

Where Hope Grows Special Olympics Study Guide



An unexpected journey. An unexpected friendship.



where hope grows



where hope grows

Special Olympics Study Guide

Introduction and Synopsis

In the new movie, **WHERE HOPE GROWS**, former professional baseball player Calvin Campbell is moving through his life without dealing with the challenges surrounding him, his family and his friends. The father of teenage daughter, Katie, Calvin spends most of his time drinking with his buddies and trying to forget his past faults. His spiral into self-destruction is slowly turned around through a newfound friendship with a grocery store clerk with Down syndrome named Produce. The cynical Calvin is awakened to a new outlook through the eyes of an unlikely mentor. As Calvin and Produce grow in their friendship, Calvin is forced to confront his various flaws and struggles and find ways to turn his life in a more positive direction. His new outlook is put to the ultimate test when a painful accident affects every person in Calvin's life, and Produce's future hangs in the balance.

WHERE HOPE GROWS is a story of challenges, healing, and the unlikely relationships we encounter in our lives. This study guide is meant for small groups, youth groups, and families to use when watching this film. Included is a discussion guide that offers prompts for having conversations about the overall themes in the film, connections to core curricular standards, and activities that provide opportunities to put ideas into action. There is also a Dive Deeper section with ideas for putting your ideas into action.

Supports Concept Objectives Such As:

- Students will explore the similarities and differences among people with different abilities.
- Students will understand the power of words and impact of word choice through various examples in the movie and personal experience.
- Students will understand the concept of acceptance and various situations in which acceptance is central.
- Students will explore the concept of friendship and its impact.
- Students will gain an understanding of the characteristics of healthy relationships.



Skills to be Addressed

- Assessing cause and effect as reflected in identified situations.
- Forming value judgments and expressing these in a clear and coherent manner.
- Using persuasive argument when promoting a selected position.
- Expressing ideas, observations and points of view orally and in writing.
- Distinguishing between multiple meanings of words based on context, audience, and intent.

Core Curricular Standards¹

Language Standards

- Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time, and is sometimes contested.
- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- Read (Listen) closely to determine what the text (film) says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it: cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.²
- Determine central ideas of themes of a text (film) and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.²
- Analyze how and why individuals, events or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text (film).²

Writing Standards

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Health Standards

- Predict how healthy behaviors can affect health status.
- Compare and contrast the benefits of and barriers to practicing a variety of healthy behaviors.
- Demonstrate how to influence and support others to make positive health choices.
- Work cooperatively as an advocate for improving personal, family, and community health.

¹National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. 2010. *Common Core State Standards*. Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers.

²Adapted from National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. 2010. *Common Core State Standards*. Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers.



Discussion Prompts

(Please note that these discussion prompts are meant for multiple discussion formats, and depending on focus and time frames, leaders may choose only some or a few of the prompts.)

Think about the story and themes in the movie: what is the primary message of **WHERE HOPE GROWS**? What scenes or characters support this message?

What are some ways characters' friends in this movie encouraged unhealthy choices? Why might a friend try to get you to do something that isn't in your best interest?

What does peer pressure mean? What are some examples of peer pressure you see in this movie?



Is Produce a hurtful or respectful nickname? Why? How do you think Produce felt about this nickname? How do you think he got this name? How can nicknames be used in ways that are condescending or disrespectful?

Produce asks Calvin, "Do you think I'm smart?" What does it mean to be smart? What would you tell Produce if he asked you? In what ways is Produce smart? Why do you think he constantly asked that question?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

Discuss the concept of multiple intelligences with students (Visual-Spatial, Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Naturalist, Existentialist). Provide examples of the varying ways individuals develop and demonstrate intelligence. Help your students assess what kind of "smart" they are, and how they can build on their strengths by understanding how they learn best.



Discussion Prompts

What does Colt think of Produce? How can you tell? What does Produce think of Colt? How can you tell?

Why did Produce's boss scold him for hugging Calvin? Why is hugging important to Produce? Why do you think his boss employs him at the store?

Which characters respect Produce and genuinely like him as a friend? What do they do and say that demonstrates their respect for him?

Were there times people were condescending toward Produce? How could they have handled the situation differently?



GUIDING COMMENTS:

Discuss what it means to be condescending toward someone else. Guide students in learning to distinguish between an equitable relationship in which both people contribute meaningfully to the relationship. What happens when one person feels a sense of superiority over the other? How does it affect the relationship? How does it feel to have someone act condescendingly toward you?



