



Special Olympics
**Unified Champion
Schools**

It's Our School, Too!

Written by:

Suzy Messerole & Aamera Siddiqui

It's Our School, Too! debuted at the Youth Activation Summit and National Education Conference, 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games.

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Background of Play

It's Our School, Too! is based on the interviews of youth throughout the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro Area, in addition to Special Olympics: Youth Activation Committee members who live across the U.S.

While the events in the play have been changed slightly for staging purposes, all of the scenes are based on the stories of the youth interviewed. In short, all of these things have happened and are happening in our schools on a daily basis.

It's Our School, Too! debuted at the Youth Activation Summit and National Education Conference, 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games at the Strauss Performing Arts Center on the University of Nebraska-Omaha Campus. The premiere was directed by Suzy Messerole, and performed by a cast of 13 youth. This script includes that full production, plus two additional scenes that directors may choose to include in the play if they wish.

In 2016, the US-based Project UNIFY was rebranded to Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools. Under Special Olympics Unified Schools, Unified Champion Schools is a strategy aimed at promoting social inclusion through intentionally planned and implemented activities affecting system-wide change within schools and its community.

Performance

The play is written for a cast of 10-20 youth, including youth with and without intellectual disabilities. The play can be performed on a blank stage, using just chairs, or you may create an elaborate set.

There are three sections of the play – Opening, the R-Word and Closing, where you can choose either to use the line suggestions in the script or you may have each actor create a line themselves, which is more pertinent to who they are.

No additional scenes that are not written by the playwrights may be added to the play. Selected scenes can be performed but it is preferred that the play be performed in its entirety.

Acknowledgements

Playwright credit must be given on all printed materials, as well as any publicity of the play on websites, press releases and any other media. "Written by Suzy Messerole and Aamera Siddiqui" must be directly under the title of the play.

The following acknowledgement must be given on any programs for a production of the play:

It's Our School, Too! was commissioned from Exposed Brick Theatre, a Minneapolis, Minnesota theatre company, www.exposedbricktheatre.com. The play premiered at the University of Nebraska, Omaha in July 2010 under the direction of Suzy Messerole, as part of the 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games. The blog used in the R-Word Scene was written by Danielle Liebl, a member of the National Youth Activation Committee from Richmond, Minnesota. It is used with her permission.

Scene 1: OPENING

All performers enter the stage, either one by one, or in groups, they will each repeat the following line...

When you see me I want you to see *(followed by a word or statement that each performer wants the world to know about them. Something that they excel at, or is unique to them.)*

Examples from the original production:

When you see me, I want you to see that we are alike.

When you see me, I want you to see that I get nervous sometimes. When you see me, I want you to see a happy dancer.

When you see me, I want you to see a football player.

When you see me, I want you to see that I love Spanish. Ola!

When you see me, I want you to see someone who tries to be a good friend.

When you see me, I want you to see a member of the band.

Scene 2: Hallway Scenes

The Video:

Students are filing out of an all-school assembly, where a new 5 minute video promoting the school was just shown. A group of three students are talking together, very excited.

Student 1: Can you believe that new video about the school?

Student 2: It's amazing I mean the whole school is in there. They pretty much got everybody.

They walk off.

A second group of students are talking together, very deflated.

Student 3: Can you believe that new video about the school?

Student 4: Yeah every group in the school was in it – except us.

Student 3: Why is it that every time there is something that is supposed to be about the whole school, there is nothing about youth with disabilities?

Student 5: That's right.

Student 4: Sometimes, it feels like we don't even exist here.

Your Kids:

Two teachers, Jody and Pam are walking down the hall.

Jody: Pam! What is going on with your kids today? They're being so rowdy?

Pam: My kids?

Jody: Yeah your Special Ed kids. They are especially loud today.

Pam: First of all, it's the end of the week and the end of the term. All the kids are being loud. Secondly, the Special Ed Kids that go to this school are OUR kids not just MY kids.

Pam steps out & addresses the audience:

Pam: "Your kids." How many times have I heard that phrase used? It's amazing to me that it's 2010 and still we have this huge divide in our schools. As a teacher in Special Education, educating students in my classes is the easy part. The hard part is trying to educate everyone else.

Scene 3: The Basketball Team, Part 1

Please note: This scene happens in four parts throughout the play, the cast should remain the same in all four parts. Four players – Alice, Jenny, Beth, Sophie – from a Unified Sports basketball team are leaving practice. Alice has a basketball. They toss it around during the following:

Jenny: Great practice.

