

Education Integration

A collection of readings on the
integration of children
with mental handicaps
into regular school systems

National Institute on Mental Retardation



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EDUCATION/INTEGRATION

**A collection of readings
on the integration of children
with mental handicaps into regular school systems**

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON MENTAL RETARDATION

To the families, children and friends
creating a new vision
of education for all children

DEDICATION

Reflections on a new kind of school*

Marsha Forest

It's a funny thing about life. If you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it.

Somerset Maugham

For the past four years the Summer-Get-Together has reached over 200 children who will have different attitudes about themselves and about people with handicaps due to the overall philosophy of the program. Everyone touched by this model integration project (parents, teachers and students) has been enthusiastic about the results.

After a week of canoe-camping in the wilderness of Algonquin Park everything seems very clear. When I was invited to write this article on the Summer-Get-Together I pondered preparing an academic type treatise full of references and footnotes. But now I simply want to tell a story of a program that has significant implications for my own life and for the lives of many children and their families.

Jean Vanier stood on a stark stage in Massey Hall in Toronto in October 1978. His simplicity moved me. Though not a believer in his religious faith, I was profoundly moved by his simple and direct message. He was the first person who had validated what I had been feeling for many years. An "expert" with a doctorate in special education, I knew so much of what was going on was wrong. Vanier summed it up, "Some call him mongoloid, I call him Jean." I remember sitting and weeping. I was tired and fed up with the academic games and jargon I had to face daily, tired of the petty fights and departmental politics of the university. I decided I would use my position as an academic to do something with the "wounded" people Vanier was talking about. Not for them, but with them.

The Summer-Get-Together is in many ways the active statement which began that evening in Massey Hall. In the summer of 1981, 25 children, their parents, five dedicated and enthusiastic young student teachers and I created a small experiment. We said that a diverse group of children can learn together and indeed should learn together. We did not believe in special education, nor segregated schools or classes. We did not expect the educational system to change overnight, but we wanted to show what could be done. We wanted to make a positive statement about learning, about teaching and about life.

* An edited version of this article appeared in the Autumn 1981 issue of Mental Retardation.

The Summer-Get-Together took 25 children -- one-third of them labelled -- (i.e., retarded, deaf, cerebral palsied, learning disabled) and two-thirds so-called "normal" children and put them together. They lived and learned together from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in a community so loving and caring that it both repelled and attracted people. No one was neutral about the Summer-Get-Together. Our statement that "all children can learn together" was and is so simple and so powerful that for creating this very beautiful program my students and I have actually put ourselves at risk, for we have challenged the very nature of the educational system.

The program is both a positive statement and a challenge to current education and special education practices. Our program says, "Stop! Come look at these children you've labelled "trainably mentally retarded." Come and see Tony whom you say is at a two-year old level. See him learning to read. Come observe Jane whom you have labelled deaf and behaviour disordered. Come watch her learning to use language in a meaningful context. See how she is learning to love and be loved by her friends."

We invited everyone to visit, but many ran away. Seven professors of sections of an Introduction to Special Education Course at York University were invited to visit the program, but only one used the Summer-Get-Together as a learning experience for his students. Yes, the other professors definitely knew about it, but if you are a labeller, a categorizer or a tester, you ignored Room 136 where real live children were learning together without diagnostic labels, test results or separate facilities. We strongly believed in special services and we were weak in this area, but can and will build it into our yearly program. For example, better physical therapy for Farid and Tony who must learn to walk. More auditory training, speech and sign language tutoring for Jane who has a profound hearing loss. Special services can and should be provided in any regular classroom.

In retrospect, the Summer program looked well organized, neat and tidy. But programs (and children) don't develop that way and this project grew because the right combination of ingredients (people) were present at the right time and at the right place.

The key players included Judy Snow, a woman in a wheelchair who can only use her thumb and her head. She taught us all what the system can do to handicapped people. She taught us how the system wounds the spirit and the soul. She showed us with her life the daily battles she wages, simply to be human. Donna Bracewell, the young teacher-to-be, was fed up and angry at her own "teacher" education, and full of energy to create something. "Let's put your rhetoric into action" she said, so we did! Peter Dill, quiet, strong,

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
Reflections on a new kind of school	3
Reflections on a new kind of school: update	15
As I was small	23
Principles and practice in education integration: a three-year analysis of the Get-Together model	25
Thousand Cranes School: building a dream	41
Right in our own backyard	49
Education integration: the success or failure of leadership	57
Thoughts on integration at Ceci's Homes	61
The emperor is naked: the truth about educational integration	65
Education update: the Wellington County Separate School Board at work	71
Bringing special children back into schools	77
The Integration-Action Group: a statement of principles	83
Recommended Reading	85

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this collection of articles and ideas on integration is to add to the material about integration currently being published. I receive requests daily for documentation, thoughts and feelings on this timely topic. Parents of children with handicaps are particularly interested in material that describes programs that work. They want articles that provide a vision of the future which includes their children. They want descriptions of children living in the real world and not in the protected and isolated world of "special" education or, even worse, in institutions.

If indeed the focus for the '80s is on community living, we had better start including children early **into** the community. It does not make sense to educate a child in a segregated setting with other children who look, act and behave in a non-typical fashion and then to expect that child to function in a real job and live in a real home. If we want children with handicaps to grow up to live and work in the community, then they **must** go to school alongside their typical peers from the beginning. We know that this is possible with supports to meet individual needs.

Despite the great strides made by good integrated programs, there are many parents and professions who still think in terms of special schools. Here is a typical example.

Thomas is blind and has severe emotional and learning problems. He is currently in a good integrated community-based setting. Yet, a group of well-meaning people are seriously considering sending Thomas to a school for blind students several hours away from his community in an isolated setting. Why would such a possibility even be considered?

Because of the "mystique" of the special school. They think that he will get a better program and "therapy." What they don't consider is that Thomas will no longer be in the company of typical, noisy, pushy, vocal, active children. In his current placement he is learning to help organize the audio-visual equipment in the school library. His reward? Listening to music through the headphones (which he loves). Does he like his job? You bet. Is there a future in it? Surely. He may be able to work in a library in the community. Therapy? No. Job training for independent living? Yes.

The articles in the collection are only a beginning. They are not a destination but a journey. They do not provide the answer, but simply some examples of programs where children are learning together. For it is not only the handicapped children that benefit from such an experience but also the

non-handicapped children. Schools without handicapped children are themselves segregated.

Lou Brown, an education innovator, says that the experiment in segregation has most certainly failed. Therefore, why not give integration a try? We certainly can't do much worse.

I urge readers to use this material to this end. Give talks of your own. Write articles. Do not sit back and wait because change does not come from philosophizing about how bad things are. It comes from action based on sound principles and careful analysis of individual situations.

We did not put these articles together so that everyone who reads them would be able to start their own integrated programs. Instead, they are meant to convey that it is possible to do something. It is possible to educate children in the community. So, don't ask permission to have your children or students in the community. Take them there, give them love and support, and, if necessary, raise hell.

Those of us involved in some of the programs described in this collection have learned by doing and seeing. We urge you to read this material and communicate with us about it in a continuing dialogue that can improve all our lives.

Marsha Forest, Ph.D.
Visiting Scholar, NIMR

persevering, was working with the parents and with NIMR to make sure our program had a sponsor. Mary Lion, the mother of Randy, a wonderful child, who more than anyone else showed us that what we were doing was right. Randy, forced to attend a school for children labelled "trainably mentally retarded" was rebelling. Without words, he told us he hated his school. So for Randy, and Jane, and Edna, and Farid, we started a Saturday program. Why not have a full week school? Why not have a summer program? Why not a real school all year? "Indeed," I asked myself, "why not?"

Skeptic's questions

I can still hear the skeptics howling:

- 1) But, the project was at York University;
- 2) But, the project had hand-picked students;
- 3) But, all the children were middle class;
- 4) But, you are so subjective.

Let me answer briefly:

Question #1. The program was indeed at York University, but only because Gary Bunch, of the Faculty of Education, generously gave us the room for Saturdays and the summer. Room 136 has been delegated to him for use as a preschool for hearing impaired youngsters. Funding for the program came from a "Summer Canada '81" grant from the Federal Government, which employed five full-time education students who all reported that this experience alone taught them more than all their courses. Due to lack of formal support from the Faculty of Education, NIMR agreed to sponsor the project.

Question #2. The children were not hand picked. The news spread by word of mouth and by mid-July we had thirteen children on a waiting list. Not just handicapped children, but "normal" children whose parents heard about an exciting educational program where children were actually learning to read, to write, and to think.... We took children on a first come, first served basis, but limited the number of "handicapped" children to one-third of our total population.

Question #3. No, the children were not upper middle-class, sons and daughters of university professors. In fact, of the 25 children only two had mothers or fathers who were academics. The majority were from white collar (single mothers who were secretaries) or working class backgrounds. We also had the full mix that Toronto represents (West Indian, East Indian, Italian, Turkish, etc.).

Question #4. Yes, we are subjective, but to counteract our "subjectivity" we hired Patrice Karn as an evaluator. Patrice, a doctoral student in the Psychology Department at York, was paid through a bursary at NIMR. Her sole role was to observe, record, video tape, interview, graph, chart, etc. all that went on during the course of eight weeks. For example, we have on record that Tony (labelled trainable mentally retarded and non-verbal by a certified psychologist) actually had an active vocabulary of at least four pages. He also had a reading word bank of twenty recorded words by the end of July.

No matter what facts are presented, some will continue to be doubters and cynics because our school represents either a challenge to their values and economics, or because it represents success in a failing sector. Many know, but few want to admit, that in too many cases special education is neither special nor educational. It is not people but budgets that turn the wheels of most institutions and the lives of both children and teachers are often wounded in the process. We cannot be discouraged or deterred by these critics, for we have too much to do. We have a new kind of school to build.

Why success?

Why did this project succeed? Would it be irresponsible of me to say because of love and courage and guts and quality and excellence? Should I write about the feeling I got every time I walked into Room 136 and saw young teachers at work with the children? It was our value base -- our common ideology as teachers that made this program a success. We said, "We are not a liberal program that tolerates mediocrity -- we stand for excellence in learning and excellence in how people live with one another. We won't tolerate less!"

Racism, sexism, teasing, etc., were simply not accepted. We didn't put up a sign reading "Thou shalt not be nasty"; we lived it! We followed the dictum of this small poem:

Tell me, I'll forget.

Show me, I may remember.

But involve me, and I'll understand.

Several incidents will illustrate my point. One day, the entire group visited the McMichael Gallery in Kleinburg to study native arts and crafts. It was part of our program of study on Canada -- its land, its traditions. One of the so-called "bright" children started making nasty comments about native people. Donna, a teacher very involved in the movement for native people, was furious. When I told this story to my summer school class of teachers, they were aghast. Donna was out of line, they argued. To me, Donna was just fine. We don't think the Ku Klux Klan, for example, has a right in the schools.

We don't tolerate a person who teases a handicapped child and we say so. But more than that, Donna, Elaine and the whole group discussed the incident at the daily group meeting. Donna explained why she was angry. (It helped that Ted, the adopted Indian son of one of the summer-school teachers, was visiting that week.) The key fact was that the incident was dealt with and not swept under the rug.

Then there was Nat, labelled "autistic" and heading for a residential program. His family was heartbroken. There was nowhere for him in Toronto. True, Nat was a handful and for three days we put up with his biting, hitting, and slapping behaviour. After a lengthy staff meeting we decided to give Nat a dose of his own medicine. If he hit, you were allowed to hit back; if he bit, etc. In other words, you could defend yourself from Nat's attacks -- not be offensive, but defensive. The rule, as all rules, was discussed at the daily hour-long general meeting.

This led to a heated discussion between myself and Tracy, one of the other teachers, herself in a wheelchair and the product of institutionalized special education. "That's not what we're trying to promote," Tracy argued. "What are we trying to promote," I asked, "passive, nice kids?" An episode ensued around Tracy's own feelings of inadequacy resulting from her own passive training and lack of confidence in herself. She had been taught to be "nice." I don't know who changed more that day, Tracy or Nat. Suffice it to say that in a week Nat was being civil and Tracy was much more assertive in her teaching.

The third incident was the most serious, the most instructive and the most profound. For two days in August Farid didn't come to school. In July he had come daily by public transit with Earl, a sensitive twelve-year-old who developed a warm and loving relationship with Farid. Farid had spent the previous year misplaced in a class for children labelled "trainably mentally retarded" and we were in the midst of finding him a new school. But in August, Earl went to a sports camp, and Farid was to come by car with another family. For two days there was no Farid.

When I phoned his mother, she was exhausted, fed up and tired. She said "He's just too much trouble for all of you. He's not coming anymore." I said "No!" I told her Farid didn't just belong to her anymore; he was part of our school. I told her he was making great gains, academic progress, and good friends. I told her he was not a bother, but a real and important part of our community. She cried. I cried. Farid took the phone and asked, "Where's Kathy? Where's Jim?" He wanted his teachers and his friends. The next day Farid arrived safe and sound and hasn't missed a day since.

In discussing this incident with Andy Baxter¹, we both felt that Farid symbolized the program. In the program review, the team used the relationship of Farid and Earl as the symbol of what happened in the Summer-Get-Together that rarely happens to devalued children. Here they had a chance to make real friends and to be valued. In Farid's case, his mother was internalizing the devaluation of her son. She felt like a bother, she felt worthless. It was not enough to take a laissez-faire attitude with her. We as teachers had to convince her that Farid and she were a valuable part of our school and our lives.

At the beginning of October 1980, we stressed that our Saturday program was a model to illustrate that handicapped and non-handicapped children could learn together. By the end of August 1981, we had changed our focus. We were running an exciting experimental school that incidently had handicapped and non-handicapped children involved. It was a given that in an ideal educational model no devalued child would be excluded. Indeed, they would be sought out, for we do terrible things to "normal" children by never exposing them to the vast diversity that exists in any society.

