

= Special Education (Glee) =

" Special Education " is the ninth episode of the second season of the American musical television series Glee , and the thirty @-@ first episode overall . It was written by series creator Brad Falchuk , directed by Paris Barclay , and aired on Fox in the United States on November 30 , 2010 . In " Special Education " , the McKinley High School glee club New Directions competes in the Sectionals round of show choir competition against the Hipsters and the Dalton Academy Warblers , while dealing with internal feuding that threatens to rip the club apart .

The episode shows the former member of New Directions , Kurt Hummel (Chris Colfer) , at his new school Dalton Academy , where he joins the rival Warblers . With his departure , New Directions must find a new twelfth member to remain eligible for the competition . Club director Will Schuester (Matthew Morrison) decides to feature overlooked performers from the group for Sectionals , to the consternation of the usual lead singers , Rachel Berry (Lea Michele) and Finn Hudson (Cory Monteith) . The episode received a wide range of reviews , with a small majority commenting favorably ; some viewed it as a lesser version of the first season 's Sectionals episode . By contrast , the six songs covered during the show received generally favorable reviews , with the most praise going to " Dog Days Are Over " and " Valerie " as performed by New Directions , and " Hey , Soul Sister " as sung by the Warblers .

Upon its initial airing , this episode was viewed by 11 @.@ 68 million American viewers and garnered a 4 @.@ 6 / 13 Nielsen rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , up significantly from the previous episode , " Furt " .

= = Plot = =

The show choir Sectionals competition is imminent , and the New Directions glee club is one below the required minimum of twelve members now that Kurt Hummel (Chris Colfer) has enrolled at Dalton Academy , home of their Sectionals ' rivals the Warblers . At club director Will Schuester 's (Matthew Morrison) behest , Puck (Mark Salling) attempts to recruit from his football teammates , but they lock him in a port @-@ a @-@ potty . He is rescued the next day by AV Club president and wrestler Lauren Zizes (Ashley Fink) , and she agrees to join New Directions , though he has to bribe her first .

Will invites school guidance counselor Emma Pillsbury (Jayma Mays) to accompany him to Sectionals . She accepts , and suggests he consider featuring other club members instead of his usual choices , co @-@ captains Finn Hudson (Cory Monteith) and Rachel Berry (Lea Michele) . Will gives the lead vocals for one song to duets competition winners Quinn Fabray (Dianna Agron) and Sam Evans (Chord Overstreet) , which upsets Rachel and Finn , while Brittany Pierce (Heather Morris) and Mike Chang (Harry Shum , Jr .) are given lead dancing roles on another number . When Brittany admits she is nervous about performing , her boyfriend Artie Abrams (Kevin McHale) gives her a " magic comb " to boost her confidence . She and Mike commence time @-@ consuming rehearsals for their dance routine , and Mike 's girlfriend Tina Cohen @-@ Chang (Jenna Ushkowitz) suspects that they are having an affair ; when Artie confronts Brittany about it , she confesses that she has been avoiding him because she lost his comb . Artie admits that the comb was never magical , and tells Brittany that she is magic .

Kurt attends his first meeting with the Dalton Academy Warblers . He learns that the setlist for Sectionals is selected by a council of upperclassmen , and is offered a chance to audition for a solo at Sectionals . He visits Rachel for advice , and at her recommendation sings " Don 't Cry for Me Argentina " from the musical Evita . Kurt is not given a solo , and his friend Blaine (Darren Criss) suggests that he try to fit in rather than stand out .

Santana (Naya Rivera) tells Rachel that she and Finn had sex the previous spring , and Rachel is furious that Finn 's claim to be a virgin was a lie . Emma counsels them , and then realizes that she should not attend Sectionals with Will since her boyfriend Carl (John Stamos) would be hurt ; she and Carl fly to Las Vegas , Nevada for the weekend .

At sectionals , the Hipsters and the Warblers perform first , the latter singing Train 's " Hey , Soul

Sister " with Blaine on lead . Despite much backstage drama , the New Directions set goes smoothly , with Quinn and Sam performing " (I 've Had) The Time of My Life " and Santana singing lead on Amy Winehouse 's cover of The Zutons ' " Valerie " ; Brittany and Mike receive several bursts of applause for their dancing . New Directions and the Warblers tie for first place , which means that both groups will advance to the Regionals competition .

Emma tells Will that she married Carl in Las Vegas , and despite his shock , Will says he is happy for her . Finn breaks up with Rachel after she confesses that she made out with Puck to get back at him over Santana . New Directions performs Florence and the Machine 's " Dog Days Are Over " to celebrate the club 's competition survival , with Tina and Mercedes (Amber Riley) singing lead .