Alice: We are going to tear it up at state this weekend.

Sophie: Totally.

Beth: But then the season's over.

3-4 members of the varsity girls' basketball team walk by. They say hi good luck this weekend, etc.

Alice: Did you know the Varsity team gets letters and an Awards dinner after their season?

Jenny: Why don't the Unified Sports teams get a dinner?

Beth: Yes, Why?

Sophie: And awards, too!

Jenny: Sophie: you would definitely win the award for Most Improved.

Sophie: Yes!

Alice: All right – so we all want a dinner. What should we do about it?

Beth: We could talk to the Athletic Director about it.

Alice: Ok, but we need to be prepared. Everyone go home tonight and think of a reason why we should have an Awards Dinner and letters and then send them to me on Facebook. I'll come with the full list tomorrow. Can you meet before school?

Beth: Yeah

Jenny: Sure

Sophie: Totally

Scene 4: Struggling to Learn

Mrs.

Lawrence: For this test, make sure you complete the essay questions on the very last page. You have 40 minutes. And go.

Michelle: (*whispering*) Are you going to say something?

Jeff: You say something!

Michelle: No you!

Jeff: I did it last time.

Michelle: Okay fine, but you know she's gonna give us a hard time.

Mrs. L: Is there a problem? In case you haven't noticed you're supposed to be taking a test here.

Michelle: Um...well...

Mrs. L: Yes, Michelle?

Michelle: Well, we're supposed to go to the testing room and take our test.

Mrs. L: You know how I feel about the testing room. Why can't you take your test in your classroom like everyone else?

Jeff: But we're supposed to take our tests in the testing room.

Mrs. L: (*sighs*) I know...I know. But if you ask me, it's cheating. Everyone else takes the time to study and take their tests here. Why should you do it any differently?

Michelle: Mrs. Lawrence, you have to let us go.

Mrs. L: Fine, but if you ask me, it makes no sense

Jeff and Michelle begin to gather their materials. As they exit Mrs. Lawrence says for everyone to hear:

Mrs. L: Why even bother taking the test? I might as well give you a 100 percent now.

Walking to testing room

Jeff: Can you believe her?!

Michelle: Don't worry about it. We're not doing anything wrong.

Jeff: She makes us feel like we are. I can't even concentrate now.

Michelle: I know – me either.

Jeff: Maybe we better get a couple of the test questions wrong. So she won't do this again the next time we have a test.

Michelle: Yeah, okay. You're right. I'll get numbers 3 and 17 wrong.

Jeff: Okay, um...I'll get 7 and 30 wrong.

Jeff: *(to audience)* That's right. We purposely got questions wrong so Mrs. Lawrence would stop accusing us of cheating. How's that for ridiculous? Look, I wish I could take a test in class, like everyone else. But I can't. And it's bad enough that schools aren't set up to teach me in the way I learn. But it's worse when someone makes you feel bad about it. And teachers who don't understand make learning so much harder. It seems like whenever a teacher doesn't know about intellectual disabilities, we're the ones who end up not learning.

Michelle: *(to audience)* Yeah, and the last time I checked, this is my school too. Teachers don't expect us all to wear the same size shoes, so how can they think the same way of testing fits everyone. The bottom line is; I want to learn. And I care about school. That's why I bother going to the testing room. If I didn't care, I'd just take the test with the rest of my class not learn anything and not do very well. I thought the whole point of getting an education was to learn. Not to struggle to learn.

Scene 5: Hallway Interactions, II

I. Resource Room

Matt and Greg meet in the hall at their lockers. Greg sounds like he's just ran a marathon.

Matt: Dude, you sound tired, where are you coming from?

Greg: The resource room.

Matt: The resource room? Where is that?

Greg: It's really far away.

Matt: It seems like it since you are so out of breath. They should put that room more in the center of the school.

Greg: Yeah!

Matt: Come on let's go to class.

II. Maybe We Should Ask

Two student senators meet in a hallway.

Carol: Hey Bill – How's the planning for the Pep Rally going?

Bill: Great – every class is participating and each class gets to lead part of the rally. Isn't that awesome! I came up with that idea. You should see this list. They have some really cool stuff planned.