The doubters will still insist that this is all well and good for the handicapped children, but what about the "average" or "bright" children. "Don't they suffer?" Our observations show that the "bright" children were stimulated and encouraged by the excellence of the academic program and the warmth of the environment. Certainly they all became more sensitive human beings. Everyone who observed our project came away with a sense of a warm community. These were not 25 individuals and teachers, isolated, competitive and fragmented. These were children and adults learning together. A day at the zoo illustrates this point. I went along as an observer. Each teacher had a team of five children. There were many other groups at the zoo that sunny summer day and I was more aware than ever of the amount of control and discipline exerted on these other children. Little "kids" roped together or wearing yellow plastic tunics for identification. These were the "normal" schools?

Our group, including two children in strollers who could not walk, bounced along. We all got together for a picnic lunch. The children ran around and played as children do. The younger ones took pony rides, the older ones chose camels. No shouting, no screaming, no need for control. Control came from the essence of the community. The little ones in strollers were wheeled or carried by older children and a highlight of the day was a relay race in which Tony and Farid participated with giggles that would melt the heart of even the most

1. Andy Baxter led an evaluation of the project. This evaluation is available upon request from NIMR.

severe doubter. Tony the "non-verbal, trainable retarded" sad little boy took his first pony ride that day and chatted away as he rode on "Goldy" his horse.

I could go on and on. I could describe the daily reading and writing groups, the new "vocabulary of the week" program, science experiments, visits to ballet classes and classical music concerts, work with computers, a yo-yo instructor, a magician, a music teacher and that incredible Friday in July that Norman Kunc, himself a York University student with cerebral palsy, took 25 children sailing in Hamilton Harbour. The teachers made a pirate fantasy out of this special day. They bought each child a book as a gift, inscribed it personally and buried this real treasure. Dressed as pirates, they sailed to and then searched a small island for the buried treasure.

Ann, a bright six year old with Down's Syndrome, was the proud student who unearthed the treasure. An exhausted but ecstatic crew arrived back at 4:00 p.m. I must admit I was surprised that this could be done. But to this new breed of teacher, nothing was impossible!

No, there were no miracle workers. We were simply Marsha and Donna and Kathy and Jim and Sue and Tracy and Joe and Peter and Judy and Floppy the rabbit, a bird, a fish, two dog friends, assorted visitors, 25 children and their parents, who got together without a lot of money, without a lot of support, but with a lot of energy and a lot of love, and we did it. We touched each other's lives. We are all different because of the Summer-Get-Together.

The Future

Before I left for my summer vacation I was exhausted and I couldn't see a future direction for myself or this project. Now it is abundantly clear. We can't wait for the government or for faculties of education to lead the way. They may follow after we begin. I propose that NIMR:

- a) institute training programs for interested teachers and administrators as soon as possible
- b) continue to support the Saturday-Get-Together as an action research project
- c) set up a model year-round school based on the Summer model
- d) encourage new Saturday and Summer or year-round projects all across Canada.

We know that one "special" teacher with a good teacher's aide and volunteer assistance can handle 20 to 25 children (four or five who are labelled).

Legislation is not enough. Bill 82 in Ontario may create some opportunities but will also create new problems and new labels.

People are the key and the answer. Anyone with the desire to do this and the belief that it can work, can make it work.

Support is also the key. What the student-teachers needed this summer more than anything else was a support system. Teachers feel isolated. They are not the problem since in most cases they want to change the situations they find themselves in, but they are blocked. Let us offer leadership to those courageous few who want to start summer, winter, spring or fall Get-Togethers of their own. We plan to start by making our summer project a small year-round school.

What have I left out? Did I convey the quality of the program? Did I stress enough that we simply expected the very best of everyone and so we got it? Did I make it clear that we were not an airy-fairy humanistic education program where anybody could do his/her own thing? Did I show the academic integrity and worth of the program?

My belief is that we succeeded mainly because we taught each child at his or her level and we taught them well. We did not just discuss feelings in the abstract, but the children felt good about themselves and each other because they were learning. One of my main criticisms of the majority of schools I have visited (especially in working class areas) is that little or no "teaching" is going on. We taught. We exposed all the children to the vast world of knowledge around them. They were introduced to the best of art and culture. They attended ballet rehearsals and met many professional musicians, scientists, artists, photographers, etc.

Our goal was not that the children have "fun," but that they form a community of learners in which each child could achieve to the very best of his or her ability.

The staff had weekly meetings to plan, plus an intense and important two-day retreat before the program began where we discussed our overall ideology, our goals and principles. We plan to end as we began with a one or two-day retreat to sum up where we have been and where we are going.

Conclusion

There are no recipes for success and no easy answers. Every program in every locale will be and should be different because the people will be different. The "curriculum" will grow out of the needs of the children. We can

advise you to start a weekly newsletter that fills the parents in about what's gone on that week. We can send you samples of our summer newsletter which was edited by one of the children. It reflects the heart of our program.

The Summer-Get-Together was **for the children**. In our minds we never saw problems, we only saw children. Some could walk and others could crawl, but all could do and did do their very best. To us the "gifted" children were not those headed for classes labelled "gifted." The gifted children were Jora and Geoff -- two of the kindest most loving people who proved that children can help each other learn (often better than adults).

The road ahead will not be easy. We will be met by an educational system ready to tell us to stop -- that we are "too idealistic" and "unrealistic." We will be met by people threatened by our optimism, our energy, our anger, and our love. These "well-intentioned" people have wounded enough children. They must be challenged!

We will also be met with support. I already have to answer 27 phone calls from interested parents. I've received many letters of congratulation. An article by Michelle Lansberg in the Toronto Star was a boost we all needed to validate our work. I just opened a warm letter of congratulation from Dr. Allan Roehrer, (President-elect of the Congress of the Study of Mental Deficiency) and this note from David Graham of the Metro Toronto March of Dimes. David is a man with severe cerebral palsy and his letter makes all our efforts worthwhile.

Dear Friends,

I want to write and formally thank you for my rewarding day at the "Summer-Get-Together." I found it most encouraging that the able-bodied children were so familiar with different disabilities, that when I "wheeled" in there was no shock or fear. We could relate to each other on a human level!

The disabled children appeared to relate so well to their fellow students who were able-bodied. I believe if there were more programs such as the "Summer-Get-Together," my community development work towards the integration of adults who are physically disabled would be much easier and we would be much closer to our mutual goal of total integration.

Join us in this journey to create a new kind of school. There are eight of us who can answer your questions, letters, phone calls, etc. We have slides and tapes we can share with you.

It is hard to capture the heart of a program. I have tried and I hope I have stirred your interest.

APPENDIX I

Our ideological base

- 1) Few aspects of a child's life are more important than sharing normal educational experiences with children of his/her own age.
- 2) If the rights of any are diminished, so are, in the long run, the rights of all.
- 3) New attitudes and values come from action, not from talk; from deeds, not words.
- 4) Integration is not possible as long as special schools and special classes exist because these "special" programs will always try to "maintain" the handicapped children for **funding** (economic not educational) purposes.
- 5) Integration will cause problems, but not for the children involved. Problems will arise because of institutions, special classes, hospitals, clinics, etc. whose purpose will be challenged.

The first step is to act -- to find sympathetic senior administrators, principals and teachers who will lead their schools and communities in this direction. The first issue is not to change architecture or curriculum, but to bring in the people, and then deal with the real problems that will arise.

Operating Principles

We have found the ten principles developed by Kozberg and Wenigar for an alternative school project in south Boston, Massachusetts, to be very close to our basic philosophy. These, plus the assumption of every alternative school, that free choice to attend the program is the key. Teachers and students must freely choose to work and study in these schools.

Other principles we share are as follows:

- 1) We believe in a small programs of manageable size -- i.e., quality not quantity.
- 2) We believe in community involvement.
- 3) We believe in pluralism and diversity.
- 4) We believe that schools will grow from strength to strength -- in other words we do **not** operate from a deficit model.

- 5) We believe that schools must change the way they deal with young people.
- 6) We know all children can learn.
- 7) We believe the basic skills of literacy are a key to learning and they can and must be taught.
- 8) We believe there are many appropriate learning environments and many ways to learn and teach. No one way is good for everyone; hence the need for alternatives within schools.
- 9) We believe in relating schools to the real world -- i.e., being out of the school and in the community as much as possible.
- 10) We believe educational leadership is necessary in the local system to support alternatives.

Reflections on a new kind of school: update*

Marsha Forest

In the Autumn 1981 issue of *Mental Retardation* I wrote about the Summer-Get-Together program which a group of us created in Toronto. The program brought together 25 children, some who had been labelled handicapped, but most who had not, and showed that integration can be a resounding success for everyone involved.

As a result of the article, I received a great deal of response from parents, teachers and students who wanted to know more. Subsequently, a Saturday-Get-Together program which had been running year-round, doubled in size. The summer program which had involved only one group in the summer of 1981 expanded to three groups in the summer of 1982. Funded by Experience 1982, a federal student employment program, a staff of 19 served over 75 children. Our waiting list also expanded.

The most exciting news, however, is that this fall we began a full-time school based on the model of previous programs. The "1000 Cranes School"¹ located in a bustling downtown section of Toronto is run by two of the students who began the Saturday-Get-Together, Donna Bracewell and Kathy Milligan. The school has 28 students, six of whom have been labelled in some way. If the results of the summer programs are any indication, the full-time school should prosper beyond expectations.

The two new Summer 1982 programs were operated in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood area of Toronto in two public schools. The programs included seven children from Ceci's Homes, a home-like alternative for children labelled severely or profoundly handicapped.

Although seven children were really too many, all the children thrived, made friends and learned.

Prior to the summer program, one student, John had been sleeping 18 hours a day. As a result of the noisy stimulation and concern of the other children he began staying awake almost all day and making friends for the first time in his life. Several children labelled "trainable mentally retarded" are now reading simple books and stories. One child is learning to play the piano.

* originally published in *Mental Retardation*, Autumn 1982.

1. The name is based on a Japanese peace and friendship story about children.

Visitors to all three programs commented on the warmth shown by the children towards one another and on the stimulating, lively and colourful environment. One group of visitors who had spent a day at our programs and a day at segregated day classes in Toronto said, "Basically, there is no comparison." Another commented, "In the segregated setting there is still an atmosphere of 'here we are to help you.' In the integrated program the atmosphere says 'we are all here to learn together'".

Some of the highlights of the summer in all three programs have been:

- a music program for enjoyment and not for "therapy"
- swimming in community pools and not in special ones
- trips to the Science Centre, Ontario Place, Harbourfront, Pioneer Village, etc.
- a weekly newspaper edited and produced by the children
- a daily circle to raise problems and discuss individual differences
- individual tutoring and reading
- preparation of a nutritious (sometimes) lunch and eating together.

Our model has been successful for a number of reasons. 1) Staff were committed to integrating all children including those labelled most handicapped. 2) Staff had intensive training in teaching and programming skills. 3) We had sufficient funding for the project. 4) We received administrative support from NIMR and Ceci's Homes.

Another important reason for the program's success was the involvement of parents in their children's education process. Parents know better than anyone else what their children like to do. As much as possible, the get-together model works to include activities each child enjoys as well as introducing them to new ones. The expectations of parents are included in the program goals.

One of the best aspects of our program, aside from the fact that the children are learning, growing and having a ball, is that the young teachers who work with them are getting first-hand experience that labelling and IQ tests are not valid. They are learning to teach all children and will be a new breed of teachers.

We know that integration can work but teachers need to learn the philosophy and implications of integration. They need to see successful models at work.

I look forward to receiving comments on this article and I hope that next year we will read about the success of the first year of our new school.

APPENDIX I

Group meetings

A daily forum to discuss a variety of issues, including differences between people, news items, and any subjects that the children may broach themselves as long as they are relevant to the values and objectives of the program.

Newsletter

The newsletter describes activities and trips that have taken place during the week and some of the upcoming events. It also includes research articles and work by any of the children. The newsletter is usually put out once a week. Not only does it involve all the children in a community-oriented product but it serves the added purpose of keeping communication lines open with the parents and neighbourhood.

Lunches

Lunch time has been one of the most successful activities in promoting social interaction. Every week, a different group of children is responsible for the planning, buying, preparing and cleaning up after lunch. They learn about nutrition, costs and cooking. Both responsibility and privilege are highlighted. This is also another opportunity to discuss how people differ. At least once a week, lunch includes a traditional dish of one of the cultures represented in the group. If this is not possible through visual aids and discussion, the different cuisines are highlighted. It is also very simple to tie this particular day into other activities looking at culture and heritage.

Another added feature to the lunch time activities is music. For example great classics or jazz. This way, lunch is an enjoyable, relaxing and social experience.

Parent participation

Input from parents is not only welcomed but encouraged. Better than anyone, the parents know what the children like to do. As much as possible, the Get-Together model of integrated education works to include activities each child enjoys as well as introducing them to new academia, health and culture. Parents also have certain expectations as to what their children will get out of the program. These expectations should be included in the program goals.

Saturday Get-Together (York University)

A description of the more successful activities of the Saturday program follows. Included in each description are the original aims in starting these particular projects and what actually came out of them.

Canada

Originally this was to acquaint the children with the country in which they live. However, it was too broad a topic and needed to be narrowed down. Keeping in mind that children respond better to something they can relate to because of their experiences or knowledge, the geography of Canada became the focal point. A map of Canada was drawn up with each province represented by a different colour. Cardboard pieces of the same colour were made up for those who could not read or see the map. It was then possible for these children to match up colours and shapes in order to acquaint themselves with the provinces and territories. From this, a discussion developed concerning the variety of ways one could travel across the country. Transportation, distances, and travelling times as well as preferred locations were among the topics. Next, relatives in different parts of the country were talked about and pinpointed on the map. From there, it was a simple step to broaden the talk to include countries where some of the children were born or had relatives or places they might eventually visit.

Photographs

Polaroid shots taken on outings became very important to a variety of program activities. They were used to recount outings for the newsletter, highlight issues in the group meetings, and were very useful for those children not yet writing. They made up picture stories from the photographs.

