

Study-Guide

Matt Glowacki



Walking is Overrated

Program Overview

“Walking is Overrated” is a humorous program designed for students from kindergarten through high school. It has been enjoyed in 43 states by over a half a million students in the past fifteen years. Matt changes the way the program is presented to accommodate various grade levels.

In all the variations of the program, Matt explains the challenges of growing up as a child with a disability. Competitive Paralympic sports are introduced and demonstrated with volunteers from the audience and of course, Matt takes spontaneous questions from the audience about any topics of interest. Audiences find his program to be very inspirational and motivating as well as humorous.

Grade Appropriate Themes

K-5: Bullying, Being a Good Friend to Others, Team Work, Healthy Choices

6-8: Acceptance of Differences, Character Building, Overcoming Obstacles, Staying Drug and Alcohol Free.

9-12: Diversity, Normalcy, Tolerance, Student Athleticism.

Matt Glowacki

Over the past two decades Matt Glowacki has spoken to over 600,000 students and teachers nation wide. In spite of being born without legs, Matt has shared his messages about diversity and disability with two United States Presidents, has traveled to 26 countries as a member of the United States Sit Volleyball Paralympic team, owned and operated two successful businesses, and designed wheelchairs for athletes all over the world.

Matt’s business savvy and experiences have taught him that other people’s perceptions of his ability can be limiting and misconceived. Matt shares his ideas of disability, diversity, respect, and success with audiences of all ages and leaves a wake of enlightenment everywhere he goes.



"Our students were transfixed by his style of teaching, he had them in the palm of his hand from beginning to end."

- Michael Michowski, Principal
Prairie Hill School, IL

When Matt finds time to spare, he works with “The Confluence,” a not-for-profit wheelchair sports foundation in the St. Louis area and enjoys the opportunity to pass on the benefits of sport to a new generation of youth.

Glossary of Terms

Paralympics- an elite multi-sport event for athletes with physical, mental and sensorial disabilities. This includes mobility disabilities, amputees, visual disabilities and those with cerebral palsy. The Paralympic Games are held every four years, following the Olympic Games, and are governed by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

Special Olympics- is an international organization created to help people with intellectual disabilities develop self-confidence, social skills and a sense of personal accomplishment through sports training and competition.

Quadriplegic- used to describe inherent discrimination against people with disabilities in favor of people who are not disabled.

Paraplegic- is an impairment in motor and/or sensory function of the lower extremities.

Prosthesis- an artificial extension that replaces a missing body part.

ADA- American’s with Disabilities Act

Able-bodied- a term used by disability rights activists to refer to those who function “normally” in society and do not have an outward physical disability. It is often noted by these activists the “able-bodied” is, for each individual who is able-bodied, always temporary.

Ableism- used to describe inherent discrimination against people with disabilities in favor of people who are not disabled.



Educational Objectives/ Discussion Questions



The educational goals of the program are as follows and are accompanied by leading questions to spark discussion.

1. To introduce Disability to the students in a new and non-threatening manner.

- a) Encourage questioning of difference “Where are his legs? Why is that important to know?”
- b) Acceptance of difference as normal “Do you think life would be harder if you lost your legs in an accident, or if you were born that way?” “How would your life be different in each situation?”

2. Recognize Similarities through individual differences.

- a) Personal Sharing of activities and Hobbies “What does Matt do for fun?” “Why does he do that?” “Do you like to do the same things as he does?”
- b) Importance of community “Can everyone contribute to society?” “How can we help one another?” “Should we only help those who have a ‘tougher’ life?”

3. To demonstrate and teach perspective through normalcy.

- a) Explanation of daily maintenance activities “What are the things Matt has to do in the morning?” “Are they different from what you do in the morning?”
- b) Interests and goals “Why is it important to identify things that you are good at?”
- c) Demonstrate healthy behavior choices “Why is it important for Matt to take care of himself?” “Would it be harder for Matt to get around if he had to have someone else push him?”

4. To introduce and teach techniques of Competitive Wheelchair Sport.

- a) Explanation and introduction of the Paralympic Games “How is the Special Olympics Different from the Paralympics?” “Who can play at the Paralympic Games?”
- b) Demonstration of Sitting Volleyball “What are the simple rules?” “Who has the advantage, Matt or someone with legs?”
- c) Demonstration of Wheelchair Basketball “How many bounces before you have to push the wheel?” “Why is it important to not just hit another person’s wheelchair?” “Are the ways in which you improve at wheelchair sports the same as the ways in which you improve at standup sports?”

5. To reinforce the value of self esteem and recognizing potential in people.

- a) Characteristics of Success “What makes Matt successful?” “If you did those things would you be successful too?” “Does success look the same for everyone?”
- b) Importance of people who believe in you “Who helped Matt achieve success in his life?” “Why is it important for people to believe in you?” “Is it important to believe in yourself?”
- c) Individual recognition of potential “Why is it important for you to try new things?” “Why should you stick with something if it is hard in the beginning?” “Do you learn anything if you fail?” “What should you do when you succeed?”