Carol: That's great! Let me see the list. These are great ideas! Cheers, songs, dances... Oh wait. Miss Matthews' class is missing.

Bill: MISS MATTHEWS?! The Special Ed lady?

Carol: Yeah...why not? The pep rally is for the whole school. Her class is part of the school.

Bill: Well...I don't know...I mean; do those kids even WANT to do something?

ALL: YES!

Carol: I guess you won't know until you ask *those* kids.

Scene 6: The Basketball Team, Part 2

Meeting with the Athletic Director

AD: Good morning. You are all at school bright and early.

Jenny: Can we talk to you for a minute?

AD: Sure. What can I help you with?

Jenny: We would like a dinner at the end of the season.

Sophie: With awards.

Alice: We don't think it's fair that some teams get Awards Dinners and letters and some teams don't. We'd like to have something that celebrates the end of our season, too.

Beth: Here's a list of reasons we put together.

Jenny: It outlines why our Unified Sports Basketball team should have the same events at the end of the season as the Varsity team.

AD: *(looks at the list)* These are all excellent reasons and I thank you for coming in, but the dinner and the letters are reserved for the best players at the school coming in, but the dinner and the letters are reserved for the best players at the school. I'm sorry, but maybe one of your parents could have a dinner at someone's house. Now, I'm late for a meeting and I have to run, but, hey – good luck at state.

The girls exit.

Sophie: Is he serious?

Alice: “They're for the best players?”

Beth: “A dinner at our parents' house?”

Jenny: Unbelievable.

Pause

Sophie: That's it. I'm telling my mom.

ALL: oooooohhhh. Your mom.

Alice: No, we can do this on our own. Plan B.

ALL: Plan B?

Alice: Plan B – the principal.

ALL: Gasp. *[reaction to let audience know Principal has a reputation of being scary].*

Jenny: Are you serious?

Alice: Yes, I'm serious.

Sophie: Ok, but then we really have to be prepared.

Jenny: Let's take our reasons and turn it into a petition.

Beth: Good idea. Sophie – you and I are going to talk to our coach after practice, she might have some good advice. Then we are going to talk to the rest of the team.

Alice: And Jenny and I will set up a meeting with the principal.

Jenny: Who? Me?

Alice: Jenny – he's just the principal!

They laugh on their exit.

Scene 7: The “R” Word Pledge

Mark and a couple of other students are in the hall with a stack of posters that read something like: “Improve your vocabulary. Stop using the “R” Word” or “Spread the Word to End the Word.” These should be signs that would actually be used for an R Word Pledge campaign at the school.

Student 1: Hey, the R Word pledge. I took it on-line last summer.

Mark: That’s cool. Here’s some flyers – will you tell your friends?

Student 1: Sure. Good luck with the pledge.

Mark goes back to hanging posters. 2-3 other students come down the hall. They say things to each other like:

“Spread the word to end the word?”

“Yeah, the R Word”

“Man, it’s just a word. What’s the big deal?”

“This is thought control.”

“We have the right to freedom of speech, we have the right to say what we want without people getting on our backs.”

These students and Mark freeze. Mark steps out from the scene and reads the following:

Mark:

These exact phrases were said by high school students, when the Spread the Word to End the Word campaign came to their schools. Special Olympics joined with a coalition of other supporters and started the Spread the Word to End the Word campaign to educate youth about the derogatory misuse of the R Word. Even though there are thousands of pledges to stop the R-word, there are just as many opposing the campaign.

As a person with a disability I have encountered bullying many times, whether it is the way I adapt to my surroundings or because I stand up for what I believe in, there always happens to be one terminology that bullies love to call me, the R-word. Whether they say it to my face or to an inanimate object, it hurts. Many people do not realize the word is a medical term to describe someone with a disability; it is not a synonym for stupid.

I am not the only one that feels so strongly about the word either, as one young man puts it, “I have an intellectual disability, but I am not the R-word.” In my mind when you mock someone’s diagnosis, you are bullying, whether you intended it that way or not. The R-word is a common term among students yet no one sees that it is bullying.

Just like you have the freedom of speech, we have the freedom not to be bullied.

*The other students on stage unfreeze and come down stage to form a line across the stage.
Mark and the students say:*

“Look, I am just trying to tell you that this word is hurtful to me.”

“It makes me feel like I’m not human.”

“People are always talking about what we can do to make schools better. Well, if I could walk through my school for one day without hearing that word that would be a miracle.”