Word banks

It is important that every day one of the staff read to the children using the words from the word bank. The word bank was set up because communication and reading are vital to all of the children. The word bank should be an integral part of the program. It won't be necessary to look for words. Throughout the day words not recognized will be obvious. In this way the word bank remains relevant and active.

Charts and graphs

Charts and graphs are used not only to illustrate certain points as in the geography project (distance, time chart) but also as a method of acquainting the children with aspects of math. They can easily be incorporated into a game. Mystery Time is a good example. A timing was selected by a staff member

for the children to circle a track. The length of time was independent of mobility and speed. Then a graph was drawn up showing the completion times and their relation to the mystery time. The contest attained its original purpose of illustrating the use of graphs and also retained the non-competitive values of the program. Probability games were used to illustrate percentage charts and graphs. For these, dice or coins can be used. Charts were also used in another activity designed to show the children different types and degrees of sensitivity of the tongue and skin. Diagrams of the body and tongue were put up and as the sensitivity of each section was determined through taste tests and pinprick testing, the part would be coloured and labelled on the diagrams.

APPENDIX II

Jack Birch's conclusions after research in 200 U.S. schools:

1. Mainstreaming can be successful.
2. Mainstreaming is the most desirable special education arrangement for almost all the recognized groups of special education children.
3. It is feasible for the regular class teacher to be skillful enough for the needs of all children including those we label severe-profound.
4. The only group he did not see successfully integrated were the multiple-handicapped deaf-blind.

The natural enemies of mainstreaming:

1. Ignorance
2. Tradition
3. Prejudice

Source: Making it Work, edited by B. Aiello, 1975.

Summary of our research findings:

1. More interaction with peers in mainstreaming setting.
2. More interaction with teachers in segregated setting.
3. More effective social interaction in mainstreaming.
4. Early exposure increases acceptance.
5. Social responsiveness much better in mainstreaming.
6. Handicapped children in segregated setting did improve functioning with materials.
7. Parents must be involved for lasting results.
8. Teachers need to be involved in planning.
9. Teachers need **support**.
10. Growth in speech, language and social awareness in mainstreaming settings.

Factors for success:

1. Intensive orientation
2. Experienced staff
3. Presence of mixed groups of children, i.e., race, sex, social class
4. Start young -- the earlier the better
5. The school principal is the key person

Comparison for mentally handicapped persons (England)

Positive aspects of integrated settings (education):

1. Non-handicapped children serve as role models
2. Acceptance of the handicapped children
3. There are lower levels of aggression in regular school placements than between handicapped children in special schools
4. Stereotypic behaviour is modified
5. Social and academic progress for **both** groups
6. Popularity of integration with **all** parents

Dangers of segregated settings (education)

1. Stigma (negative) attached to recipients of special school services
2. Detrimental effect of lack of contact for both groups
3. Lack of community support and involvement
4. Reinforcement of wrong ideas and perceptions

Prepared by M. Forest, 1982.

As I was small

Marsha Forest and Kathy Wustefeld

The following is an example of a child whose life was touched and changed by her participation in the Summer-Get-Together program.

When I first met Kathy two years ago, she was a "little girl" of 12 who sat and cried. She didn't talk or smile or laugh or participate. She was sad and withdrawn. An hour ago this same Kathy wheeled her chair into my office to bring me a story she had typed by herself and to show me a rather large canvass she had just painted. She chatted happily to the other students in my office, then left to go back to her school work with her tutor Libby.

The new Kathy is the product, not of a miracle, but of a group of loving people who refused to believe that she was, as the medical reports stated, a "severely retarded child functioning at the level of a 3-year old...trainably mentally retarded."

But Kathy was lucky. She arrived at the home of the Wustefeld family as a foster child. An hour after being in this warm and friendly house, Kathy knew the names of all the family members and asked if she could call Mrs. Wustefeld "Mommy." She was later adopted by this loving family.

Kathy spent most of her early life at a small institution outside of Toronto. It has since been closed. From there she was sent to another institution -- a private hospital for children in wheelchairs. She hated this place and longed for weekends when she would visit her new friends, the Wustefelds.

I know Kathy as a member of our Saturday and Summer-Get-Together programs. She is part of our family now, too. Her mom took her out of school last year and has been tutoring Kathy herself at home with the help of some dedicated university students. Kathy has learned to lead, write, do geography, spelling, math, etc. Her social skills have advanced fantastically. She is getting her own telephone next week and is starting to become a real social butterfly.

The magic -- the difference -- the changes in Kathy can be directly attributed to being moved out of the institution and into a real, loving home. Her teachers all deeply care about her progress. All of them (especially her parents and siblings) believe she is smart and beautiful (and she is!).

But Kathy says it best. She wrote the following story and has agreed to let it be published. I'll let Kathy have the last word. Next year Kathy will be a student in a fully integrated Get-Together School. (We hope.) She will be in a situation with all kinds of children and we all expect that she will continue the tremendous progress she has already made. Who had the right to put a label on this young woman who has now proven once again the misuse, abuse and cruelty of the labelling process. We label Kathy -- able!

As I was small

As I was small I lived with Mommy and Daddy and three sisters. As I was four years old I went to Darcelle. Darcelle is a place where you get washed and fed. It is called a Nursing-home. There were lots of small children at that home. Audry looked after us with some helpers. One of the helpers was Dianne and the other one was Ester. Mr. Pierce came sometimes for a visit. And he brought us cookies. We called him the cookie man. One morning we had a hair cut from Tony. Then after breakfast we went to Nursery school with the taxie. In Nursery school we played with the toys. Then later on we had some snack at the table. Then we went home with taxie. As I got older I went to Thornhaven to school. Mrs Littleford was my teacher there. Sometimes I watched T.V. in the school. Then I would back into the classroom.

As I was nine years and five months old I came to the Wustefeld family for one week. Then Mrs. Gallacher brought me to the Villa. I did not like it there. I was three months in the Villa and then the Wustefelds adopted me. I got three new names. As I was ten years old I went to the Willowdale Christian School. Mrs. Bakker was my grade one teacher. I learned to type, math, phonics, reading, songs, and Bible stories. Mrs. De Walle was my teacher in grade two and three. In grade four I had Mrs. Nieboer as my teacher. In grade five I'm not going to school. I learn at home with Mommy. Mommy teaches me math, reading, spelling, and geography. Libby and Sheri, two students from York University, teach me Science, music, art, history, and grammar.

Next year I hope I will go to my new school with Donna and all my friends.

Principles and practice in educational integration: a three-year analysis of the Get-Together model

Patrice Karn

Patrice Karn is a doctoral student at York University and can be seen every summer furiously filling notebooks with data on child interaction, play patterns, etc. The following article gives empirical evidence on the interaction of the children in the Get-Together program.

Introduction

The Get-Together Model of integration refers to a network of programs with a common philosophical, operational and pedagogical base. The underlying philosophy of the programs is derived from Wolfensberger's principle of normalization (1972) which stresses physical and social integration in the daily activities of living for people with handicaps.

History

The Get-Together programs grew out of an informal network of education students, parents, and professionals who were dissatisfied with segregated services for children with handicaps. Young student teachers complained that they had no practice teaching in integrated settings. Parents of children with handicaps were seeking opportunities for their children to have contact with their typical peers. The professional educators involved were concerned with the drift toward specialized technical services which necessarily led to segregated settings for children labelled mentally retarded. Therefore, in 1980, the needs of these diverse groups came together in the first concrete proposal for a recreational and educational Saturday program for young children ages 5 to 11.

The Saturday program, run by volunteer student teachers and supervised by a university professor, had the single purpose of fostering physical and social integration between children with handicaps and their typical peers (i.e., non-handicapped children) for at least one day a week.

The Saturday program appeared to be successful on several levels. Parents of children with handicaps reported that their children, who were having problems with motivation at school all week, were visibly enthusiastic about attending the Saturday program. Dramatic improvements in language and speech were noticed. As a result of the enthusiastic reception of parents, teachers and

children to the Saturday program, a proposal was presented to expand the Saturday Get-Together into a daily summer program.

At this point, support was also forthcoming from the National Institute on Mental Retardation which sponsored the grant and which provided a researcher to study the program. The grants came from the Canadian Federal Government and the Scottish Rite Foundation.

The application was successful and the first Summer-Get-Together ran for 8 weeks in July and August 1981 with a total of 36 children and six staff. One third of the children had been labelled in need of special education by the school system.

The Saturday program continued in 1981-82 and plans for expansion in the summer of 1982 were accepted by the government and various sponsors. The plans called for three Summer-Get-Together programs to be set up in separate locations around the city. Simultaneously, plans for a full time private alternative school were put into action. Encouraged by the success of their children's experiences with integration, parents sought out alternative placements for their children within the public school system.

The summer programs of 1982 presented an exciting challenge and test of the integration principle. Up until this point, the children with special needs were labelled "trainable mentally retarded," physically, or sensorially "disabled," or "learning disabled." The new challenge accepted in the summer of 1982 was to integrate 15 children labelled as having severe to profound mental and physical handicaps.

As of spring 1983, the following programs comprise the Get-Together network:

- (1) The Saturday-Get-Together (26 Children)
- (2) The Summer-Get-Together (75 Children in three programs)
- (3) A private alternative full time school (20 Children)
- (4) Individual integrated placements (12 Children)

Features of the model

Objectives/philosophy

The overall goal of the program is to create a picture of what is possible in terms of educational integration. The aim is to create a learning environment in which each individual student's potential would be developed. This is done by incorporating the most current educational theories for all children's learning, irrespective of special needs.

A major emphasis of programming is based on **experiential learning**, which stems from the belief that learning occurs when the student and teacher are actively engaged in relevant and meaningful experiences. Thus a **wholistic** approach to education where learning is seen as interdisciplinary, is used. For example: A music lesson is also a reading and writing lesson and can include problem solving. The **psycholinguistic model** forms the foundation for a reading and writing program which stresses reading for meaning and reading based on the personal world of each child.

Further features are reflective of the program's commitment to integration. An underlying belief of the model is that no child is too handicapped to learn and fully participate. The major goal is to create a vibrant and dynamic community where differences are not only tolerated but respected and valued. Part of successful integration requires changes in children's attitudes to people who are different. Children in the Get-Together program are thus actively encouraged to show compassion and sensitivity toward others. Cooperation is highly valued and rewarded, while competition and selfishness is discouraged.

Activities

There are at least eight activities that form the core of the program. These are:

The group meeting

The group meeting or circle, as it is commonly called, is a daily forum to discuss problems, issues, current events and future plans. Children are encouraged to voice their own opinions and democratic decision making is practiced. It is at the group meeting where the values of the program are made explicit so that everyone knows exactly what they are, and what is expected of them. For example, the children in cooperation with their teachers make rules for the program.

The group meeting is thus a reflection of the values, philosophy and operation of the program.

The weekly newsletter

Written and produced by the children with the help of one teacher, the

weekly newsletter describes activities and trips that have taken place during the week and some of the upcoming events. It also includes articles researched by the children themselves. Not only does it involve all the children in a community-oriented product, but it serves the added purpose of keeping communication lines open with the parents and the neighbourhood.

Lunches

Lunchtime has been one of the most successful activities in promoting social interaction. Every week a different group of children is responsible for planning, buying, preparing and cleaning up after lunch. They learn about nutrition, costs and meal preparation.

Music

Music is an integral part of the program in terms of singing, listening and playing instruments. It serves to bring the group together and helps focus the attention of some of the children with handicaps who tend to pay little attention to verbal cues in their environment. Listening to the great classics, folk music or jazz at lunch time is part of the music program. Learning the words to songs serves as a rich aid for reading.

Reading

The overall objective of the reading program is to encourage reading for pleasure and information. Stories are read to the children daily, children are encouraged to read stories to one another, and they are encouraged to write and read their own stories. Libraries are set up in each program location. The overall program emphasis is on reading, writing, speaking and listening. Creative drama and the performing of plays is also part of this program.

Field trips

All children have the opportunity to go on frequent field trips. Children vote for places they want to visit and participate in planning the outing. The trips serve as an excellent source of reading, writing and discussion. Issues of accessibility and transportation for children in wheelchairs sometimes arise and must be resolved.

Swimming

The children are taken to neighbourhood pools for fun and exercise at least two or three times per week. This is one of their favourite activities.

Parent involvement

Input from parents is not only welcome but encouraged. The program is open for a parent or legal guardian to visit any time. Families were urged to evaluate the program in a parent survey sent out at the end of the summer. Teachers maintain close contact with parents via home visits or by phone. For non-speaking children, a daily diary is sent home with the child to describe the day and to give suggestions to parents for further work at home. Parents are encouraged to reply when they return the book.

Structure of the summer program

The **Director** of the Get-Together network is responsible for overseeing the smooth operation of all parts of the system, setting policy, initiating public relations activities, providing staff training and development, assisting in curriculum planning and obtaining and coordinating funding.

The **head teacher** is involved in staff selection and contacting schools and parents who are interested in the program. She or he does the actual day-to-day planning and acts as a liaison person with the Director. Planning and implementing the optimal learning environment is the main responsibility of the head teacher.

In addition to the head teacher, each program has five full time staff members plus contributions made by one or two part-time staff. Staff members work on a one-to-one basis with designated individual children, organize and conduct small group activities, are in charge of special projects or programs, and supervise the lunch program. Each staff member is encouraged to use his or her unique talents and skills with the children. For example, a staff member with a music background would run the music program.

All staff members are involved with the maintenance and physical care of the children (i.e. looking after the personal care of children who require assistance, including toileting, dressing, feeding, and helping children in and out of wheelchairs). Staff members report that they spend on average about two hours a day on these types of maintenance activities. This is one of the reasons why a high staff to student ratio is necessary. The student to staff ratio ranges from 3.5 to 4 students to one staff member.

The **researcher** is involved in designing and implementing research and evaluation of the program. She attends all staff meetings and assists in the planning of the program and the training of new staff.

Research

Research has primarily focused on social integration occurring in the programs. Evaluation has been conducted on the basis of the research plus questionnaires and interviews with staff, parents and students.

