

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

TRANSCRIPTION

Hunter: Hello. My name is Hunter, and this is *A Virtual Little Library for Staying Connected*, created by Dr. Taucia González and myself. Our library is a collection of picture books read aloud by community members that we would like to share with you. These read-alouds are a way for us all to stay connected while also supporting our children while they are unable to attend school. The books and community members we've chosen show the diversity of our schools and communities. We would like to thank our readers and their guests for participating, as well as the Midwest & Plains Equity Center for supporting the project. We hope you enjoy.

Carlyn: My name is Carlyn. I'm here with a couple of my friends. Do you guys want to introduce yourselves?

Maggie: I'm Maggie.

Oscar: I'm Oscar, but usually my name is Spider-Man.

Carlyn: I'm going to call you Spider man? That's cool. We're going to read a book today and it's called *All the Way to the Top: How One Girl's Fight for Americans with Disabilities Changed Everything*. This book is really special to me for a couple of reasons. The first is that it's a real story about a real girl. So Jennifer, the main character who's on the cover of this book, is a real person and she really did the things we're going to read in the book.

Yeah, that was my reaction too! And we actually have the same disability. So we both have cerebral palsy, which means we both use a wheelchair to get around in the world. And we're going to learn a lot about that experience. The other reason that I really like this book is that it talks about kids becoming activists. And Oscar, I think, do you know what that word means? Being an activist?

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

Oscar: An activist is someone who works on something yeah.

Carlyn: Someone who works on something?

Oscar: Yeah.

Carlyn: Yeah. Fights with them for what they believe in, right?

Oscar: Yeah.

Carlyn: And kids can be activists, too. So that's a really important part of this book is it talks about Jennifer fighting for something she really believes in. Right?

Oscar: Yeah.

Carlyn: Okay. Let's get started. Shall we? Okay.

Jennifer Keelan may be small, but her voice is mighty. Yee-haw! Snowball responds, feeding up from a walk to a trot. Jennifer loves to go fast, but she knows she'll soon have less time for writing since she's finally old enough for school. She can't wait to make new friends. She's ready to go. Huh? In big letters, she's on a horse, you see?

The school is not far. Jennifer rolls outside, down the sidewalk to the corner. But, stop! A four-inch curb is a cliff to someone who uses a wheelchair.

Do you see what's happening here in the picture? She's in the wheelchair, right? She's going to school and what happened? Can you see?

Oscar: She falls!

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

- Carlyn:** She doesn't fall, but she might because there's a curb. And so it's a big step and her wheelchair can't go over that curb. Right?
- Oscar:** If she went over with her wheelchair, she would fall off her wheelchair.
- Carlyn:** That's right. It's really dangerous. Let's see what happens.
- Carlyn:** Her grandpa eases her wheelchair over the curb. Though the drop jolts Jennifer, she makes it to the building. But, stop! The school says Jennifer doesn't belong there because she uses a wheelchair. So she made it over the curb, but now what's happening? What do you see here? What are those right there?
- Oscar:** Those guys don't have wheelchairs.
- Carlyn:** That's right. They don't have a wheelchair and they're able to go up these stairs, right?
- Oscar:** That's because they have feet!
- Carlyn:** That's right they're walking up the stairs. But what's happening here. What about the wheelchair?
- Oscar:** Wheelchairs can't go up steps, because they have wheels.
- Carlyn:** That's right. They can't go up the steps. And the school says that she doesn't belong there because she uses a wheelchair. Oscar, do you want to see what Jennifer does to solve this problem? Do you want to see what she does?
- Oscar:** Yeah.

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

Carlyn: Let's see. Instead, Jennifer and her mom find a different school that says she can attend kindergarten, but only for part of the afternoon, when lunch is over. As Jennifer rolls in each day, everyone is already busy. She has to figure out what's going on and how to join in. Since most kids have never met someone who uses a wheelchair, her classmates are confused and even a little afraid. "You'll never be one of us," some of them say.

Oscar: Huh?

Maggie: What do you think about that?

Oscar: She has no school!

Maggie: Does that seem fair to you?

Oscar: No!

Carlyn: Jennifer knows they're wrong. She's just a friend waiting to happen. But how do you change someone's mind? She's not sure, but she's not about to give up.

Oscar: Hmm. Yeah.

Carlyn: Yeah! Jennifer and her family hear about activists who are working to make sure people with disabilities have access to public places like schools. Remember we talked about activists being people who fight with for what they believe in, right? So they want to find a school that Jennifer can go to. They want to know more. So they attend a strategy meeting.