That group of students, opposing the campaign, turn and say:

“Okay, how do I do this?”

Student: By taking the R Word pledge. (student turns to the audience and says) We invite anyone in the audience who wants to take the pledge with us to please stand up and repeat after us.

Pledge

Student: I pledge

All: I pledge

Student: and support the elimination of

All: and support the elimination of

Student: the derogatory use of the r word

All: the derogatory use of the r word

Student: from everyday speech

All: from everyday speech

Student: and promote acceptance

All: and promote acceptance

Student: and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

All: and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

Everyone but Mark exits, who looks at the audience and says.

Mark: Just one day.

Scene 8: The Audition

Danielle: Hi Cassie, Hi Marshall.

Cassie: Hi.

Marshall: Hi.

Cicily: Are you trying out for the school musical?

Cassie: Yeah.

Danielle: Will you show us your audition?

Cassie: Sure.

Cassie & Marshall do a dance routine to a contemporary song. After the dance:

Cicily: That was great!

Danielle: You two were awesome. I really hope you get in the musical.

Scene 9: You're Under Arrest

A social studies classroom with students. The teacher, Mrs. Murphy is giving a lecture about the Electoral College.

Mrs.

Murphy: So why would the founders give each state 2 senators, despite how large they are? Why not just have the whole country vote on 50 senators?

Student 1: So that each state has representation.

Student 2: Otherwise it would be an unfair system – especially for the states that are more rural.

Mrs. M: Exactly. It's all about trying to make the competition fair. Making a senator from North Dakota run against one from New York would mean the one from New York would always win. It would be like me competing in the Special Olympics, I would have an unfair advantage and I would always win the race.

We hear sounds of a police siren. Everyone in the class looks up. Three “officers” enter the classroom. It is obvious they are not real cops – that this is a fantasy.

Mrs. M: Excuse me, Officers is there a problem?

Officer 1: Mrs. Murphy, we'd like you to step outside the classroom, please.

Mrs. M: But, officers, I haven't done anything wrong.

Officer 2: Step outside.

Officer 1: We just need to ask you a few questions, Mrs. Murphy.

Officer 3: Now!

Mrs. Murphy and the officers step outside the classroom.

Officer 1: Mrs. Murphy, could you please explain why you were making a comparison between yourself and a Special Olympian?

Mrs. M: Officer, I was just making the point that if I competed in a Special Olympics competition, I would win. I was making a point about fairness.

Officers

2&3: Hmmmm... (*shakes head*).

Officer 1: Mrs. Murphy, which sport are you referring to?

Mrs. M: Um...

Officer 2: Basketball?

Mrs. M: No.

Officer 3: Swimming?

Mrs. M: No.

Officer 1: No offense, Mrs. Murphy, but I've seen you get winded running up a flight of stairs.

Mrs. M: Hey, that's a big flight of stairs.

Officer 1: When was the last time you trained for a sports event?

Mrs. M: Ummm...

Officer 1: Answer the question please.

Mrs. M: Well, back in college I played on an intramural basketball team.

Officers 2&3: Uh-huh (*they shake their heads*).

Officer 1: All right, here's the deal, Mrs. Murphy. We are going to you a warning...

Officer 2: This time...

Officer 1: for using a misleading comparison between yourself and a Special Olympian. Mrs. Murphy, the Special Olympics rewards hard work, effort, and training. If all you are doing is "riding an elliptical at the gym" then we would ask you to make difference comparison. It's disrespectful to the athletes who are actually working hard and training.

Officer 3: That's right.

Mrs. M: Yeah, I do. Hey – thanks, Officers for setting me straight. And thanks for not giving me a ticket.

Officer 2: This time.

Mrs. M: Right, this time. Well, I better go back in and teach my class. The teacher lounge is just down the hall if you want to grab –

Officer 1: (*cuts of her sentence*). No donut jokes, please. All right guys, let's go.

Scene 10: A Heavy Backpack

Shelly walks into a classroom with a very visible backpack. Five of her friends are with her. They are meeting in their classroom before leaving for a field trip.

Cicily: *(singing)* They say the neon lights are out on Broadway! They say there's always magic in the air. *(stops singing)* Man, I love the theater. Don't you love the theater?

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Shelly sets down her backpack.

Amber: Um...Death of a Salesman is not a Broadway musical.