It is proposed that **acceptance** and **participation** are two important dimensions of social integration. Acceptance reflects attitudinal components and participation reflects behavioural components of social integration.

Method

Subjects:

The research data reported here was collected during the Summer-Get-Together programs of 1981 and 1982.

A total of 36 children attended the July and/or August 1981 sessions. They ranged in age from 5 to 12 years with an average age of 7.5 years. Eight of the 36 children were considered to be handicapped. They included three children with Down's Syndrome (2 EMR, 1 TMR), two hearing impaired children, 2 children with cerebral palsy, and one child diagnosed as aphasic. The two children with cerebral palsy were the only physically handicapped children. Of the above 36 children, 19 children (7 handicapped and 12 non-handicapped) are represented in the observational data, i.e., those who regularly attended the August session.

The children represented in the 1982 data consisted of 25 children in Program 1 and 23 children in Program 2 who attended most of the 7-week summer session. Their ages ranged from 5 to 11 years with an average of 7.7 in Program 1 and 7.2 in Program 2. Program 1 data includes 7 handicapped children and Program 2 includes 8 handicapped children (\bar{X} -age = 7.3 years. Only 14 handicapped children are included in the observational data due to insufficient data for one child). Of the children with handicaps, all were considered to have severe mental disabilities. Thirteen children also had physical disabilities, and of these, 10 children required wheelchairs for mobility. All 15 handicapped children required some degree of physical care (e.g., assistance with feeding and/or toileting). Two children had some limited verbal abilities but the remaining handicapped children had not yet acquired language or symbolic communication skills.

Procedure:

Three different measurement techniques were used to obtain data on degree of social integration: systematic observation, teacher ratings, and sociometric interviews.

(1) *Systematic Observation of Free Play*

Observation of the children's social grouping and play activities was conducted using the Parten Scale of Social Play (Parten, 1932; Wintre and Webster, 1977; 1980). The children's activities were coded according to Parten's six categories: Unoccupied, Solitary Play, Onlooker, Parallel Play, Associative Play and Cooperative Play. The observers also recorded whether the child was involved with handicapped children, non-handicapped children or staff members, thus yielding data on social grouping. A scan sampling technique (Sears, 1963) was found to be a highly effective method of collecting data on a large group of children. The observer looks at the child just long enough to decide

how to categorize the child's behaviour, then records the information, and moves onto the next child in a predetermined order. The observer recycles through the list of children several times in one session, thus obtaining a number of observations on each child throughout the play session. Reliability checks on the coding of social play ranged between 69% and 87% agreement.

(2) *Teacher ratings*

All full-time staff members rated the levels of acceptance and participation of each child according to a 5-point scale. In addition, each child's social skill level was assessed by two staff members using the Kohn Social Competence Scale (Kohn, 1977). The Kohn Scale measures two factors related to social skills: Interest-Participation versus Apathy-Withdrawal, and Cooperation-Compliance versus Anger-Defiance. The first factor (Participation-Withdrawal) was considered to be most relevant to the research objectives.

(3) *Sociometric interviews*

Two techniques were used in assessing the sociometric status of the children: a peer rating exercise based on Singleton & Asher's (1977) technique, and a peer nomination exercise. For the peer rating exercise, the children were presented with a list of all children in their program and asked to indicate, on a three point scale, how much they liked to play with each child. The peer nomination exercise consisted of eleven questions and the child was asked to nominate another child with whom they would like to do the various activities listed.

Sociometric interviews were conducted individually and with non-handicapped children only; the handicapped children did not have sufficient abilities to respond to this task.

Results

Systematic observations of free play yielded some interesting data on the degree of integration occurring in the programs. In the summer of 1981, the population of handicapped children was predominantly from the groups labelled by the school system as educable mentally retarded and trainable mentally retarded. The younger non-handicapped children tended to spend about 55% of the time observed in integrated play groups (i.e. mixed groups of children with and without disabilities), while younger handicapped children spent about 45% of their time in an integrated play group. Older children spent less time in integrated play groups (28%) mainly because there was only one older child (age 11) who was handicapped. Averaging over all the age groups, the children spent about 41% of the time observed in integrated groups.

In the summer of 1982, the population of handicapped children changed dramatically to include more multiply handicapped children, the majority of

whom had no verbal communication skills. Social integration levels were encouraging but not as high as in the previous summer. Integrated play activities occurred approximately 29% of the time observed for both the handicapped and the non-handicapped children.

In 1982, the social integration patterns related to age and presence of handicap were slightly different than those observed in 1981. Unlike the 1981 data, the 1982 results show that age was **not** a factor in the levels of integrated play of non-handicapped children.

In terms of the handicapped children, however, age in combination with sex may be a contributing factor to social integration. Levels of integrated play, sociometric status, and acceptance ratings were significantly higher for younger (7 years and under) handicapped children than older children. Five out of the six older children were males, thus sex differences in the way that the children relate to each other must also be considered in interpreting this data. The predominant style that the non-handicapped children use in relating to the handicapped children tends to be nurturing (e.g., providing assistance, showing affection). This style is frequently used by girls in relating to the handicapped children and occasionally by older boys towards the younger handicapped children, but seldom by males towards other boys their own age. Therefore, the older handicapped males are less likely to receive the same type and degree of attention that the handicapped girls and younger children who are handicapped receive.

Through the use of the same observational methodology over two summers (1981, 1982) several patterns in children's social play have become apparent. In 1981, the non-handicapped children spent on the average 71% of the time observed in interactive social play (i.e. associative or cooperative play) and in 1982, 59%. For handicapped children the average levels of involvement in interactive social play were 38% in 1981 and 35% in 1982.

There was a wide range of individual differences in terms of handicapped children's involvement with others. In 1982, four severely handicapped children spent over 50% of their time in interactive social play while three other children spent less than 15% of the time involved with other children.

Another consistent pattern that emerged over both summers has to do with the problem of handicapped children spending more time alone or with staff only in comparison to the non-handicapped children. In 1981, the handicapped children spent 40% of the time observed alone, unoccupied or with staff only while the non-handicapped children spent 15% of their time in similar activities. In 1982, the comparable figures are 51% and 21%.

The data on social play reported here were collected during periods of unstructured free time when children were allowed to initiate their own play activities. The data indicates that there is a potential for the handicapped child to spend a lot of time unoccupied, especially if his or her activities are not directed. It also shows the need for structure to support the integration process, particularly if some of the children with very severe disabilities can't or won't initiate activities or social contact on their own.

As can be expected there are significant differences between the handicapped and non-handicapped children in terms of variables measuring degree of participation (See Table 2). This is evident both in terms of social play variables and teacher ratings of participation, with the data consistently showing lower rates of participation of handicapped children.

On the other hand, measures of acceptance (acceptance rating and sociometric variables) show either no significant differences between the two groups of children (i.e., sociometric nominations received and teacher ratings of acceptance) or higher scores for the handicapped children (sociometric ratings of "like to play with"). Therefore, attitudinal variables show few or no problems in integrating severely handicapped children, but what we do need to be concerned with are participation levels of these children.

Peer nomination questions in the 1982 sociometric interviews were specifically designed to reflect both "passive" and "active" activities. A handicapped child would be just as likely to be chosen for passive activities as a non-handicapped child since these activities do not require special skills. (Examples: "Who do you like to sit beside in the circle?", "Who do you like to walk with on a field trip?"). In contrast, "active" activities do require more in the way of skills or responsiveness on the part of the person chosen. Thus there is a higher probability that a non-handicapped child would be chosen for these activities. (Examples: "Who do you like to read you a story?", "With whom do you like to play games?").

The children did make a distinction between their choices for passive versus active activities. In one program, 78% of nominations for "passive" activities were handicapped children and 78% of nominations for "active" activities were non-handicapped children. The second program showed the same pattern: 56% of "passive" activity nominations were for handicapped children and 84% of nominees for "active" activities were non-handicapped children.

Also of note is the result that four out of fourteen children in the first program and five out of ten children in the second program named a handicapped child as their "best friend" in the program.

An initial hypothesis predicting a relationship between non-handicapped children's social status and their acceptance of handicapped children was not confirmed. The attention that children were seen to give to others appeared to be related more to individual differences in personality and expressions of nurturance, rather than in the child's status in the group. Some of the most popular and respected children developed special friendships with the handicapped children and some of the quieter more introverted children were also seen to devote time and attention to a handicapped child. It was also observed that children who were known to be "class bullies" often changed their behaviour when relating to a child with a handicap. They were quieter and more gentle in tone and touch.

Evaluation results

Parents and students have been given opportunities to evaluate the program in surveys and structured interviews. The overall ratings given by parents and students to the Summer-Get-Together Programs are displayed in Table 3. Return rates for the parent surveys ranged from 42% to 83% for various programs.

In 1981, the most frequently mentioned comments made by parents regarding gains made by their children were: improved communication skills (e.g. larger vocabulary, better ability to participate in discussions) [6 children]; greater confidence or independence (4); improved swimming ability (4); and greater acceptance of or ability to relate to handicapped people (4). The 1982 comments were fairly similar. They included: increased willingness to take on responsibility (7); better understanding of and relationships with handicapped people (5); greater independence (4); and improved swimming ability (3).

Houseparents of children with severe disabilities noted improvements in their children's social skills (11 out of 15 children) and in the children's alertness or attention to their environment (8 out of 15). Houseparents also noted an improvement in the non-verbal communication skills of at least five children and two children had made some progress in verbal skills. Houseparents were concerned mainly with issues related to extra attention the children needed, especially around their health and physical requirements (e.g., changes in physical positioning, assurance that medication was given, proper diet and adequate liquid intake).

Although the staff report a high degree of satisfaction with the program, there are some definite issues that arose around the intensive care needed by the children. The ratio of children with handicaps was too high and this will be ameliorated in future programs. Eight out of twelve felt their summer job was moderately stressful and three felt it was highly stressful. Most staff members saw their workload as heavy in comparison to other summer jobs that

they have had, but their major satisfaction came from the time they spent working closely with the children.

Discussion

Ratio

As a result of experiences in building a network of integrated programs, a number of salient issues have emerged over the past three years. One of the most persistent problems has to do with the ratio of handicapped to non-handicapped children in an integrated program. There is a constant demand to include more children with handicaps than is ideologically desirable, (i.e., according to the principle of normalization).

According to statistics from the Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded, approximately 1% to 3% of the general population may be considered mentally handicapped to some degree. Ideally the population of a program should reflect this natural proportion. However, the practical demands of the situation including pressure from parents and a severe shortage of integrated placements means that it is not possible to be so restrictive in the number of handicapped children accepted in the Get-Together programs. Attempts to deal with the problem include expanding the number of programs, as well as setting an upper limit that no more than one third of the children in a program should have the label "handicapped."

Experience has taught those involved in the programs that this guideline cannot be violated. The potential danger exists of establishing yet another good, but segregated setting if the ratio guideline is violated.

Staff

Additional concerns have arisen related to staff selection and training. It is necessary that strong and compatible teams be developed to run each program. A practical suggestion regarding staff selection is that the director should hire the team leaders and these leaders in turn choose their own staff.

The next step in the process is for staff to attend a week long training and orientation program. This program includes normalization theory, the philosophy and practice of integration, current research and thinking about the education of children with and without handicaps and discussion of the principles and history of the Get-Together model.

Other more specific topics related to the actual day to day running of the program include formulation of goals and objectives, practical training in the

physical care of the children with handicaps (including discussion of their medical needs), and discussion of potential problems and practical solutions from past experience. The training program also includes at least one session on creative curriculum planning and teaching ideas especially in reading, writing and problem solving.

The intense preparation of the staff helps to ensure the smooth operation of the program. The more groundwork that is done, the stronger the program. Further examples of this preparatory work include: home and school visits, setting individualized programs for specific children, and small group meetings to solidify each group.

It may also be necessary to schedule a two day break for professional development in the middle of the program. This is partly in response to reported feelings of stress or burnout among the staff. A short break for problem solving and discussion is one of the antidotes to this problem. It has been noted that social events among staff (e.g., "pubbing" and pizza evenings) help to release tension.

Another way of alleviating staff tension is for the program director to give constant support and positive feedback to staff. This is done by the director's frequent visits to the program and evening phone calls so that staff feel they can discuss day to day problems and share their excitement or frustration.

Leadership

A program of this nature needs a democratic model of leadership and guidance. The teams have a high degree of autonomy to design and run their programs in their own unique style, as long as they adhere to the guiding principles and values of the program. For example, in the summer of 1982 one program had a greater emphasis on physical and recreational activities while another stressed a more cultural and educational curriculum. Both however had the same emphasis on integrated activities and respect for individual dignity and rights.

Networking

Personal networking has proved to be successful in attracting staff, expanding programs and generating interest in the model. The program itself serves as a catalyst for the development of other new integrated programs. Groups in Ottawa, Ontario, and Louisville, Kentucky have been encouraged to start their own programs based on this model.

Two of the main ways in which the model has gained popularity has been through invitations to speak to parents and professional groups throughout Canada and the U.S. and articles published in journals and newspapers about the program.

Children

Both handicapped and non-handicapped children benefitted from their attendance at the Summer Get Together. This observation is based on interviews with children, parents and houseparents and comments made by parents when picking up or delivering their children. Most important, new friendships were formed among all the children. In particular this carried over to after school visits by non-handicapped children to the homes of the children with handicaps. This has continued throughout the school year.

Another benefit to the children with handicaps was the daily and constant exposure to appropriate age role models, especially in the area of language and behaviour. A reduction in inappropriate behaviour on the part of the children with handicaps (e.g., tantrums, biting, self-stimulation, pinching,) has been observed by program staff and houseparents.

An unexpected gain was the improved physical health and well being of the children with handicaps as reported by nursing staff and houseparents. Children slept through the night and a marked reduction in the number of seizures was noted. The reason for this is unknown; perhaps reduced seizure activity may be due to the children's better general health or the increased and varied stimulation they received. This is a rich area for further investigation.