= = Production = =

The competitors for Sectionals were announced three episodes prior in " Never Been Kissed " : the a cappella Warblers from Dalton Academy , an all @-@ male institution in Westerville ? they were seen in that episode performing the song " Teenage Dream " ? and the Hipsters from the Warren Township continuing education program , which consists of seniors working toward earning General Educational Development diplomas . While Criss sings lead on the Warblers song , the background vocals are sung by the Tufts Beelzebubs , a male a cappella group from Tufts University in Medford , Massachusetts , not the actors playing the Warblers on screen . The Beelzebubs had not yet met Criss at the time the episode aired . The scenes of the Warblers performance of " Hey , Soul Sister " were filmed in a theater over the course of two fifteen @-@ hour days , according to Chris Mann , one of the actors : from the front on the first day , and from the back on the second .

Cheyenne Jackson as Dustin Goolsby and John Stamos as Carl Howell were originally supposed to have scenes in this episode ? the Fox publicity included a photograph of a scene between Dustin and Will ? but Jackson 's was cut entirely , and only a brief shot of Stamos embracing Mays as Emma was retained in the final version . Recurring characters in this episode include glee club members Mike Chang (Shum) and Sam Evans (Overstreet) , school bullies Dave Karofsky (Max Adler) and Azimio (James Earl) , Stamos as Howell , and Criss as Blaine Anderson , lead singer of the Warblers . Vicki Woodlee , mother of Glee choreographer Zach Woodlee , plays one of the Hipsters ; as the youngest of the performers at 60 , she had to wear a great deal of makeup to emulate an older person 's appearance , including " pounds of powder " . Zach Woodlee instructed those cast as Hipsters , the oldest of whom was 83 , to limit their dance movements to seem more realistic . Scenes were filmed over the course of four days . Actress and former American Bandstand member Bunny Gibson plays another group member . Co @-@ stars include Fink , who appears as new glee club member Lauren Zizes , Telly Leung and Titus Makin , Jr . , who return as Warblers Wes and David , respectively , and Riker Lynch , Eddy Martin and Curt Mega , who debut as Warblers Jeff , Thad and Nick , respectively .

" Special Education " features cover versions of six songs : " Don 't Cry for Me Argentina " from the musical Evita , Mike + The Mechanics ' " The Living Years " , Train 's " Hey , Soul Sister " , " (I 've Had) The Time of My Life " from the film Dirty Dancing , " Valerie " by The Zutons (although specifically a cover of the version by Mark Ronson featuring Amy Winehouse) , and Florence and the Machine 's " Dog Days Are Over " . Each song was released as a single , available for digital download , with two separate versions of " Don 't Cry for Me Argentina " released ? one by Chris Colfer (Kurt) and the other by Lea Michele (Rachel) . " Valerie " and " (I 've Had) The Time of My Life " are included on the fifth soundtrack album Glee : The Music , Volume 4 , released on November 26 , 2010 , and " Hey , Soul Sister " was included on the seventh soundtrack album , Glee : The Music Presents the Warblers , released on April 19 , 2011 .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings and viewership = = =

" Special Education " was first broadcast on November 30 , 2010 in the United States on Fox . It received a 4 @. @ 6 / 13 Nielsen rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , and attracted over 11 @. @ 68 million American viewers during its initial airing , and thus won its time slot despite airing simultaneously with network specials , including Rudolph the Red @-@ Nosed Reindeer on CBS , Christmas In Rockefeller Center on NBC , Dr. Seuss ' How the Grinch Stole Christmas and Shrek the Halls on ABC , and CW 's usual offering , One Tree Hill . The total viewership and ratings for this episode were up significantly from those of the previous episode , " Furt " , which was watched by 10 @. @ 41 million American viewers and acquired a 4 @. @ 0 / 12 rating / share in the 18 ? 49 demographic upon first airing on television on November 23 , 2010 .

In Canada , 2 @. @ 32 million viewers watched the episode , ranking second for the week . In the UK , the episode was watched by 2 @. @ 602 million viewers (2 @. @ 218 million on E4 , and 384 @, @ 000 on E4 + 1) , which made it the most @-@ watched show on cable for the week .

= = = Critical reception = = =

" Special Education " received a wide range of reviews from television critics , though there seemed to be more positive than negative responses . The most enthusiastic reviewers were from The Atlantic , where both Kevin Fallon and Patrick Burns declared it the " best episode of Glee all season " , and Meghan Brown suggested that the show should " just do competition episodes from now on " . Aly Semigran of MTV was similarly laudatory , and said that the show was " back in top form " ; she added that the episode " felt very reminiscent of the magic the first season provided " .