Sylvia: Yeah it's a very serious play. Right Ryan?

Ryan: Right.

Cicily: Oh...well – I'm still glad we get to miss a day of classes. Did you all remember to bring lunch?

Amber: Oh, yeah I wasn't going to forget that again. Hey Shelly, what did you bring? *(Amber picks up Shelly's backpack)* Whoa. Your backpack is heavy. What do you have in here? Twenty encyclopedias?

Sylvia: *(looking in the backpack)* Shelly, why are you carrying around all your books?

Amber: Yeah, we'll be coming back to school. Just take them back to your locker.

Shelley: No, it's okay. I'll just take them with.

Amber: Shelly, it's so heavy. You don't want to bring them with!

Shelley: No, really, it's...

Amber: What's going on Shelley?

Shelley: All right. You know that girl Molly?

Amber: Molly...Oh yeah...she can be...well not nice.

Shelley: Right. And her locker is next to mine.

Amber: Oh, no... her locker is next to you? Does she tease you when you go to your locker?

Shelly: Yeah she says things like:

Lights up on Molly on opposite end of stage – she directs her lines out.

Molly: Hey Shelley – how did you get here? Did you take the short bus? Are you going to your special classes now?

Lights out on Molly.

Amber: She's so original.

ALL: Not.

Shelley: So now I don't use my locker.

Amber: Wait! You've been carrying around all your books the whole semester?

Shelley: *(trying to joke)* Yeah, that's why I've got such big muscles.

Sylvia: That's not funny. You have to say something and get a new locker mate.

Amber: You need to tell your parents. Have them call and talk to the principal. You can't keep carrying around your books all semester.

Shelley: Ok.

Sylvia: Here, let's walk to your locker together. I'll stay with you while you put your books away and please talk to your parents tonight.

Amber: Come on... We'll all go with you. And Shelley – it's going to be a whole lot easier walking around school WITHOUT carrying all of your books.

Scene 11: The Basketball Team, Part 3

Alice, Sophie and Beth are passing around the basketball at practice. Jenny runs in:

Jenny: You guys! You guys! We did it! We did it!! We got our Awards dinner.

Everyone cheers & high fives.

Alice: Wait. How do you know?

Jenny: I just saw the principal in the hall. She said she was super impressed by our petition and all the reasons we should get an Awards Dinner and its set for after our State Tournament this weekend.

Beth: This is awesome.

Alice: And I think we all know who's going to win the Most Improved Award, don't we Sophie?

Sophie: OH YES!

Sophie gives Alice a big high five!

Scene 12: Yearbooks

From off-stage we hear:

Amber: Yearbooks. Hot off the press. Get your 2010 school yearbooks. Be the first of your friends to have one. Only \$17

Two groups of students, one primarily youth with disabilities, one primarily you without disabilities enter the stage. They have just bought their yearbooks. They sit in their two groups.

First Group:

Nathan

& Bruce: *(flip through the first few pages quietly – looking for pictures).*

Second Group:

Danielle: Oh, awesome – there’s a picture of you hanging out in the hallway.

Cicily: Did my hair really look like that? Why didn’t you say anything?

Cedy: What – you look like you always do. *(they all laugh).* No, what I mean is, you look great.

First Group:

Bruce: Look there’s the adaptive team’s page – hey, there’s a game shot of you.

Nathan: That’s the game right before the state tournament.

Bruce: That’s a cool picture.

Cedy:

Second Group:

Danielle: Oh there’s you in the class play. *(flip, flip)*

And there’s you in the debate team. *(flip, flip)*

Cicily: There’s you in the stands at the big volleyball game. *(flip, flip)*

Danielle: And here’s another picture of you in the hallway.

Cedy: C’mon - -let’s look at the rest later, we’re going to be late.

They all run off.

First Group:

They continue to flip through a big chunk of the book.

Bruce: You know, if a person only knew our school through the yearbook, they would think the only things people like us ever participated in were two adaptive teams.

Nathan: Yeah – I mean, I know we hang out in the halls, cuz we are hanging out in them right now.

Bruce: C’mon, let’s go before we are late. And I am definitely saying something to the yearbook committee about this.

They exit.

Scene 13: A Lonely Graduation

Students sit in rows of chairs as if at their own graduation. Four students are standing in a line as if waiting to get their diplomas. The third person in line is Jared Connors. As each student's name is called, the principal hands them a diploma and shakes their hand.