The children with handicaps participated in a wider range of activities than they would normally have experienced in a segregated program. For example, swimming in a community pool, sailing, field trips, movies, theatre, concerts, public transit, and amusement park rides were just a few of these activities. The children were also exposed to the full range and intensity of activities that non-handicapped children experience in a day-long recreational program, without special allowance made for prolonged lunch hours or nap periods.

The exposure to the natural and often noisy activity of typical children made the children with handicaps more tolerant of their environment. The natural parents reported that they could now bring their child home more often for visits as the child could cope more easily with a "normal" family situation. At least two children previously unable to cope with crowds in a busy shopping centre can now be taken to normally crowded public places such as supermarkets.

Special gains made by the children without handicaps include increased acceptance of people who have handicaps and greater sensitivity and tolerance of individual differences. A further benefit was the opportunity to mix with a wide variety of children in terms of ages and abilities. On a more academic level, these children showed a greater interest in reading. They picked up books voluntarily and produced creative writing for the newsletter. Several children felt that they had improved in their ability to read. Many children learned how to swim and almost all reported that swimming was a favourite activity. Staff reported that children improved in their ability to listen and to participate actively in group discussions.

Future priorities

The following areas have been given priority to receive more attention in upcoming programs.

- Staff positions should become more specific. Responsibility for certain areas in the curriculum and specific children should be assigned to individual staff members. Therefore, the future policy will be to hire staff on the basis of specific areas of expertise (i.e. music, language arts, recreation).
- Individual program planning for the children with the most severe handicaps needs to be developed and implemented. If specific plans are not put in place for these children, they tend to be lost amid the activity of the other children.
- Increase the level of parent involvement through evening meetings and personal interviews.
- Adaptive equipment for the support of the children with physical handicaps is needed. For example, specialized pool equipment and seating devices other than wheelchairs are desirable.
- Greater emphasis on training the staff in the use of adaptive devices and positioning of the children with physical handicaps is needed.
- There is a negative tendency for the non-handicapped children to approach and treat the children with handicaps in a patronizing "babyish" manner. This needs to be dealt with quickly and creatively. Children must be reminded to speak to each other in a normal tone of voice and that children in wheelchairs have the right to determine where they want to go.
- More videotape and photographic records of the program are necessary for future use in research and public education.

Conclusion

The original purpose of the Get-Together program was to show that integration is possible. It is gratifying to find that integration indeed does work and that it is not difficult to implement.

There will be a strong demand for this type of program from both parents of children with and without handicaps, if the **quality** of the educational program is ensured.

The Get-Together program is effective because it has both a conscious plan of action and yet retains and reinforces spontaneity. Very careful use is made of the talent and energies of each person (child or adult) who becomes part of this growing community.

This energy and commitment is channelled and directed by what has been demonstrated to enhance human growth and development. This means drawing on the most current theoretical perspectives, research and practical experience.

The hope of everyone involved in the Get-Together program is that more and more children will have the opportunity to share in integrated educational experiences where they will learn that each human being has value and dignity.

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**Thousand Cranes School:
building a dream***

Donna Bracewell and Kathy Milligan

*Whatever you can do,
Or dream you can;
Do it.
Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.
Goethe.*

The beginnings of the dream

Integration. What word is heard more often in our schools these days? What word elicits a more emotional and varied response from educators and parents alike? The raging controversy over integration versus segregation is, in part, responsible for the formation of Thousand Cranes School, a new, alternative, independent school in Toronto which is fully integrated.

Integration is a word that has come to mean many things. Generally, it refers to the process of educating children with special needs within a setting that contains "non-handicapped" children. Unfortunately, this is often interpreted so narrowly that the establishment of special classes within regular schools is viewed as integration. While this is no doubt a step toward integration, its roots are firmly planted in the philosophy that children should be educated with other children who have similar needs; a philosophy of segregated education.

At Thousand Cranes the environment is designed to accommodate and nurture a wide variety of children with diverse needs and interests. It was formed by us (two newly-graduated teachers), a group of parents and their children. We all felt that a homogeneous educational environment (be that segregation for "gifted" children, "regular" classes, or classes for "retarded" children), meant that children are deprived of the opportunity to learn to value human diversity. Our goal was an environment which fosters human diversity, and stimulates intellectual, social and emotional growth.

The idea for Thousand Cranes School grew out of our involvement in setting up the Get-Together model at York University, an integrated recreational Saturday and Summer program. In the second year of the Saturday Get-Together, a group of interested parents met with us to pursue the dream of a full-time

* An edited version of this article appeared in the Canadian Journal on Mental Retardation, Autumn, 1983.

integrated school. The parents came from all over Toronto and had varied reasons for wanting to establish a school. The one element they were all searching for was a caring, challenging and supportive environment for their children.

After months of hard work, the dream became a reality when Thousand Cranes opened its doors in September of 1982. The children ranged in age from 4 to 13 years. Five of the children came with specific labels which had previously placed them in segregated settings for children with mentally handicapping conditions. Some of them also had physically handicapping conditions.

People share the dream

The school provides an alternative educational setting, offering individualized programming in all academic areas. It employs two teachers and a teacher's aide and draws on the resources of numerous volunteers including professionals, high school and university students, senior citizens and parents.

Children are drawn to the school for a wide variety of reasons. Some come because their parents want more input into their education, others come because they are experiencing difficulty either socially or academically in the large classes of the public schools. Still others come because they are extremely bright and their parents feel that they are not being challenged in their present settings. And then there are the five children with "special needs"; children whose parents do not want their educational needs to result in segregation from the rest of society.

Our waiting list for these five spaces is particularly long and we receive inquiries almost daily from parents seeking an integrated setting for their "handicapped" child. There can be no doubt that the need for this kind of school is great and we constantly must battle the pressure that we feel to open our doors to "just a few more" children whose needs prevent them from gaining access to regular classrooms.

Children show the way

The rhythm of the day is designed to incorporate times for the community to come together as a whole (general meetings, music, lunch, drama, etc.) a time for individuals to pursue their own studies and creative endeavours (academics, painting, embroidery, plays, etc.) and a time for children to meet in small groups (to read together, work on projects, for older children to assist younger children with their work). All children are incorporated into the daily pattern. It is necessary for some of the children with "special needs" to spend the majority of their work time in one-to-one situations, while others have learned to work through an assignment with partial supervision from

teachers and other children. Every student's work is recognized and valued, whether it is the completion of a project on Norman Bethune, or a successful attempt at a simple pegboard pattern.

On a typical "day" at Thousand Cranes, ten children can be seen spread across the stage, each working on his/her own assignments. Two or three children can be found cuddled into the igloo, while the oldest is reading a story aloud. Another few are sitting at a table with one of the teachers editing stories, or sorting pictures. In a small tutorial room, a little boy is hard at work with an aide, learning to sort objects by colours and shapes. At least ten more can be found in the gym painting, putting on a puppet play, working on puzzles or playing in the water centre.

Invariably, one or two parents are lending a hand with the younger children and a visitor is being given a guided tour by an older boy or girl. Bach, Beethoven or Zamfir is playing in the background: One minute it is peaceful and quiet, the next, excitement erupts as a child discovers something that must be shared with everyone.

A great deal of effort goes into developing a sense of commitment to the community and, as in all communities, there are some arguments and unhappy times. When problems arise, a circle is called and the difficulty is discussed and dealt with by everyone. Through this shared process of discipline, each child comes to understand that his/her behaviour and participation is important to the rest of the community. This is developed in other ways; student-planned trips, concerts, camping trips, etc. The fundamental rule when planning anything is that everyone who wants to be involved **must** be involved. To date, the children have always found ways to ensure that this happens, no matter what the obstacle. The community is truly a strong one.

Issues

There are many arguments against integration in general, as well as against the type of model Thousand Cranes represents. Let's look at them one at a time:

"Average and bright children are held back"

There is no reason that this should be the case if adequate supports are available for the child with special needs. At Thousand Cranes the day-to-day living with people with handicaps provides a challenge for the other children -- how trips can be planned, the necessity of accessibility studies, how to modify games, etc. All of this develops creative thinking and problem solving skills, as well as a heightened awareness for others' needs.

"In integrated settings, children with special needs cannot receive adequate programming."

Again, if proper support is provided, every child will receive what he or she needs. There is no formula for "necessary support." For some children a one-to-one program will be necessary. In other instances an aide can be shared between two or three children in separate classes. For others, a one hour a day withdrawal program will suffice, and for a great many, a reliable volunteer network is all that is necessary. At Thousand Cranes, all of these methods are employed.

"The children with special needs will become targets of ridicule for the other children."

Children are not inherently cruel. They do, however, react to fear and the unknown. Preparation and ongoing openness is necessary to ensure success. Before integrating a child there is much that can be done to pave the way. Parents or advocates can go in to talk to teachers, and talk to the class, showing pictures, explaining in simple honest language the child's difficulties and interests, talking about family pets, hobbies, etc. All this contributes to painting the picture of a new, yet not so different classmate. Once the child is integrated, it is necessary to be open to children's questions, and supportive of interactions. At Thousand Cranes there are often discussions about specific handicaps, about things we all do well and we all have difficulties with, and about issues involving disabled people in the news. We invite adults with handicaps to come in and talk about their experiences, or share their hobbies, or just visit. Children follow behaviour modelled by teachers, and if that behaviour is acceptable then that is what they will follow.

"Most classroom teachers are not trained to deal with handicapped children."

The issue here is "programming." These days "programming" is highly over-rated while "teaching" is under-rated. Computers are programmed; children need to be taught, nurtured and supported. Our public schools are full of creative and capable teachers, who, with a little bit of information and a lot of moral support, could easily accommodate one child with special needs in their classrooms.

"Children with handicaps need highly specialized programs to meet their physical needs."

There are so many myths built around children with handicaps. There are widespread fears that escalate at the mention of such words as seizures, positioning, physiotherapy, medication. Schools are for education. When "therapy" and "programs" predominate in a school, education suffers. At Thousand Cranes we incorporate into our daily activities opportunities to learn and to practise necessary skills for everyday life. We do not, however, work on "self-help

skills" or "feeding programs" as separate subjects. They are all part of our daily pattern.

"Children are happier when they are with others like themselves."

It never ceases to amaze us when we hear such an argument. Placing a child who does not talk and does not reach out and initiate interaction, in a class with five or six other children who have similar needs, creates six or seven isolated islands within one room. If you place such a child in a noisy, active group of talking, initiating children, that child, without exception, becomes more aware of his or her world, more open to language, more aggressive and more willing to accept and even reach out for physical interaction. We have seen this time and again in our school and in other integrated settings.

"Parents of 'normal' children will oppose placement of handicapped children in their child's classes."

The fear of their child "catching" something or being neglected is common. An aggressive education program is necessary to reach parents. Adults, like children, become less fearful when their questions are answered. Our experience, formerly with the Saturday and summer programs, and now with Thousand Cranes, has always been that many parents actively seek out integrated settings when they are made aware of them. They feel the exposure for their children will be a positive experience. For many parents there is some envy, as they see the ease with which their children learn to interact with people with handicaps. For still other parents, integration is not even an issue; they come because they are interested in quality education.

"Integration is too costly."

To change the public system to a model like Thousand Cranes where 30 to 35 children have two teachers and an aide, would be a costly endeavour. It would not be costly, however, to integrate children from special schools and classes and to use those teachers as resource teachers and curriculum planners. The many aides employed in special programs could be used to assist classroom teachers. Public schools could use volunteers in a much broader way than they currently do.

The most important point in any discussion of costs to society, however, is the cost of segregated schools, workshops and institutions, and the present waste of productive citizens who, because of a segregated education, from infancy to young adulthood, cannot hope to become integrated into the mainstream of society. Our society can no longer afford such a waste.

There are many arguments against integration. Thousand Cranes is a living, loving argument for integration.

*The future belongs to those who believe
in the beauty of their dreams.*

Unknown.

Donna Bracewell is Director and Kathy Milligan is co-founder and teacher at 1000 Cranes.

*The following five articles are descriptions
of programs integrating children with handicaps.
Some are more successful than others,
but all are an attempt to bring children into the life
of the community.*

Right in our own backyard

Marsha Forest

Last year I travelled to the United States to see educational integration at work. I was searching for some model areas and programs which integrated children with handicaps into the mainstream of society.

From the first day of my visit I was puzzled. Why was I here? I saw basically segregated special education classes in regular public schools. Granted, I saw no schools for children currently labelled "retarded" and yes, it was better to have the children in the public system, but I don't call what I saw "integration" -- I and others call it "partial segregation."

There was the proliferation of the usual labels -- I.Q. scores abounded with the use of the accompanying terms and letters EMR, TMR, etc. I returned home to Toronto puzzled. I could have seen segregated special education classes in the public schools of Toronto. I could have seen kids bussed to non-neighbourhood schools right here, so why had I spent my money to fly to the U.S.?

In my own city of Toronto there are examples of real integration. What do I mean by that? Simply stated, I mean children labelled "mentally retarded" in regular neighbourhood schools with proper support systems built in. The weakness in Toronto is that integration is not system-wide yet, but rather random and dependent on the good will of individual teachers and principals.

Recently, however, I drove one hour from my home in Toronto, and saw to my amazement and delight what I had expected to see in the U.S., and what I understand is happening in Italy. I observed a system whose stated goal and policy was individualized and I also saw the total integration of children labelled "mentally retarded" (as well as other groups of children currently classified as deaf, blind, etc.).

When I arrived in Hamilton, I was greeted by the energetic Superintendent of Supervision and Operation, Mr. Jim Hansen. Jim is in the Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Separate School Board. He proceeded to tell me how for years they have been placing children with labels in regular classes, with aides when necessary. He showed me an excellent slide tape show, "Each Belongs," depicting their system. But I was skeptical. After all, the U.S. system also looked good on paper. Jim said, "Let's go, Marsha -- you won't

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believe me until you actually see it." For the next six hours I drove around Hamilton, saw four schools in four different and diverse areas of the city, and observed many children.

The following, in capsule, is exactly what I saw: (the children's names have been changed.)

