



A Union of Special Hearts

The following story was written by Patrick Maher, a Grade 3 teacher who has students with special needs in his class. This fictionalized letter suggests what a student with special needs might write as a Middle or High School student.

There is nothing wrong with me. In fact, my IQ is higher than the average person but I just don't learn like other kids do. When it comes to listening to lectures, copying what is on the whiteboard, and taking standardized tests, I just can't seem to focus. When I was younger, my parents thought I needed glasses. After the doctor told me my eyes were fine, I felt great but I could see my parents were still worried. They kept pushing me to try harder in school. The only problem was the harder I tried, the more frustrated I became. At one point, I remember thinking that I might be dumb and I even thought about giving up. Then my teacher told me I was going to take some tests at the psychologist's office. Looking back, this was the best thing that ever happened to me because a few days after seeing the psychologist, my parents and I were told I was a special student. Today, a special needs teacher comes to my class and helps me learn the same things other kids are learning only in different ways. I am getting good grades and I am more confident than ever. My homeroom teacher told me that people like Tiger Woods, Rowan Atkinson, Julia Roberts, and even Albert Einstein were special needs kids. That is incredible and it makes me realize I am special in a wonderful way. So today, when I hear the Fathers talk at assembly and say we are a Union of Hearts, I realize they mean we are a Union of Special Hearts too.

At Ruamrudee we make it possible for all students to take part in every aspect of school life. We believe that unless everyone can participate in our learning community there can be no union – of hearts or minds. The Special Needs Department's role is to support students so that they can participate and develop their strengths as opposed to being isolated by their educational needs.

Some students with special needs may require learning outcomes to be modified in some classes or they may have the ability to take International Baccalaureate. Whatever their academic ability, students with special needs participate in all aspects of school life from sports teams, to the Jeremiah singers, to clubs and special interest groups.

Years ago at Ruamrudee, and still in many international schools, students with special needs were 'counseled' out. Now, we can proudly say that our school truly represents its community: brothers and sisters do not have to get up and put on different uniforms and head off in different directions, student's are educated alongside their peers forming bonds of friendship, teachers develop their professional practice to meet the range of needs in the class which is of benefit to everyone, and parents learn that 'special' includes success.

At Ruamrudee we have a community – a Union of Hearts.