Others were more tempered in their praise . James Poniewozik of Time said the episode was " grounded " and " solid @-@ if @-@ not @-@ spectacular " , and highlighted how Glee " has developed into a broad ensemble , where any of several characters is capable of taking the spotlight , even an originally comic @-@ relief character like Brittany . " Todd VanDerWerff of The A.V. Club and the Houston Chronicle 's Bobby Hankinson both liked the episode ? VanDerWerff gave it a " B + " ? but they , like Erica Futterman of Rolling Stone who was less complimentary , were disappointed that it failed to measure up to the last time New Directions competed in Sectionals . VanDerWerff wrote , " When the show [?] remains , at some level , a show about a bunch of kids who just love to sing and dance and maybe have wacky adventures on the side , it remains fundamentally strong , as it does tonight . " He also stated , " The fact that the Warblers and New Directions tied , while probably necessary for whatever reason , is ridiculously anticlimactic and keeps this episode from an A- pretty much singlehandedly . "

Amy Reiter of the Los Angeles Times was disappointed with almost everything , and said the episode " felt more like a long , slow letdown after a season of gleeful highs " . She added , " New Directions ' sectionals performance wasn 't a total fumble , but it wasn 't the touchdown you might 've hoped for either " , and of the long @-@ awaited opportunity to see other members featured in competition : " the anticipated shining moment turned out to be so dull . " Reiter was one of a very few critics to note the absence of cheerleading coach Sue Sylvester in the episode , and only when she lamented the " relative lack of humor " . Futterman merely remarked on Sue 's non @-@ appearance in passing ; she came to the conclusion that " we got a spazzy , unfocused hour at the expense of emotional investment " , and though Anthony Benigno of the Daily News complimented the " solid acting " , he also wrote that " this is the first time the show 's started to feel genuinely boring as opposed to , you know , gleeful . " He made a general complaint as well : " This show is starting to suffer in a big way from making the music secondary to the plot . " Robert Canning of IGN gave the episode a 7 @. @ 5 out of 10 rating . He said that the show " tried to make it all work , and while the hour was enjoyable enough , each storyline felt just a little bit shy of going from good to great . "

A few reviewers remarked on how the Hipsters seemed to be a reflection of the New Directions crew in fifty years , with Futterman getting into specifics : " We see future Rachel start the number with a cane and future Mercedes break through to finish the song off with a riff , and it 's hard not to be endeared to them . " Poniewozik wrote that Rachel 's " silent reminder to Kurt to smile on stage was a perfect , sweet little moment " , a sentiment shared by Tim Stack of Entertainment Weekly .

Poniewozik also noted that " Lea Michele had some of her strongest non @-@ singing moments of the season by showing not just how Rachel dealt with her problems with Finn but with being on the periphery of the group . " The storyline that featured the disintegration of the Rachel ? Finn relationship , when commented on at all , was viewed unfavorably ; VanDerWerff called it a " stupid twist " .

Brown praised the addition of Fink as Lauren to New Directions , and declared , " I hope she 's on the team for keeps " , while Poniewozik was pleased that " the episode used Lauren for comedy without simply making her the butt of jokes " . Brown also wrote , " Kurt 's arc was subtler this week , and thereby about 50 times more interesting . I [?] am impressed that Glee 's handling his acclimation to Dalton so truthfully . " Canning was similarly impressed , and called Kurt at Dalton " the most solid story " of the episode . There was little approval among reviewers for the " canary in a cage " metaphor in the scene between Kurt and Blaine at the end of the episode , with Kurt the " canary " in his new Dalton cage ; Hankinson characterized it as " super ham @-@ fisted " , and others were nearly as harsh .

= = = Music and performances = = =

The musical performances in this episode were mostly praised by critics , though there was little said about the quality of the abbreviated performance by the Hipsters in competition . There was near @-@ universal approval for the first song heard , " Don 't Cry For Me Argentina " , which Stack called " totally beautiful " and gave an " A- " ; he , like Burns , who said it was " fantastic " , loved having " Rachel and Kurt get a chance to sing together " . Jen Harper of BuddyTV echoed Kurt 's words in the episode ; she said " Rachel really is as talented as she is irritating " , but wished she " didn 't always look like she 's crying while she 's singing " , and added that she was " really digging Kurt in a lower register " . Futterman noted that Rachel , as is usual with her " power ballads " , " uses the time to grapple with the latest obstacle to her future stardom , while we see Kurt deliver a clear , restrained take . Benigno called Michele 's voice " astounding " , and added that her solo alternated " with Kurt 's audition with the Warblers , which is predictably outstanding " , and gave the song a " B + " . Even those who disliked the song or the composer were won over by the performance : Berk gave it three stars out of five , and Burns thought it was " fantastic " ; both liked the song 's tag @-@ team presentation .