School 1 - St. Teresa of Avila. Principal: Ron Kocel

Patty, age 9, was in an open area grade two class sitting in a reading group with four other children and a "student aide." They call teacher-aides student aides to show a shift in attitude from a teacher-centered to a child-centered approach. Patty is a child with Down's Syndrome and according to her teacher, Alice Anderson, is a "real asset in the classroom." In that same class is Betty who was receiving an enrichment program for children identified as particularly gifted and talented.

In another grade four class I met Darren who had previously attended the school for mentally handicapped children (in another school board) and who was now progressing at his own speed through a first grade reading program. In Darren's class, no student aide was deemed necessary by the regular classroom teacher and therefore no aide was provided. The other children provided the natural support that Darren needed.

In each classroom I was welcomed warmly by the teacher and allowed to speak to the child I was observing. I asked each child two major questions -- "Do you like your class?" and "Who are your friends?" In each class the children obviously were enjoying their learning experience and most important, had many friends.

School 2 - Corpus Christie School. Principal: Michael Webber

I must admit this classroom made me a bit teary, partly because I was so pleased to see an 11-year old girl with Down's Syndrome in a grade six/seven class so beautifully accepted by her peers and teacher. Sitting in a row along with the other children was Gloria, singing heartily during the music lesson. She also played in the classroom band and was obviously having a ball. The gentle principal of this school could see no reason for any child being excluded from his school and was willing to accept what we currently term "severe-to-profoundly retarded" children. "Why not?" he asked me.

School 3 - St. Michael's School. Principal: Tony Tigani

This school has two programs. One is called a "systems special education program" and is, as Superintendent Jim says, a segregated classroom. However,

the stated goal in the student services handbook of the board (p. 33) is as follows:

"Since we believe that all children should be integrated with their peers in their own neighbourhood schools, we are reluctant to place any child in a segregated, enclosed special education class, especially in a school outside his/her neighbourhood. Therefore, although these are segregated classes, the main objective of each class is to re-integrate every child referred to the program as soon as possible ... The central characteristics of these classes are their positive orientation (every child knows that he/she is going back to his/her peer group); the absence of any labelling procedures (the pupils are not referred to as mentally retarded or perceptually handicapped or dyslexic, etc.) and the constant evaluation of the appropriateness of each student's placement in terms of the objectives that have been set for him/her."

Seventeen children were in two classes with two teachers and three aides. All the children are involved in French, Phys. Ed., music, art and drama with the "regular" school population. Tony (the principal) assured me that these children went back "home" as soon as possible. Tony believes that "every child should be in his/her own neighbourhood school with his/her own brothers and sisters and with proper support as soon as they are ready."

In that same school I observed Ronald, a grade five boy who had originally come to the school once a week from the school for mentally handicapped children. Ronald's mother was so pleased that she insisted her child be transferred to this school for grade two. He has been there ever since with a student aide. Tony Tigani told me, "When Ronald first came here, he looked retarded but within a year his face and physical appearance changed. He was not talking at all at first, but he gradually began talking and hasn't stopped. Now he's in the regular grade five class and is at a grade three work level." I met Ronald's handsome and bearded young teacher who obviously loved all the kids in his class.

After lunch Jim Hansen transferred me to Betty Brown and Mary Galarneay, two talented remedial teachers, who drove me around. They also offered some insights of their own. The gist of their statements was that none of this would be happening without the powerful, committed and dedicated leadership of Mr. Hansen and a core of incredible school principals. Mr. Hansen expects his teachers to adhere to the stated philosophy and goals of the board but was quick to point out to me that he's never had a teacher say no to having a child with a handicap in his/her classroom. I was impressed with the openness, warmth and quality of the principals and teachers. They were not primed for my

visit and were all pleased to welcome me to their rooms. The spontaneous joking around was a pleasure to see. People seemed to genuinely like each other and the children.

A deep respect for the board policy and a love and concern for Jim Hansen ran through the conversation I had with the teachers.

School 3 - Blessed Sacrament. Principal: Art Thompson

In the large and lively open area kindergarten, I saw two children among their neighbourhood peers who required the assistance of one student aide. There was Paul, a child who is totally blind, and Stanley, a child many would label TMR. Stanley was also an abused and neglected child now living in a foster home. Both boys appeared to be doing fine and were well integrated into their classroom.

School 4 - St. Agnes. Principal: Eugene Mazur

Eugene runs one of the calmest, most organized and well-functioning open area schools I have ever seen. I got there at recess on a rainy Friday afternoon and it was noisy! At the sound of the bell, however, the whole place calmed down without any screaming from teachers or kids. It was amazing! Eugene has welcomed five neighbourhood children with special needs into his school and they are dispersed into their regular grade placements. For the sake of this article I will describe the children briefly: Martin, hearing impaired and developmentally delayed age 5; Jules, a six year old child with cerebral palsy who needs many adaptive devices; Mark, a five year old child with Down's Syndrome; Sara a ten year old child with Turner's syndrome; and Henry, a marvelous barefooted boy who is currently driving Mr. Mazur crazy. Henry has definite behaviour problems but is hanging in there and being dealt with right in the school. Henry is, as I agree with Mr. Mazur, a "handful -- definitely a challenge."

Some of the issues Mr. Hansen raised during our visit:

1. There have been little or no problems with parents of the other children.
2. All children deserve dignity and the right to be at school with their peers.
3. He never uses the term "retarded;" no I.Q. scores in Hamilton.
4. There is no Superintendent of Special Education. Jim is Superintendent of Supervision and Operations. Special services is part of that.
5. Mr. Hansen's public (and private) philosophy: "All children can grow. It is the responsibility of all who instruct children to foster growth. No handicap, no matter how severe, no learning deficiency, no matter how persistent, should discourage our efforts. No special gift should be neglected. Every resource both human and material must be used to meet the needs of the child."

I was exhausted and elated as I drove back to Toronto in the Friday evening traffic. I had just found a friend an ally. I met Jim Hansen through a little girl named Bridgett. She had somehow managed to slip between the cracks and was at home unserved by the schools in Hamilton. Bridgett is seven years old and weighs twenty pounds. She has many strengths, many problems and many needs. Another dedicated Superintendent in the Toronto Separate School Board, Mr. George Flynn, got me in touch with Jim. Jim Hansen personally phoned Bridgett's mom and today Bridgett has an education program in Hamilton!

It is hard for Jim Hansen to tell his own story -- he can't write of his own persistent dedication or describe his warm and hard working principals and teachers. But I can. I wrote this article without his permission, but I know I have his support.

On October 15, 1982 I went back to Hamilton to spend another full day of visits and to verify that what I had seen in September was indeed system-wide. Once again I had a great day and saw more children thriving in fully integrated settings. Three more principals, Joe Ricci, Mary Duffy and last but not least, Tony DiFrancesco welcomed me warmly into their schools. Of all the children I saw that day a few examples stand out. Tommy, an eight year old boy with Down's Syndrome came to Holy Rosary School not walking nor talking nor toilet-trained three years ago. When I walked into his grade one/two classroom, the children spontaneously jumped up to sing their welcome song to me. But they didn't only sing it -- they signed it! The entire class is learning sign language along with Tommy who is now walking, starting to talk and who is toilet-trained. They had an excellent group sign lesson conducted by an enthusiastic student aide. The teacher, Helen McNamara was just bursting to show me how well the integration was working. She was right!

The second example involved Dan, an eight year old who had quite a different program. Dan, unable to tolerate other people, had a tailor-made program where other kids gradually came to him. "It's the opposite to our 'normal' philosophy," the teacher explained, "but this child needs a one-to-one program to get him back to his peer group." And of course there was the special program being designed for my very special friend Bridgett, unable, for medical reasons, to move from her home to go to school. A special teacher was hand-picked to plan for Bridgett at home. I visited her that day and met a mother who has regained faith in a system that for so many years had failed to see her daughter as valuable. Bridgett had led me to Hamilton in the first place. I'm looking forward to seeing her progress in the years ahead.

For more information about the Hamilton-Wentworth Separate School Board, don't write me -- write to Jim Hansen, 90 Mulberry Street, Hamilton, Ontario L8R 2C8.

Appendix I

The Hamilton experience further reinforces a growing body of data on integration which shows that integration is the best way to meet the needs and rights of all children. Just a few examples from research since 1974:

When comparing educable retarded groups in self-concept and achievement, the results indicated that those in regular classrooms did significantly better than those assigned to special classrooms.¹

In contrast to the segregated students, the integrated students showed marked differences in scores in the motivation and cognitive style variable domains. The integrated students felt more positively about their prospects in school, expressed an increased sense of control vis-à-vis their environment, tended to view their own capabilities as students more positively than when they were still in the special class and in contrast to the students who remained in the special class.²

Teachers generally reported that the mainstreamed students were "enthusiastic," "happy," and "well-adjusted" in the regular classrooms and there were no observed indications of unusual anxiety among mainstreamed students.³

The majority of teaching staffs...approved of the integration...the more favourable behaviour was found in the pupils placed in the regular classroom for most of the day.⁴

While threatening and difficult to begin, the institutional crisis created by PL 94-192 [a U.S. law stating that all children must be educated regardless of handicaps] is having very salutary and healthy professional and institutional consequences. While experiences are mixed, it has been the experience of the authors that mainstreaming, approached through some reasonable and sensitive planning and program development strategy, has had positive benefit for special and regular educators.⁵

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**Education integration:
the success or failure of leadership***

Marsha Forest

Although the literature in special education says that "today the movement is clearly away from self-contained classes as the primary strategy in special education" my eyes tell me quite the opposite. In Ontario, for example, educators are still debating the efficacy of segregated schools.

Despite the reams of writing on the negative effects of labelling, in Ontario at least, new categories abound in an attempt to make sure no child escapes undetected as a "TMR," "SLD," "static," "BWIC" or "developmental."

In Canada there is a definite trend in the education of children labelled "mentally retarded" to slowly close the segregated schools for such children and phase all but the most severely handicapped children into the public school systems. This is usually done by placing a class or classes of special children in a regular school building. This is called "integration." The following article describes two cases of "integration" of classes labelled "TMR" into a public (Catholic) school setting. One is a positive example of how it can work well; the other reflects the perversion of a perfectly good idea.

The placing of a "TMR" class in a regular school setting does **not** necessarily mean anything except that one is physically placing approximately ten children, their teachers and aides in a building that also houses their typical peers. It can, in fact, be as segregated as a special school and have the same or worse stigmatizing effects. Unfortunately, what I am about to describe is a true description of a program in Canada in 1983. The names and locale have been disguised to protect the guilty.

Classroom X is in the basement of a medium-sized elementary school in a bustling area of a major Canadian city. There are eight children ranging in age from eight to twenty. There are four teachers' aides. The teachers and aides have little or no training.

On any educational evaluation the program would rate less than zero. The room is barren, there are no age-appropriate materials, it is cold and damp. None of the children speak and the only voices heard are those of the teachers and aides singing and joking inappropriately, often ridiculing the children.

* An edited version of this article appeared in the Canadian Journal on Mental Retardation, Summer 1983.

It is **not** an educational program at all but one that maintains and baby-sits its inhabitants. It is a tragic example of "integration", for **no** integration exists. There is segregated recess and segregated lunch. The little children of the school pass by this room on their way to the bathroom and point at the strange young people within. It is very sad that in 1983, when so much progress has been made in other areas, that this type of program exists in a major Canadian city.

In stark contrast is a model integration project run in Sydenham, Ontario, a half hour from Kingston. With a population of approximately 3,000, Sydenham is in a lovely but relatively poor rural area. The Loughborough Public School has approximately 325 students with nine children labelled TMR. Three years ago Mr. Wayne Riley, his two teachers' aides and nine children arrived at Loughborough. Wayne reports that for two years he and his class stayed in their own classroom and had very little to do with the rest of the school. They ate lunch in their room as a group and were waiting to be invited into the life of the school. A small degree of integration occurred through physical education activities, but not much else.

At the end of the second year (1981-1982) Wayne got mad when the entire school went to a special concert **except** his class. He realized he would have to initiate the **interaction** of his class and not wait for something to happen.

Around this time Wayne also attended a workshop conducted by Mary Kovacs who described the work of Emerson and Donna Coish in Labrador City. In that program children labelled TMR hung their coats outside the regular classroom doors and had individualized programs run by volunteers.

That idea was the catalyst for Wayne Riley's plan of action. He called a staff meeting and explained his rationale for wanting his class to interact with the rest of the school. He asked for volunteers to take his nine children for parts of the day. Seven teachers volunteered.

Today, all of Wayne's nine children are integrated for parts of the day that are appropriate. They all identify with an age-appropriate home room class and hang their coats outside that door. They have recess with the rest of the children and lunch in their home room classes. The kids all told me that they now had two teachers -- their home room teacher and Wayne.

I spent a day at the Loughborough School and was impressed by the warm atmosphere of acceptance by the staff and children.

Wayne Riley is no superman. He is a quiet, almost shy young man who previously worked in an institution as a residential counsellor. He hated the institution but "really liked the people." He decided that segregating people was "just not right." He studied to become a teacher.

Today Wayne has nine students, two teachers' aides, and twenty-six helpers from the high school next door. The high school students act as assistants to the children who need help when they come and go from their regular classrooms.

Wayne's role has changed from one of a more traditional teacher to an organizer of nine individual timetables, a trainer of high school assistants and general manager of a unique system.

It is significant that this year each of Wayne's students will have his/her class photo with their home room class.

I observed the nine children in Wayne's room and in their regular classes. I also talked to all the children and learned the some of their favourite activities were:

- singing "O Canada" with my new class
- going jogging
- playing touch tag.

The children also mentioned that the other kids talked to them a lot and were nice to them. Each child listed several favourite friends.

One outstanding example was a young boy named Carl. Wayne reports that Carl had poor speech and major behavioural problems before the integration took place. Now his regular class teacher says, "He's so normal. He's matured, he's not silly anymore and he's well liked." Carl, labelled TMR is in the jogging club and will be a track runner for the school team next year.

What did Wayne Riley do to make this happen? He simply decided to try something different and it's working.

