

NUMBERS N3RDS

THE {Almost} ALL-GIRL MATH CHALLENGE

Story and Theme

Numbers Nerds, the almost all-girl high school math team from Waukesha, Wisconsin, has lost – and then won – the Regional Math Competition. They are off to compete in the National Math SUM-IT. These smart and funny whiz kids must unite to solve difficult math problems without getting distracted by teen drama and pressures. Always witty, sometimes uproarious, this is the story of girls becoming women – conquering anxiety and rivalry, finding a way to affirm themselves as individuals and as team-members, learning to win at math....and at life!

Synopsis of the musical

The Numbers Nerds are the math team at Waukesha Charter High School, until last year a Catholic all-girl school, now co-ed. We meet:

- ❖ Melissa, who dreams of being a math wizard like Einstein
- ❖ Mary Kate, a feminist shaped by the affirmations of the nuns,
- ❖ Barbie, an eccentric girl who sees colors while solving math problems, and
- ❖ Amber, a “mean girl” who hopes her friends won’t discover she loves math.

They are at the Regional Math Competition. They’re presented with a very complicated question. But Melissa, their captain, becomes paralyzed with stage fright, and they lose. The other three members, in their anger, fire her from the team.

Suddenly they find that the winning team has been disqualified for cheating. So the Numbers Nerds can go to the National Math SUM-IT. But they only have three team members, and must have at least four. Ms. McGery, their drama teacher until last year, has lost her job in cost-

cutting, and is now the school janitor. Still, she cares deeply about the girls, and encourages them to seek another team member at the school Activity Fair. They do that, and select Leroy, an awkward boy, home-schooled till now by his missionary parents.

Still, Melissa begs to be reinstated. With Ms. McGery’s help, she takes steps to conquer her stage fright and is accepted back. The five person team leaves for the national competition, with Ms. McGery as their chaperone. Meanwhile, Melissa continues to obsess over the math problem that stumped her at Regionals. Comments from the other team members slowly clarify elements of a solution.

At Nationals, they go through several rounds of questions, and succeed each time. But meanwhile, their “team spirit” unravels. They turn on each other. Ms. McGery tries to call them back to their better selves. Melissa finally embraces her leadership role. She asks her teammates why they love math; and in replying, each reveals how it feeds, supports, protects and empowers them. With new energy, the team approaches the final round.

It is an “elimination round.” Questions are put to each teammate in rotation, eliminating members as they fail. Finally, only Melissa remains. But as time runs out, there is also one person remaining on the other team. So there must be a “lightening round:” one question posed to the two competing players.

The question is announced, and it is quite similar to the one that Melissa missed at Regionals. As she recalls the suggestions made by her teammates, and takes strength from their support, she answers it correctly. The NUMBERS N3RDS are the national champs!