Jennifer had never seen anything like it. All the grownups with all sorts of disabilities. Some use wheelchairs, some use canes. None of them are sitting

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

around waiting for things to change. They're shouting and laughing and planning a big protest to get wheelchair lifts on buses.

Carlyn: Okay. He turned to Jennifer. "Do you want to come?" Yes! She wants to go.

Carlyn: Downtown, Jennifer rolls to the microphone and tells her story. She leads marchers through the streets chanting, "The people united will never be defeated!" It feels good to speak up for what she believes in. She can't wait to do it again. She's raring to go. Have you ever been to a march like this?

Oscar: Yes, I already been to one.

Carlyn: Yay! What happened?

Oscar: We were walking and it was too long. I started to get tired like this.

Carlyn: Oh you were tired. Was a lot of marching huh?

Maggie: That was from Martin Luther King Day, right? Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Yeah. We ended up riding a bus on that day, too, didn't we?

Carlyn: Oh my goodness. Yeah. It looks like Jennifer protests in Phoenix. She rolls through streets in San Francisco. The demonstrations don't always change people's minds, but Jennifer is used to that.

Maggie: What do you think she's talking about when she's being an activist? What do you think she's saying in these marches? You think she's saying be fair?

Carlyn: She wants to go to school. Right? She wants to go to school like everybody else and be with her friends.

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

Oscar: Yes. I think she's saying take care.

Carlyn: Take care. Yeah.

Oscar: Take care of people.

Carlyn: Yeah. Take care of people. That's right! Neighborhood School finally agreed she can attend. I think her classmates with disabilities aren't allowed to eat in the cafeteria with everyone else, that hurts. But she keeps going. She can't eat in the cafeteria with her friends.

Carlyn: Working with other activists, revs her up, yet she can't help noticing that she and her sister are usually the only kids out there raising their voices. Still, she can't leave all the protesting to grownups. She knows firsthand that children with disabilities get ignored, too. So she keeps speaking up.

Maggie: I see a sign. Oscar do you know what the sign says? It looks like someone wrote it. It says, "disability rights now."

Carlyn: Disability rights now! They're chanting right?

Oscar: Yeah.

Maggie: I think it means they want the right. But I think for Jennifer, it means that she wants the right to go to school.

Carlyn: You know, that people with disabilities are fighting for what they believe in. Right? And they, one thing that we know is that they can't really get around. So they don't have curb cuts, or ways of getting in and out of buildings, or ways of going to

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

school. Those are all rights that we want to be able to have to be fair. Right? Okay.
Let's see what happens next.

When Jennifer is eight, activists propose a new law called the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, or ADA. The law insists schools, government and businesses make room for all people, including those with disabilities. Jennifer feels like dancing! If it passes it means sidewalks with curb cuts, buildings with ramps, in addition to steps and elevators with brail panels. It means Jennifer and her classmates with disabilities can finally go to the cafeteria with everyone else for lunch. All those good things! It can be with their friends and they can go up in elevators with the braille pads. Do you know what braille is?

Oscar: No.

Carlyn: No, it's a way that people who are blind can navigate like, well anywhere. So it's like a language. You read it with your fingers, and it allows people to read. So it says on the elevator, it would say "elevator" in a sign and you would run your hands over it. It's pretty cool.

Carlyn: Jennifer and her family watch the news for updates on the ADA, but reporters never mentioned it. She switches off the TV in frustration, wishing she could change reporter's minds on what's worth talking about. Instead, the Keelans get their updates about the ADA when activist friends call it's bad news. Members of Congress say the law will be too complicated and too expensive. They say it's just not worth it. Since the news station is ignoring people with disabilities, Jennifer and her friends are determined to find another way to make Congress hear their voices. Its go time!

Maggie: Wooh!

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

- Carlyn:** Her family buys plane tickets to Washington, DC. You see that?
- Oscar:** Wow!
- Carlyn:** They're going to go on the airplane!
- Oscar:** Why?
- Carlyn:** They have an important job to do!
- Maggie:** A very big March!
- Carlyn:** As they march down Pennsylvania Avenue, Jennifer has never shouted louder:
“What do we want? The ADA! When do we want it? Now!” Look at all those
people!
- Maggie:** Oh my gosh!
- Carlyn:** All of those people all shouting for their rights and what they believe in.
- Maggie:** She's shouting, because she's being an activist.
- Carlyn:** Right.
- Maggie:** She's saying schools need to be fair.
- Oscar:** Why is she saying, “when do we want it now?”
- Maggie:** She's saying, “I can't wait any longer. I want to be able to go to school. I want
fairness now.”