The principal of the school, Mr. Don Marks appeared supportive of the integration. Other enthusiasts included the school secretary, Barb McKenzie, the crossing guard, Mrs. Young, Mrs. Homer, and the school janitor. They were all involved and pleased with the children's progress. Wayne had managed in his own quiet way to involve everyone.

Wayne is also the type of teacher who takes his whole group home to lunch once in a while and the kids told me about Julie, Wayne's wife, Shaun their one year old baby and even about Max, the Riley dog.

Wayne is not satisfied with what he's done and his aim is full integration for several of the students in the coming year. With teachers like Dennis Logan, Mr. Walker, Betty Brown and others, the integration program can only go forward.

Why does this work?

- The teachers accept and invite children voluntarily.
- There is ongoing support from the principal.
- There is ongoing support from Wayne and his consultant.

To Wayne and the other teachers, what they are doing is neither difficult nor unusual. They are doing it because they think it's good for everyone in their school.

Loughborough School stands in stark contrast to my first example. What it proves is that integration can succeed or fail depending on the leadership present or absent in any given locale. It is not a question of resource allocation as much as ideological and pedagogical commitment. Indeed, my first example has more resources involved but far less or no leadership.

Wayne Riley enjoys talking about his work and his students. If you want more information write to him at 475 Alfred Street, Kingston, Ontario K7L 2A5.

Thoughts on integration at Ceci's Homes*

Marsha Forest

This past year, I was involved in a unique and challenging educational experience in conjunction with Ceci's Homes for Children, a community-based group home of 24 children with very special needs. Last year (1982/1983) five of these children were fully integrated into their neighbourhood school and this year the number has increased to seven. All were labelled "severe" to "profoundly" mentally retarded and many have serious physical impairments. However, they were welcomed by two local schools where their only "label" is their own name.

This project is in keeping with an exciting international trend as outlined in educational documents from the United Nations: "to integrate handicapped pupils as far as possible into ordinary education..." (Case Studies in Special Education, Unesco Press, Paris, 1974).

The seven rights outlined by Unesco serve as an interesting point of reference for us in the field of education. They are the right to:

- be different
- share in ordinary education
- work in normal surroundings
- leisure
- continuing education
- autonomy
- the right to choose.

I have used these as guidelines to provide programs for the children being integrated in regular educational systems.

The Ceci's Homes children are indeed different from their "typical peers." However, all of us involved in the project firmly believe in their right to share in ordinary education. This is not always easy. Old ideas die hard and many well meaning people still believe that they belong with their "own kind": I fully agree. They belong with their own kind -- other children.

I have learned over the years that even the most cogent analysis and data will not change certain people's minds. What does change them is seeing tangible models that work. Many teachers who were skeptical of all my lectures on

* Originally published in the Canadian Journal on Mental Retardation, Autumn, 1983.

integration were won over by seeing the actual growth and development of the children at school.

Educational integration only works if a conscious and definite plan of action is carried out by a partnership of parents and professionals planning and evaluating the program for each individual child. I've seen the best results when a group of people who all know the child get together with common sense to do just that. This takes time, energy, dedication and hard work. It does not require "flying in experts" or doing intensive psychological testing. It takes information from the people who touch a child's life daily.

Parents have to support and be involved in the concept of educational integration for it to work. This means they must be educated as to why their child is better off in a regular school program. I suggest parents visit a variety of programs, talk to people with diverse points of view and make a choice of education based on fact, not fiction. It is my strong view that most parents of children with handicaps have as little choice in the matter of education as their children. I want to widen their options. They, however, make the final decision. One serious mistake we made was integrating a child whose parents were against the project. This child is now back in a segregated setting because of parental choice. I don't agree with their decision but I am willing to admit error in that case. Now, I work with the parents to help them understand the rationale behind our philosophy and goals and most often they become avid champions of integration.

This educational integration project is working because there is ongoing support to the schools: the teachers know a team is behind them and they can get any help they need for a child's optimal growth. The teachers are not left alone with a child who has very special needs and told to fend for themselves. In fact, the teachers become the major part of the planning team. No one person is expected to have all the answers.

When people argue that integration doesn't work, I answer that a system of implementation which is generally ill-conceived and unsupported causes the failure. Integration does work when carefully and properly enacted.

Our aim has been to increase the interaction that Ceci's Homes children have with their typical peers and to open new doors for them into the community. If our goal is to have the children grow up and work in sheltered environments or live in large institutions our work would be a waste of time. However, if we see community living as our goal, then we are succeeding admirably. I see the results weekly. I have photographs and video tapes as proof of success. Also, the success of my fall lecture series "Education, Integration and

Change" encouraged me to plan another series in the winter. But most important are the relationships, friendships and love that can be seen amongst the children themselves. This simply could not happen if they were segregated.

It seems so simple to say that the way to teach children to talk, walk, sing and behave appropriately is to put them into environments where this is the norm. Putting five children who scream and bite and cry together is just nonsense and should be condemned as poor education for **anyone**.

A Latin quotation guides my work; "Solvitur Ambulando" which means "Solve it by doing it." The secret of success is to plan, but not so elaborately that you never get down to doing anything. Plan...then solve the inevitable issues.

Parents of young children with handicaps are leading the way. Their voices will be heard loud and clear and their children will benefit the most. The school system will respond to the voice of parents (taxpayers) who with their allies and advocates present a strong case for educational integration. Change won't occur by wishful thinking. There is hard work to be done. The payoff may be a new generation of children (handicapped and otherwise) with attitudes and values far different from those of the current generation.

There is much work to do with parents and children who want to be pioneers in this exciting era. The Ceci's Homes project is still new and we certainly don't have all the answers. But we do have hope that we are on the right track and that **everyone** involved will benefit from our work.

I'll give the last word to two houseparents from Ceci's Homes. Their words in a letter written to me say it all: "Because of the Summer Get-Together and school integration we now have a whole new network of children who come to visit in our home after school and on weekends. This gives the Ceci's Homes children a chance to develop real friendships in the neighbourhood. The whole neighbourhood now feels more comfortable with handicapped people."

The emperor is naked: the truth about educational integration*

Marsha Forest

There is an abundance of literature pouring fourth these days on the topic of "educational integration." Policy statements, discussion papers, reviews of the literature abound. The positive aspect of this diversity of print is that integration is definitely on the agenda for discussion. The negative aspect is that there is a danger of mystifying a relatively simple idea.

"Integration," according to the revised edition of the Random House College dictionary means: 1. the act or an instance of combining into an integral whole. 2. behaviour in harmony with the environment. 3. (U.S.) the combination of educational and other public facilities previously segregated by race, into one unified system.

Integration as defined above does not mean segregation. Let's once again turn to the dictionary for a definition of "segregation": 1. to separate or set apart from others or from the main body or group; isolate. 2. to require the separation of (a specific racial, religious or other group) from the general body of society. 3. to separate, withdraw, or go apart from the main body and collect in one place.

Educational integration of **children** with special needs means just that -- integration. It does not mean segregation, partial segregation or placement in a resource room. Integration means integration -- that is the inclusion of **children** with special needs into the "integral whole" of the school system. The issue here is not whether the school system is good or bad or mediocre but whether parents of children with special needs are going to ask, demand and fight for the right of their children to have full and complete access to that system. Thus parents can improve the system once they are part of it.

When the United States' Supreme Court declared that segregation was no longer the law of the land in 1964, it did not agree to put small classes of black children into white-only schools. It said that children should be educated **together**. Many brave black families literally risked their lives to fight in order to make integration a reality for their children.

I often hear parents of children with handicaps say that they don't want their children to be "guinea pigs." Were those young black children in Selma

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Alabama and Taledega, Mississippi guinea pigs, or were they brave and courageous pioneers bringing about long-term social change destined to benefit an entire society? Were early Canadian suffragists guinea pigs, or undaunted women demanding the vote?

The point is that change doesn't come easily or without a struggle. Children with handicaps will not be welcomed into our schools because we wish it to happen, but only if we make it happen.

A current example is a young family in Ontario who is going through an appeal process under the new Education Act (formerly Bill 82) to demand that their six-year old daughter attend the local neighbourhood school. The case is instructive because the school in question is not in any way outstanding educationally or particularly welcoming to this child. But the parents are further ahead than most of us. They take "normalization" quite seriously since they see that the most important aspect of their daughter's life includes her friends and relatives who live in the neighbourhood and include her in all their activities. Joan (a pseudonym) goes out at Hallowe'en, goes to birthday parties, and sleeps over at friends' homes. She is an accepted member of her social circle.

The school board has proposed the following arrangement. Placement in a regular school an hour away by bus and half-time placement in a classroom for mentally handicapped students. There would be lots of support in this placement but no support in the neighbourhood school.

I predict that the parents will win. Why? Because they will not compromise. As a young couple, they moved into this community because there was a school close to their home. They are not willing to give up this arrangement because they know that it is in the best interests of Joan and of their non-handicapped son who will be going to this school next year. If this school is mediocre or poor, they feel that the school should change and not the child.

For decades everyone has known that "special education" is the dumping ground for children that regular classroom teachers could not handle. As early as 1960, Burton Blatt, currently Dean of the Faculty of Education at Syracuse University, wrote, "it has yet to be demonstrated that the special class offers a better school experience than does regular class placement."

In 1968, Lloyd Dunn published a landmark article entitled "Special education for the mildly retarded: is much of it justifiable?" Dunn questioned the "open arms" attitude with which special educators were willing to accept the instructional problems of general education. He said,

In my view, much of our past and present practices are morally and educationally wrong. We have been living at the mercy of general educators who have referred their problem children to us. And we have been generally ill prepared and ineffective in educating these children. Let us stop being pressured into continuing and expanding a special education program that we know now to be undesirable for many of the children we are dedicated to serve.

It is important in the '80s to take Dunn's argument one step further and ask the same question for children with more severe handicaps. After years of observation and practice in the field of education, it is my contention that all children can be educated along with their non-handicapped peers. What is so difficult about having one child who is obviously different in a classroom? Why can certain school boards do this while others cannot? It is obvious that the child is not the issue but rather the values and attitudes of the educational leadership in each school district.

In a recent article, Steven Taylor summarizes strategies used by a variety of school boards to integrate severely handicapped students into normal school and community settings in the U.S. The author concludes that, "**commitment** is the key to the success of integration efforts."

A leading expert in the field of autism, Anne Donnelon of the University of Wisconsin, recently told a large gathering of parents at a national conference that they had been "sold the wrong bill of goods." According to Donnelon, children labelled autistic do not need small classes and specialized teachers and aides. What they need are appropriate role models and understanding adults who can be guided by expert advice to help the children learn in the real world.

The current propaganda against integration is full of innuendo and fear. One recent document reads, "If there is to be one overwhelming conclusion...it must be that mainstreaming is being poorly done in most cases." Another statement warns, "In general, the more serious the handicap, the more negative the teachers' attitudes towards mainstreaming."

These arguments simply point out that there is a major problem with our education system and our teacher education programs and not a problem with our children.

Who will change this state of affairs? Those who have always changed the education system -- consumers, taxpayers, parents -- who along with their advocates and allies will challenge the status quo and push the system forward. It

is not in the interest of highly-paid bureaucrats to change the system. Those most directly affected will have to instigate change.

If parents of children with handicaps were to wait for accepting principals and warm, inviting teachers they would have a very long wait. Teachers have not been educated to accept children with severe handicapping conditions into their classrooms. Nevertheless, most teachers are not negative about the children but rather are afraid that they do not have the background to do a good job. With patient support, teachers can educate any child with an individualized program all through the school years.

Who will be the greatest teachers of the teachers? The children themselves. They will win over almost all the teachers by their very presence. We must not wait until the system is ready. We must demand that it be ready. We must make it ready.

I have presented the preceding arguments not as a professional in the field of mental retardation, but rather as an educator and a teacher. I know too much about how children learn language and reading and thinking to believe that it is sane to put four children who do not walk or talk or move very much, together in one room. It is time to say, "the emperor has no clothes on -- the emperor is naked!"

If your children or your students are headed for a life in an institution or a sheltered workshop or for a life away from the community, then I suggest that you tear up this article and forget all that I have written. If, however, you want your children or students to live in the real world with all its joy, pain, sorrow, happiness, friendship, love, and hate, then you must actively join in the fight for your child to sit, stand, learn, eat, play, rest, travel, and work **alongside** other children in real schools in the real world. Children can be educated together by learning to live together.

Let me end on a practical note. If what I have presented is your ideal but you know you cannot reach it tomorrow, what can you do? Ask yourself what small step you can take today. How can you increase the interaction of your child or student with the typical world in which we live?

Small steps are a beginning. Take it step by step but don't ever lose sight of the dream.

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**Education update:
the Wellington County Separate School Board at work***

Marsha Forest

It is becoming more and more clear to me that the way in which a child with special needs is educated is less a question of diagnosis, assessment and labels and more a matter of **where** the child lives and what his or her religion happens to be.

The future of our children labelled "slower to learn" seems to depend on the values and philosophy of particular school boards.

Parents and educators need to visit and observe school systems where children with special needs are welcomed with warmth and where good education is provided for everyone. Parents and educators need to know that it is **not** a matter of dollars and cents but a matter of philosophy that will determine the future of their children's lives.

Once parents see this new vision they can make an educated choice and begin making demands on their own school boards. If integration can be accomplished in places such as Hamilton and Guelph (Ontario), why not everywhere?

School boards which are putting integration into action are challenging the traditional educational wisdom of what is best for children with special educational needs.

I have found a school board in our own country which shows what can be done and which is accessible to visitors. This article describes not a dream but a reality.

As early as 1973, the Wellington County Separate School Board (WCSSB) in Guelph, Ontario was examining its delivery of special education services to children in need of special programming. They were being served either in confined classrooms outside their home school community or by non-Catholic systems in segregated schools.

After intensive planning and substantial research, the board began working toward the following goal in September 1977.

"... to have every child's educational needs met in his/her home school in

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a regular classroom setting in accordance with their educational needs, be they of average ability, gifted or in need of remediation. Each child's social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs must be addressed."