Principal: Joseph Compton

Students in chairs cheer loudly and clap. And say things like:

Go Joseph!

We love you.

Woo hoo!

Principal: Rebecca Connolly

Students in chairs cheer loudly and clap.

Yay Becka!

You did it Connolly!

Principal: Jared Connors

Silence. No one claps. Even the principal looks confused as he shake's Jared's hand.

Jared takes a seat.

Student in chairs whisper:

Who is that?!

Was he in our class?

I've never seen that guy in my life.

The action freezes. Jared's parent steps out and says:

That was my son's high school graduation. He graduated with 350 people who didn't know him. The schools in our district didn't have the right kind of programs for a learner like Jared. If he had stayed here, he would have spent six years in non- inclusive classes only. The closest school that could provide him with an adequate education was nearly 40 miles away. So for six years, he had to get on a bus at the crack of dawn and take a 45 minute bus ride to school. And because of some rule that I still don't understand, his diploma had to come from our district school. I hated having to watch him walk at his graduation without her friends. But those are the kinds of choices we've had to make all his life. If all schools took the time to better understand learning differences, maybe Jared would have graduated with his friends cheering him on.

All exit.

Scene 14: The Basketball Team, Part 4

The dinner

Coach:

Welcome to the first ever Awards Dinner for the three time State Champion Unified Sports Girls Basketball team. (clapping, cheering). This Awards Dinner is happening because a group of athletes from the team made a strong case for why there should be an Awards Dinner. To be honest, this is something that should have happened a long time. There is so much to celebrate – especially all the hard work that these athletes put into the season, both in practices and in the games. This is an important first step in placing Unified Sports more at the center of our school, and I am extremely proud of the team for being agents of change and making this event possible.

We have many awards to give out this evening, but we will start with the Award for the Most Improved Player – and that award goes to – Sophie Martin.

Sophie goes up to get her award. Action freezes. A performer steps out and says the following poem:

A Just Day, A Just Place

Sometimes I wonder
How can I find my place?
In a place that was crafted with someone else in mind?
A place that was built around you by design.
Where is my place in a blueprint for your comfort?
Where you are free to be - with little effort.
A place where you walk with your head held high and keep the lead
Where it feels like I search for air as you breathe with ease
Sometimes I wonder
Is it just my place to prove my place?
To carve it out with struggles and protests?
Or will there come a just day when my just place... just is?
As yours has always just been...
Just for you.

Final Scene – Agents of Change

Actors enter the stage and form a line. They repeat the phrase I will, stating what they can do to create change. Below is a list of statements from the original production.

Actor: Change happens one step at a time.

I will speak up when I hear others using the R word and other derogatory words.

I will spend more time out of my comfort zone.

I will be brave.

I will make new friends.

I will stand by my morals, even when it is difficult.

I will never give up.

End of Play.

Additional Scenes That May Be Included:

The following two scenes were not included in the original production in July 2010, because of the specific needs of that production to rehearse in only one week, and because of the make-up of that specific cast. One or both of these scenes may be included in future productions.

Making The Track Team

*Students are trying out for the track team. A **Coach** & 2 **assistants** are yelling out encouragement and writing notes on her/his clipboard while the students run.*

Everyone is now tired from the tryout. They sit, take pretend “gasps” of breath – have fun with this. Marty stand a little away from the rest of the crowd.

Coach: All right everyone. Great job today. You all gave it your best out there. I wish I could have each and every one of you on the team, but as you know, I have to make some cuts. I will post the team list on my office door tomorrow morning. Now, head home.

The assistants and other runners walk off. Marty starts to exit.

Coach: Marty, I am really proud of you for trying out for the team. That’s really brave.

Marty looks at Coach puzzled, gives a little nod and heads off.

The Next Day:

Marty walks into his classroom, agitated. His teacher walks over...

Teacher: Hey, did you make the team?

Marty: No, and the coach even came up and TALKED to me after. He said I did a good job AND he said I was brave. I don’t understand that – what is brave about running? But why would he say something and then not put me on the team. I don’t understand.

Teacher: I don’t either, Marty. I am sorry you didn’t make the team.

Marty: Whatever. I mean, I don’t even know why I tried out. Kids like me never get on teams here.

The Teacher exits to go and talk to the Coach, in his office.

Teacher: Jim, can I talk to you for a second?