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

- Carlyn:** They reached the U.S. Capitol, but stop! A mountain of steps block Jennifer and other people using wheelchairs from the building where Congress makes laws. Grownups slide out of their wheelchairs and start pulling themselves up the steps. They will make sure members of Congress know they are here. Jennifer's heart races. This is what she's been shouting about. "I want to climb the steps," she says, but stop! The grownups think she's too young. "You can't do it," they say. Does that seem fair?
- Oscar:** No, no, no!
- Carlyn:** No. The grownups are like, "you can't do it. You're too small." Jennifer knows this is not just about her. It's about her friends at school who were shut out of the cafeteria at lunch. It's about millions of other kids she's never met, who gets stopped at every turn. Jennifer wants to speak up for all the kids with disabilities, who aren't there. I need to climb the steps. Here she is. Ready to do it. Look at that determined face. She's ready to climb the steps.
- Maggie:** She's going to climb it. There she goes!
- Carlyn:** She slides out of her wheelchair, scoots along the sidewalk to the bottom of the stairway, and puts her hand on the first step. She hauls herself up, tiny bits of dirt and rock dig into her skin. She drags herself up another step. The crowd roars! Reporters surround her with cameras and microphones recording her gutsy climb. "I'll take all night if I have to," she vows and she keeps heaving, hauling, dragging herself up those steps. She keeps going all the way to the top. Yeah. Wow. You see all those steps? She climbed all those steps! Cool huh?
- Maggie:** That's amazing.

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

- Carlyn:** Pictures of Jennifer climbing the steps flash around the world. Reporters start talking about the ADA, members of Congress see the news, listen to the activists and finally pass the ADA! They passed it, look! They're doing it. They're signing a law. She fought for something so hard. And guess what? They signed the law.
- Maggie:** They made the change.
- Carlyn:** They made the change. Laws like the ADA don't change things overnight; entrances have to be rebuilt, sidewalks redesigned, and buses re-engineered. Slowest of all: minds have to change. That's exactly what you were just talking about, Oscar. So Jennifer will continue shouting and waving signs, organizing and explaining. She will continue fighting for what she knows is right. Jennifer has places to go, and nothing will stop her now. Whoa! What's happening here? Can you tell me what's happening? What's the change that you see?
- Carlyn:** Can you see a change? What happened.
- Oscar:** The bosses changed their minds!
- Carlyn:** Did they make a change in the building?
- Oscar:** Yeah!
- Carlyn:** What did they do? What do you notice?
- Oscar:** They made stuff better! And they passed the ADD
- Maggie:** The ADA?

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

- Carlyn:** ADA? Good! That's right. The cool thing about this that I see is there's a ramp here. Right? Well, you see, this is a ramp, right? So that Jennifer can get up into school, but also somebody who's blind with their guide dog can get into the school, and there's no way that anybody can have any barriers. Right? Everybody can get in. It's really fair, and really good now. Right?
- Carlyn:** I have a challenge for you. Are you ready? For you and for anybody else who's reading this book, or finished reading this book. The next time you go outside for a walk with your mom and your dad, I want you to notice when you see a curb cut in the streets. Right? So when you can see a ramp. Or maybe when you go inside somewhere, you find an elevator. I want you to start noticing all of these changes that are made because of kids like Jennifer who were being activists. Right?
- Oscar:** How about for the cliff? There should be a ramp, for Jennifer's wheelchair to go down.
- Carlyn:** That is a great solution. Those are the kinds of things I want you to be looking for.
- Maggie:** We can maybe look for places where there should be ramps.
- Carlyn:** Oh yeah.
- Maggie:** Or elevators.
- Oscar:** Ok, Bye!
- Carlyn:** Thanks for reading!
- Oscar:** Thanks for reading!



A Virtual Little Library for Staying Connected
II. All the Way to the Top: How One Girl's Fight for Americans with Disabilities Changed Everything



INDIANA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IUPUI

Equity Spotlight Podcast Series

Taucia González, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Wisconsin
Hunter Brown, Educator, Amphitheater Public Schools – Arizona

[End of Audio]

Copyright © 2021 by Great Lakes Equity Center

The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Grant S004D110021). However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the Federal Government should not be assumed.