The performance of Train 's " Hey , Soul Sister " by the Dalton Academy Warblers received even more praise than " Don 't Cry For Me Argentina " . Benigno called it flawless , and gave it an " A + + " , and Hanh Nguyen of Zap2it gave it her " top prize " of the night . Berk gave it four stars out of five , Burns said " the Warblers sounded fantastic and fun " , and Harper said she loved it , and that , like the audience on the show , she " would have given it " a " standing ovation " . Stack said he " sorta " hated the song " from sheer overexposure " , but " Darren Criss sold it for me with his choreography and acting " , and gave it a " B + " . Pat Monahan , the lead singer of Train , said : " Loved it ! I thought they did an amazing job . "

The praise was more tepid for Sam and Quinn 's " (I 've Had) the Time of My Life " . Benigno called it " solid " , but added " overkill knocks it down to a solid B . " Both Futterman and Stack said the number " fell a little flat " , though Stack said the duo had " great physical chemistry " . Fallon characterized it as an " adorable duet " . Berk gave it five stars of five , his best grade for the episode , and called it " oozy , curdling perfection " , while Reiter was the least impressed , and wrote that their " voices (and romantic interplay) seemed wan and thin . "

The New Directions closing number at Sectionals , " Valerie " , received the most commentary , with Santana 's solo given enthusiastic praise , though Brittany and Mike 's dancing was also lauded . Hankinson , who had tepidly called songs " nice " up to this point , shifted gears and said , " Then Santana burns the roof down with a rendition of Amy Winehouse 's ' Valerie ' . It was awesome . " Raymund Flandez of The Wall Street Journal echoed that fervor : " But then Santana came on and killed . With an on @-@ spot rendition of Mark Ronson / Amy Winehouse 's ' Valerie , ' and wearing a Snooki bun , Santana was electrifying behind the mic , in an energizing display that revved up the audience " , and added , " Brittany and Mike 's pas de deux rocked " . Benigno opined that " Brittany

and Mike Chang handle the moves (extraordinarily well) , but the vocals here are what steal it . Naya Rivera (Santana) is completely outstanding on lead vocals , and I can 't understand why she hasn't gotten a solo before this " ; he gave it an " A " . Stack was slightly less generous with an " A- " , and wrote that it was a " great song choice for Santana " ; he gave " bonus points for the phenomenal Mike / Brittany choreography " , while Harper said that their dancing " totally made the song " . Nguyen liked the dancing , but she was critical of how the song sounded , as she felt " it lacked something and didn 't really feel worthy of the standing O " , while Futterman said " Santana 's sassy vocals are a perfect echo of Winehouse 's , but the rest of the song feels a bit like a circus " . Reiter felt the entire song " seemed kind of tacked on " , both the dancing and Santana 's solo .

" Dog Days Are Over " was the favorite song of several reviewers , including Hankinson , who said " it was the exact brand of high @-@ energy jubilation that I love the most . " Harper was also enthusiastic : " This performance for me represents what I like about New Directions ? and why Kurt needs to come back asap . Everyone got to do their own individual thing , yet they still work really well as a group . I give it best song of the night . " In Semigran 's view , " From the cute choreographed claps to the unconventional (but oddly fitting) choice to have Tina and Mercedes sing the tune , I wish they 'd save this one for regionals . It was a winner " , while VanDerWerff wrote , " ' Dog Days Are Over ' is right in this show 's wheelhouse , so , naturally , it hits the song out of the park . " Benigno gave the song a " B + " , and Berk awarded three stars out of five , while Stack gave it an " A " , and said series creator Ryan Murphy " chose the perfect gals to pull off this cover . "

= = = Chart history = = =

Five of the seven cover versions released as singles debuted on the Billboard Hot 100 , and appeared on other musical charts . The show 's rendition of " Dog Days Are Over " debuted at number twenty @-@ two on both the Hot 100 and Canadian Hot 100 , and pushed the original version of the song by Florence and the Machine ahead of it to number twenty @-@ one on the Hot 100 , up from number fifty @-@ eight in the previous week . The other songs on the Hot 100 were " Hey , Soul Sister " at number twenty @-@ nine , which also made number thirty @-@ two on the Canadian Hot 100 ; " (I 've Had) The Time of My Life " at number thirty @-@ eight , which also made number thirty @-@ nine on the Canadian Hot 100 ; " Valerie " at number fifty @-@ four , which also made number seventy on the Canadian Hot 100 ; and " Don 't Cry for Me Argentina " in the Lea Michele version , at number ninety @-@ seven .