Coach: Sure.

Teacher: Marty Wexler tried out for your team yesterday. He’s pretty upset. Was it his times?

Coach: No.

Teacher: So, why didn't he make the team?

Coach: Marty needs special attention. I don't want to take time away from the other runners because I would have to deal with Marty.

Teacher: I don't think Marty would need a slot of extra attention at track practice. He's a good runner, and this would be a great opportunity for him to compete with people his same ability. Not to mention what it would do for him socially.

Coach: Look, I just don't know how to coach someone like Marty. I'm not trained in autism.

Teacher: Well good, because you don't have to coach autism, you just have to coach the track part.

Coach: You know what I mean.

Teacher: All right – I get this makes you nervous. Look, why don't we have a para come with for the first few practices. If something comes up or if you think Marty needs some special attention, a para could step in.

Pause.

Coach: All right. If there's a para who can be there with im. I'll put him on the team.

Teacher: Thank you. (starts to leave) Jim – they're all just kids. They are way more alike than different.

Teacher exits. Marty stands up and comes center stage and addresses the audience.

Marty: When I run, I run with my heart. I run with joy. I joined the track team because I loved to run. It's that simple.

But the thing that has changed – the big thing – is that kids now know me. In this huge school- there are now kids who know me – who say hi to me in the hall. And others who saw a meet who come up and say “good job on Saturday” It's cool. And I'm really good at it.

But there is one weird thing though. There is a para who comes to all the practices. And he just sits in the stands and waves. I wonder what he's doing there. Well no matter – I'm off to practice.

The Sub

A substitute teacher sits at a desk looking at paperwork. Jack enters, followed by some other students. Jack approaches the sub. Other students begin to file in and take their seats. Slowly the room gets disorganized.

Jack: Hi.

Mr.

Donnelly: Hi there! What can I do for you?

Jack: I just wanted to let you know that I need to leave to take a test at 10:15.

Mr. D: Oh, okay well can you just have a seat and remind me in a little bit. I just have to get the class started on their assignment.

Jack sits.

Student 1: *(walking in)* Where's Miss Schroeder?

Mr. D: She's out with a...

Student 2: *(walking in)* We have a sub? Where's Miss Schroeder?

Mr. D: She's out with a...

Student 3: What are we doing today?

Student 4: Are we gonna go over the homework?

Mr. D: Okay everyone! Take a seat, please.

Students keep talking.

Mr. D: Listen up, everyone. Can I have it quiet please? Quiet, please. Please, quiet.

Students suddenly stop talking.

Mr. D: Thank you. Alright. Let's get started. My name is Mr. Donnelly and I am your sub today. Miss Schroeder is out with a sick child. She left specific instructions on what you're supposed to be working on. *(picking up a sheet of paper with instructions)* If everyone would open their text to the end of chapter 5. Complete questions 17-35 and do essay question 4. Work individually and turn in what you have at the end of class.

Jack raises his hand.

Mr. D: *(as if he's never seen Jack before)* Yes, can I help you?

Jack: I have to leave now.

Mr. D: Leave? Why?

Jack: I have to go take that test.

Mr. D: Well I don't know anything about that. Can you work on your assignment please?

Carol: No, he gets to leave.

Mr. D: Well, I was told that everyone needs to turn in the assignment at the end of class.

Bill: Yeah, but he is allowed to leave to take a test.

Mr. D: Hmmm...

Jack: I talked to you before class remember? I have a test.

Mr. D: Really? I wasn't told anything about that.

Carol: But it's okay if he leaves.

Bill: Yeah – It's okay.

Mr. D: *(hesitant)* Well, okay but *(then realizing)* Oh...Oh! I see, you're one of those...um...You're one of those *Special* students.

Jack: *(looking down)* Yeah...

Mr. D: Well you better get going then.

Jack: *(dejected)* Thanks...

Jack steps out of class and addresses the audience:

I wanted the ground to swallow me up. I was so embarrassed. And for the rest of the day, that's all I could think about. You know, every day, I work really hard to fit in, but somehow a spotlight ends up on me anyway. I spend a lot of time explaining myself and asking for what I need and trying to get teachers and students to understand and I get tired. It would have been so much easier if Miss Schroeder or someone in charge would have let the sub know that I was scheduled to take a test. I mean, we've got some great accommodations at my school, but it still seems that I'm the one having to explain them to everyone