



## **EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSION GUIDE KEEP MOVING FORWARD**

KEEP MOVING FORWARD is a powerful and heartwarming piece of music that can also be a dynamic tool for engaging students in learning. Sam's outlook on life, as expressed in Mark Miller's music and in Sam's TedX Talk as well as the HBO documentary film LIFE ACCORDING TO SAM, offers lessons in inclusion and interpersonal relationships. Despite his challenges, Sam loved playing percussion and lived his life as a regular teenager- and his friends and peers accepted him that way. Sam always said that Progeria does not define him, and he sets the tone for dynamic discussion of this topic. The music provides the opportunity for teachers to educate students about empathy and relationships, problem solving, and science and technology.

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In learning, practicing and performing KEEP MOVING FORWARD, music directors and their colleagues are encouraged to use the questions below to generate dialogue about the important issues that the music and Sam's story explore. The Progeria Research Foundation created the questions specifically for student audiences, but as an educator, we encourage you to determine which questions will be most appropriate/most helpful for your students. You can expand your conversation by inviting a biology teacher, local scientist or university professor with experience in genetics or other related fields to join you in the discussion. You can invite students from other classes, perhaps after listening to your performance of KEEP MOVING FORWARD, to join you and your band in a discussion. If you have questions on how to best prepare for your screening and conversation, please feel free to contact [info@progeriaresearch.org](mailto:info@progeriaresearch.org).

### **Suggested discussion questions**

#### **Empathy and Relationships**

- Compared to other pieces of music that you have learned and performed, how was this experience different? There are many feelings this music can bring out. What are they and why do you think this is occurred for you?
- Do you look at your own life differently after learning, practicing and playing KEEP MOVING FORWARD? Did you think or feel any differently when

you learned about Sam as the inspiration for this music? Did it somehow affect your own relationships? In what way(s)?

- Despite his appearance and his health condition, Sam “fit in” just like any other kid in his school, especially as a leader in his high school band percussion section. He never experienced bullying within his community. Why doesn’t and why shouldn’t that happen when other students bring their own differences? How do you interact with others who are “different”, whether in the band or in your other classes? Will that now change? Why or why not?

### Problem Solving

- For over 100 years, researchers failed to prioritize Progeria, the condition that Sam had, because so few children were diagnosed with the disease. What do you think about that? How should society deal with challenges like this?
- Sam was confronted with multiple roadblocks that he chose to surmount, including finding a snare harness that he could successfully wear in marching band. What can you learn from how he handled this?
- Did you think about some of your own challenges when learning about Sam and perhaps while playing the music? Are there ways you might apply some of what you learned about Sam in addressing potential roadblocks in your own life?

### Science and Technology (for suggested use in partnership with a biology or science teacher, especially after seeing Sam’s TedX Talk and/or the film or trailer for LIFE ACCORDING TO SAM)

- Progeria is caused by a very rare genetic mutation. What constitutes a rare disease? What are some other genetic diseases? How and why do these mutations happen?
- What struck you most about the biology of Progeria?
- What did you learn about the process for developing and testing drugs?
- What do you think about the long and detailed process required before a drug can be approved by regulators? Is it important that the process is so strenuous? Why? Would you make any changes to the process?
- A lot of research goes into making sure new drugs are safe and effective, which can make drugs very expensive – especially for rare conditions like Progeria, where only a few hundred would need them. What could we be doing to make this process more affordable?

**Many thanks to the Foxboro, Massachusetts school administrators, and junior and high school teachers who contributed to this guide.**

## **Opportunities for Service Learning**

The Progeria Research Foundation began as a true “start-up.” When Sam was first diagnosed with Progeria, his family put everything aside and launched this new organization, dedicated to finding a cure. Since that time, the organization has grown with the help and support of friends, neighbors, and an expanding list of donors and volunteers from around the world. Many of these supporters are students and children and, as with other service learning efforts, organizers often tell stories of how greatly the students grow from their experiences in learning, volunteering and otherwise playing a part in supporting such a critical cause.

KEEP MOVING FORWARD provides a unique opportunity to not only educate students around music, empathy and relationships, problem solving and science and technology, but to also see the value in literally participating in PRF’s journey toward a cure. In the past, kids have held events of all kinds – from bake sales to concerts – and created awareness-building campaigns, all to help PRF advance its mission to cure kids with Progeria.

We invite you to consider how your students can help build awareness and other support for PRF as you plan your next service learning project. Contact us to learn about what other students and educators have done, and how you can use the musical experience as you teach the next generation about the value of service and helping other children their age.

To learn more, go to [http://progeriaresearch.org/get\\_involved/](http://progeriaresearch.org/get_involved/) or contact us at 978-535-2594 or [volunteers@progeriaresearch.org](mailto:volunteers@progeriaresearch.org)