UCS implementation

+1.1 percentage points

(0.30 standard deviation)

**Graduation rate for all
students**

in Unified Champion Schools



+1.4 percentage points

(0.357 standard deviation)

**Graduation rate for students
with disabilities**

in Unified Champion Schools

Evidence: Standardized test scores

- 11 years of student level administrative data from NC: students with ID, students with other disabilities, students without disabilities



13.8% higher

(0.116 standard deviation)

**Reading scores of
students with ID**

in Unified Champion Schools



14.5% higher

(0.023 standard deviation)

**Reading scores of
students without
disabilities**

in Unified Champion Schools



3.6% higher

(0.034 standard deviation)

**Math scores of
students without
disabilities**

in Unified Champion Schools

Evidence: Cumulative effects

- Each additional year of UCS exposure is associated with:
 - Increase in **mathematics and reading** test scores for students with ID in grades 3-8.
 - Significant increases in **high school GPA** for all students but largest impact for students with ID.
 - Lower likelihood of **suspensions or expulsions** for students with ID in all grades.
 - Lower likelihood of any **disciplinary incident, suspension or expulsion** in Grades 3–8 for students with other disabilities.
 - Lower **absence rates** for high school students with ID.

Evidence: Economic and policy case (1/2)

■ Cost analysis

- **Ingredients method** (Levin et al., 2018) considered gold standard for determining costs of education and social programs
- Types and quantities of **resources** = staff effort, equipment, materials, facilities
- **Prices** = compensation (salaries, benefits, stipends) and annualized prices for durable non-personnel resources. Standardized to national average price levels to control for differentials across sites.

■ Benefit analysis

- **Outcome impacts** = high school graduation (Yin et al., 2022), behavioral incidents, chronic absenteeism
- **Monetary benefits** = benefits to students and the public from increased high school graduation (Weimer & Vining, 2019), school savings from decreased behavioral incidents (Sorenson et al., 2022), savings to parents associated with fewer student absences.

Evidence: Economic and policy case (2/2)

Average cost:

- \$367 per enrolled student over 3 years
- \$1,502 per graduating-cohort student over 3 years

Estimated benefits:

- \$4,131 per cohort student over three years

Result:

- **\$2.75 in benefits for every \$1 invested**
- **175% return on investment**

Evaluation Strategy

- 18 Years of consistent annual evaluation conducted by Center for Social Development at University of Massachusetts Boston
 - Teacher liaison survey at each school
 - Improvement and programming enhancements based on recommendations
 - Consistent impact queries
 - Determination of quality indicators
 - Validation through use of existing scales on impact categories
- Supplemented with specific studies from other research entities
 - Longitudinal study
 - School Climate
 - Family Engagement
 - Social Emotional Skill Development
 - Academic Impacts
 - Economic Impacts

Evaluation Strategy – Questions to ask

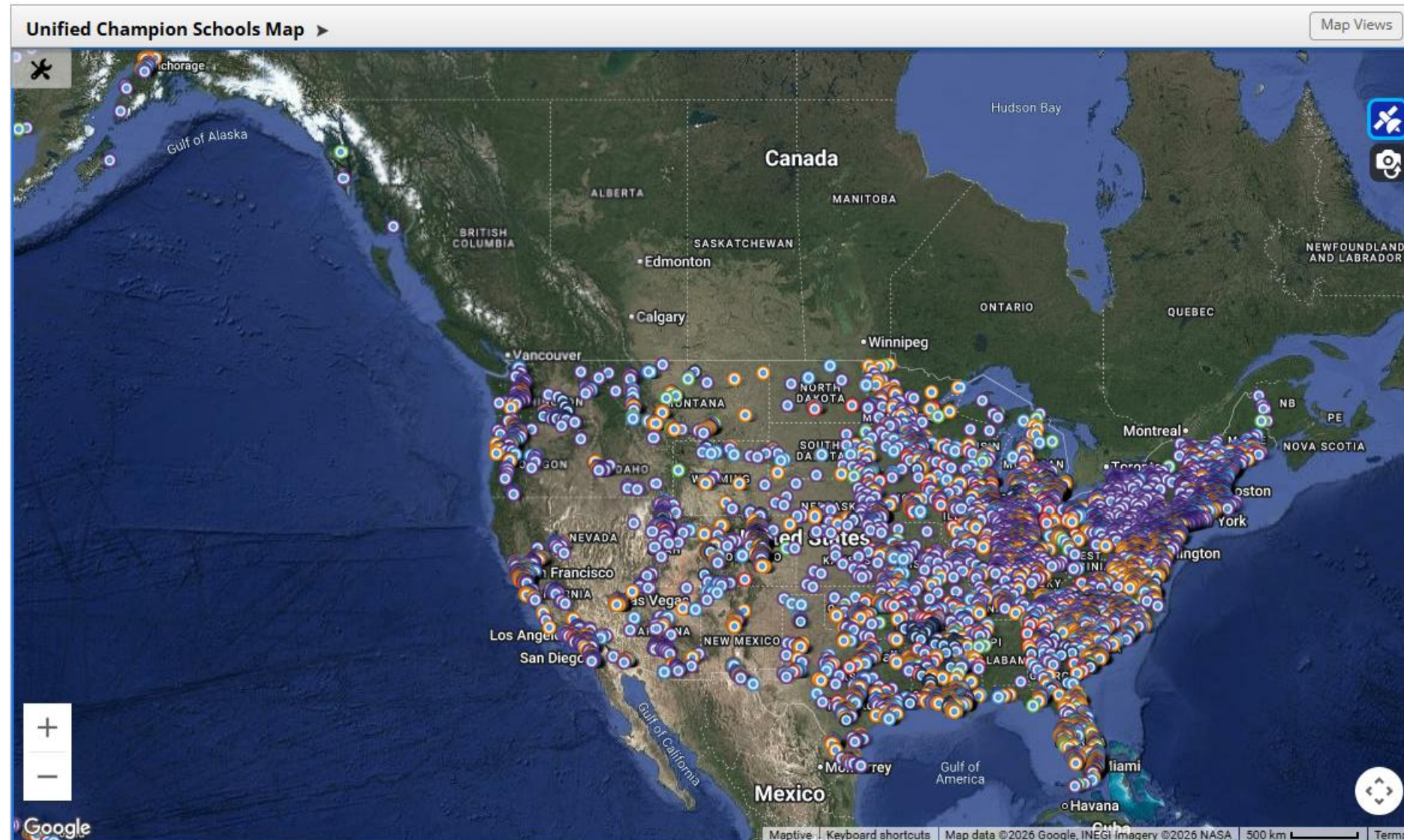
- Timing considerations
 - One-off
 - Annual comparisons/growth
 - Longitudinal
- Who is the audience for your data?
 - To support your performance measures?
 - To show impact for continued project?
 - To gain public support?
 - All of the above?
- Can one format cover all your needs?
 - Engage stakeholders
 - Participatory action
 - Training data collectors

Key implications for sustained impact

Five big takeaways from evidence across all sources:

- UCS improves inclusion, school climate, and sense of belonging **at scale**
- Outcomes are driven by **dose, integration, and norms**
- Outcomes strengthen with **quality implementation and over time**
- Federal investment yields **measurable returns**
- Evaluation and research strategies **contribute to your ability to show impact**

How to connect in your state



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Contact information

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