Discussion Prompts

Why do you think Calvin initially befriends Produce? Who benefitted from the friendship? How? What does it mean when a relationship is mutually beneficial? How does a mutually beneficial friendship develop between Calvin and Produce? How can you tell the relationship between Produce and Colt isn't mutually beneficial?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

Discuss the difference between a mutually beneficial relationship and one in which only one person benefits by exploiting or using the other to meet a personal need. Be sure to address the difference between healthy benefits and using the other person for something that is illegal or wrong, such as when Calvin switched places with Produce in the car when he was pulled over by the police officer.

How does Calvin make Produce feel smart when he's teaching Produce to play baseball? When have you been successful at teaching someone else a skill they were struggling with?

Characters use different labels to describe Produce—some call him a “retard,” some say he’s “different” or “disabled,” others say he has Down syndrome, and some never give him a label at all. Why are labels harmful? Which labels are particularly inappropriate? How can you describe someone without labeling them?



GUIDING COMMENTS:

Discuss the use of labels historically, and how/why they change. Review the history of the label “mental retardation”, its use in the medical field, and the offensive way it is still used today. Share with students the efforts to end the use of the R-word. Do you hear the R-word being used in their school and community? Why is it offensive? Why is it so difficult to get them to stop? Does it matter if they say they are just joking or don't mean it to be offensive?



Discussion Prompts

What does Milt think of Produce? Why does Calvin get upset when Milt wants Produce to be in his commercial?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

Point out what it means when a relationship is exploitative. Discuss examples with students. Relate the conversation back to the concept of mutually beneficial relationships. Why is it harmful to someone when they are exploited by someone else? How does it harm the larger group? What happens to people's perception of them?



Why was Calvin surprised that Produce lived on his own?

At a funeral service, the pastor says to “make your dash count,” to live your life to the fullest. What does he mean by this statement? Who makes their dash count in the film? Who is someone you know who is making their dash count? How can you tell? What are key elements needed to live a healthy life?

Who or what helps Calvin make changes in his life? What relationships bring about his transformation, and what realizations does he make in order to grow?

What do you think will happen with each of the characters beyond the end of the movie? Imagine and describe a future for Calvin, Katie, Produce, Amy, and Colt—what will the next year hold for them?

Which character did you relate with the most—Produce, Calvin, Katie, or another character? Why do you think you felt a connection with that character? Which character did you dislike the most? What bothered you about them?

Why do you think the movie is titled “**WHERE HOPE GROWS?**” Discuss how you see the growth of hope throughout the story. Who or what is the source of hope?

How has watching **WHERE HOPE GROWS** changed or altered your perspective on people with Down syndrome? What steps could you take to support people with Down syndrome or other intellectual disabilities in your school or community?



Discussion Prompts

Are there people with special needs in your life? What have you learned about life and about yourself from knowing this person?

How does your school welcome and serve people with special needs? Your friends? Your neighborhood? Your community?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

This question presents an excellent opportunity to talk about inclusion with your students. In particular, you may want to raise the concept of social inclusion and what it means to ensure all members of a school or community are meaningfully engaged as part of the group, form positive, mutually beneficial relationships, and are viewed as equal, contributing members of the group. Some additional questions to ponder with your students might include: What does it feel like to be excluded? What are some ways we unintentionally exclude certain people or make them feel unwelcome? What steps can we take to make sure we create an inclusive community?



Dive Deeper: Put Your Ideas into Action

Create a poster about a good choice for maintaining a healthy body (emotional, intellectual, social and/or physical health). Be sure to include why your choice is important, how to support healthy choices, and alternative responses when faced with unhealthy choices. Display it in your school or community.

1. Find one skill you can teach to someone else. Break the skill down into steps they can learn successfully. Write an essay about the experience. What did it feel like when they were able to follow your instructions? How did you deal with any frustrations they encountered? What adjustments did you need to make to your teaching? How did you measure their growth or improvement?

Now ask someone else to teach you a skill they possess that you don't. Write an essay about the experience of being a learner. How did they show respect for your abilities? How did they encourage and support your learning? What did they say to you that helped you overcome frustration?

2. Research healthy choices. Write a persuasive essay providing evidence about why someone should make that healthy choice. Offer at least three healthy alternatives to the corresponding risk behavior.
3. In the movie, Calvin says, "We don't use the R-word just like we don't use the N-word." Find examples of how words matter. Research the history of one of the words and how its use has changed over time. Create a poster of helpful, supportive words that can replace hurtful or offensive language. Display in your school or community.

Resources

Down Syndrome

[National Association for Down Syndrome](#)

[National Down Syndrome Society](#)

Inclusion

[Australian Institute of Family Studies](#)

[Disabled in Society](#)

[Inclusion and Sports](#)

[Inclusive Schools](#)

[Movies That Move](#)

[National Inclusion Project](#)

[Project UNIFY](#)

[Special Olympics Social Inclusion Resources](#)

R-word

[Special Olympics resources](#)