The WCSSB program is based on children's needs. According to the board's own documents, a "needs-based program" is one which accepts

- that any particular child has needs that are relevant to particular situations and particular points in time;
- that learning is a key element in a child's educational development;
- that progressive development is applicable to the learning situation which in turn can be programmed and timed to suit a child's particular need;
- that "special 'education" is an integral part of each school and each classroom teacher's program;
- that each child is exceptional.

The program attempts to respond

- to identified needs of any child;
- to identified needs of any classroom teacher, in respect to a child's needs;
- to a request for assistance from any child, teacher, principal, parent, etc.;
- by identifying (assessing) the specific needs of the child and/or the teacher, in respect to a child's need;
- by developing an educational prescription (program);
- by regular monitoring including necessary adjustments or modifications;
- by follow-up after the intervention ends.

Once again as in the case of the dynamic superintendent, Jim Hansen, in the Hamilton-Wentworth Separate School Board (see the Canadian Journal on Mental Retardation, Winter 1983), another superintendent with a clear vision is at the heart of the planning process. Through Dr. Joseph Waters, Superintendent of Programming, the implementation of this educational model has become a reality.

I have personally been to Guelph several times to see the model and it works!

The WCSSB model is intended to provide special education services to all children. It accommodates the full range of exceptionalities and places the responsibility of meeting a child's needs on all those who interact with him or her.

Mrs. Pat Billings a "methods and resource" specialist at St. Joseph School, spoke to me candidly about the system. "You can't beat it," she said, "I used to be teacher in a self-contained special education class and now I'd never go back to that! The thing that makes this work is that it comes from the top. We get excellent professional development, courses in task analysis, communication skills, etc."

Pat told me that, "Initially there was lots of resistance. Classroom teachers were apprehensive but Joe got the teachers involved in the planning and gave them lots of support in many ways, especially good in-service."

"People here work very hard," she went on. "Principals can't sit behind their desks any more because they too are part of the planning. One key to success is that the teachers see the principals as a supportive part of the team."

Believe it or not, there are no special education teachers in the Wellington County Separate School Board and there are no special education classes. My visit to St. John elementary school is an example of the situation.

Ken MacKenzie is bursting with enthusiasm about his school, his staff and the children. He's the principal and his office is symbolic of his attitude. It's a sitting room with a couch, chairs and interesting posters. There are 425 children at St. John. Ken explained that many of his pupils get extra help, but he has two students with particularly challenging needs. No labels for Ken MacKenzie. "These two children would be in the schools for the retarded in any other setting were they not Catholic," he told me.

Anna, age 13, is currently in grade six and is going on to the junior high school in the fall. She comes to school in a wheelchair, has cerebral palsy and was in a developmental centre until two years ago when her parents decided to send her to a local school. I observed Anna in her own study room having a private session with a teacher using a communication board.

Ken is also particularly proud of Maria, a beautiful young girl of 11, who lives near him. She had little speech when she first arrived. She used guttural sounds and was immature socially. Maria is now talking fluently, is starting to read and has good language and social skills. The other children tend to mother her a bit, but the school is working on this issue.

Both Maria and Anna are now well integrated into the whole life of the school and community. Ken had only one inquiry from a parent as to why Anna was attending St. John. His reply was quick and to the point: "Why is **your** child

here? To get an education of course." End of discussion.

Dr. Waters explained to me that the success in meeting the needs of children in his school board centres around the school-based "prescriptive team."

The main goal of a school-based prescriptive team is one of shared responsibility in providing programs to meet needs in order to maximize each child's potential.

Each of the board's elementary, junior high and high schools has a school-based prescriptive team which accepts

- that the centre of the program is at the individual school level;
- that the principal is the administrative head of the team;
- that the administrative and coordinating functions occur at the individual school level;
- that each school has a team composed of regular teaching personnel with the key personnel, the principal and "methods and resource" specialists having training in a broad general area of special education and pupil personnel service;
- that support personnel and materials are available at the individual school level;
- that disability labelling will disappear and be replaced with descriptions/objectives of the educational process/programs required;
- that pupil failure will become program and instructional failure;
- that school support personnel and methods and resource specialists will act as part of the school's instructional team, will work together with the regular teaching personnel and will be available regularly according to the size of the school;
- that the methods and resource specialists will be responsible for coordinating all team activities and for overseeing the actual implementation of the recommendations of the team;
- that additional support personnel from the central office will be available to the school team.

Imagine a school system where

- all members of the school community are responsible for teaching children with a full range of special needs;
- supply teachers are available so that teachers can pursue quality professional development;
- the methods and resources specialists are regular classroom teachers who have been selected on the basis of their teaching talent, their personal skills, their qualifications and experience to act as support staff to classroom teachers;

- no formal testing is done but where all assessments are done to define needs and then to develop appropriate programs.

In conclusion, let me say that the Wellington County Separate School Board is not perfect. It has problems but it is so far ahead of most systems that the problems are not worth mentioning. They are being solved daily. In the WCSSB a child with Down's Syndrome, for example, is without exception in his or her neighbourhood school, with an appropriate education provided. No appeals or tribunals are necessary.

If you have any questions about the WCSSB, please contact Dr. Joe Waters. The WCSSB has produced three excellent slide/tape presentations and I urge readers to invite Joe, his principals and teachers to talk to your school system, parents, or other groups. You can also write to WCSSB for their document, "Growing Together," at 75 Woolwich Street, Guelph, Ontario, N1H 3V1.##

Bringing special children back into schools*

Marsha Forest

When this century began, with relatively few exceptions all children went to the local school, regardless of their brightness or handicaps, or their parents' income. Like it or not, teachers dealt with every child. Then began a movement to remove the slow learners, the atypical, the difficult child. Schools focused on the "norm." The argument was that traditional schools could not cope with the exceptional and that the exceptional would be better served with special services elsewhere.

Now the pendulum shows signs of swinging back. Within the past year the Province of Ontario has ruled that school boards must provide special services for the exceptional as well. Just at a time that private schools, especially those focused on the above average are facing a resurgence, the handicapped are returning to the mainstream schools.

Not everyone is comfortable with this trend, not the least some of the schools whose specialty is the handicapped. Nevertheless, parents' chapters within associations for the disabled are proving to be powerful, persistent and effective lobbies.

Dr. Forest is visiting scholar at the National Institute on Mental Retardation, a noted scholar on education, frequent public speaker and author of numerous scholarly papers on education and human development themes. We invite your comments. [Ed.].

Picture this. Maria, age six, sits with her friends. They are listening to the teacher tell a story. Nothing unusual here you think. Now add this to the picture. Maria is in a wheelchair. She cannot speak or feed herself. Her file indicates that she is "severe to profoundly" physically and mentally handicapped. Should Maria be in this classroom? What is she learning? Are the other children getting less attention because Maria is here? Would you want Maria in your child's first grade class? Before you answer, picture something else.

Felicia, age nine, is in a special school for physically and mentally handicapped youngsters. She has been at this centre since she was five. A bus picks her up and delivers her home each day. In her class there are six other children. None of them speak. None of them feed themselves. All of them need

* Reprinted with permission from Toronto Parent, November/December, 1984.

help going to the washroom. They have a special teacher and an aide. Their program consists of developmental activities, lunch together, naps, etc. They have no contact with typical children their own age.

Maria and Felicia are real children -- they are the daughters of Rose and Dom Galati who until last year accepted picture number two as inevitable for both their children. But, they had doubts and always asked hard questions.

The professional experts who dealt with them were always sympathetic and understanding. They told the Galatis "not to have so many expectations," to be "realistic." They were told to institutionalize Felicia as "she will never understand or feel anything." Instead, they kept Felicia at home. Their doubts and questions grew.

Through a unique pilot project with two schools in Toronto (Market Lane Public School and St. Michael's Catholic School) Maria was integrated into her age appropriate classroom along with the appropriate supports.

Everyone was nervous. The teacher was afraid. Did she know enough "special" techniques to help Maria? The parents were apprehensive. Would Maria be welcomed, accepted, or teased? The school principal was concerned. Would other parents complain?

Within one week all fears turned to dust as Maria won everyone over with her own unique personality and charm. She taught us all that she was first and foremost a child.

It is now two years later. Maria has been promoted with her friends and classmates. All the children are doing well. But the effect Maria has had on the entire school community is the key issue.

The typical children have become more sensitive, tolerant and understanding. They are better citizens. They are the future parents, teachers and friends of children with handicapping conditions. They will have different attitudes than we do.

Doug is another example. Labelled "autistic," Doug is a child who hits, pinches and screams. He rocks back and forth. His behaviour is, to say the least, not typical. Where should he go? The choices were: an institution, a special school, a special class or his neighbourhood school in an age-appropriate class.

Doug was part of our pilot project and went into Market Lane School where has has been a challenge for everyone involved.

He has an individualized program but is a full part of his regular grade class. His excellent teacher has made him "chair" monitor as one of his strengths is organizing the chairs and desks. Other children are game monitors, phone monitors, etc. Doug fits in with creative program modification and an accepting teacher.

And what happened to Felicia? Today she attends a Catholic school in Toronto and is a part of a fourth grade regular class. Her parents demanded services from their own Catholic school board in Mississauga which this year agreed to purchase services from Metro Toronto Separate School Board. Felicia goes by taxi to school each day.

Next year the Galatis hope that Felicia and Maria will both go to their own neighbourhood school near their home, their relations and the other kids on the block. In the meantime Felicia is a welcome new addition to a regular school.

In the past, children like Maria, Felicia and Doug were in institutions, special schools or segregated classes. Today a new trend, spearheaded by parents of young handicapped children, is to integrate children (no matter the severity of their handicap) into their local neighbourhood schools.

The reasoning is simple, but common sense is rare these days.

Parents for years were sold on what many now think is the "wrong bill of goods." To put six children together who don't talk, walk or eat unassisted, just doesn't make sense. Children model or imitate other children. Children learn most from other children. It's called "socialization." One child who is different can be a valuable addition to a class of typical children.

But, but, but.... I'll quickly outline some of the common myths and arguments about integration. You be the judge.

1. "Segregated settings are more efficient."

Do you want efficiency or education for your child? Is a long ride on a school bus efficient? What are your priorities: relationships, learning -- or efficiency?

2. "Segregated facilities are more accessible to wheelchairs, special bathrooms are provided, etc."

Accessibility is more an attitude than a wheelchair ramp. Where there is the will, people in wheelchairs can be carried.

3. "It's better for handicapped children to be among their own kind. Regular children can be mean."

Just the opposite occurs. Integration in fact reduces the fear of difference, promotes friendships and understanding, leads to acceptance and tolerance, increases self-esteem, increases self-confidence and enables everyone involved to cope with real life in all its diversity.

4. "The quality of education for the typical child will suffer."

There is absolutely no data to prove this. When there is the presence in the classroom of one child who is different the quality of teaching in a properly integrated setting improves for all.

"In every case, integration of a handicapped child into a regular classroom has enhanced the classroom, the school and our entire community," says George Flynn, superintendent of special services for the Metro Toronto Separate School Board.

The overwhelming research in the past ten years on integration indicates that integration can work and be successful; that integration is the most desirable educational arrangement for almost all children now in special education programs; that the classroom teacher can be skillful teaching all children if she/he receives proper supports. That commitment is the key to making integration work.

It is dangerous to put labels on children. A label can be a "life sentence" and a "self-fulfilling prophesy." The only label you should pin on your child is his/her name.

I tell parents that their child may be slower or faster to learn. Your child may be in a wheelchair. My suggestion is always to say "my child Jane," and not my Down's child, my retarded child, my cerebral palsied child.

To the Galati family, Maria and Felicia are not a tragedy, not a curse but two beautiful daughters who have strengths and needs just like any other children. Their problem is not the needs of their daughters but society's attitudes about people who are different.

Ontario is playing a leading role in this new and exciting educational trend. Several school boards are welcoming all children no matter how fast or slow they learn. Notable examples are the Wellington County Separate School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth Separate School Board.

They are taking a **needs-based** rather than a **label-based** approach to education. They are child-centered systems who believe that no school is complete unless it represents and welcomes the diversity of people in our society.

Blind children can be taught braille while other children are reading with their eyes in regular schools. Without friends and good social relationships, children do not learn language, reading, math, etc. We send children away because we are **program-** rather than **person-oriented**.

Parents can and are changing this. Parents can and are demanding that the doors of our schools be opened to everyone and not just those who walk, talk and learn easily.

Over three decades ago in the United States, Chief Justice Earl Warren, in a unanimous Supreme Court decision wrote: "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." This was in regards to racial segregation. Warren wrote: "Purposeful segregation generates a feeling of inferiority as to a child's status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone....The sense of inferiority affects the motivation of the child to learn and has a tendency to retard their education and mental development."

These landmark words are now being applied to the educational placement of children with handicaps. Once you have seen the vision of children "being together" you can never turn back. All parents want the very best for their children -- let's open our doors to all and not exclude any of them.

**The Integration-Action Group:
a statement of principles**

The Integration-Action Group is an action-oriented association of parents, educators, and concerned citizens whose goal is to help families achieve integration for their children, and to advocate for attitudes, practices, policies and laws that promote integration in education and the community.

All children have the right to a full education and to participate in society -- to life in the community. The practice of segregation, in education and in the workplace, tends to isolate and neglect those with special needs, whether these be physical or mental in nature. The best way to prepare children for life in the community is through education alongside their peers, typical children from the neighbourhood, in regular classroom settings.

- All children can learn and develop.
- All children need to live at home in a family.
- All children need to share normal educational experiences with others their own age.
- All children need neighbourhood friendships and relationships.
- All children need supports and services from time to time, and these should be provided in his or her neighbourhood school, in a regular classroom setting.
- All children need an education that will prepare them to live and work in the real world, rather than in artificial, sheltered environments.
- All children need to acquire the daily social and coping skills that develop through life in the community.
- All children need the chance to become 'just one of the kids.'
- Successful integration of children with special needs benefits not only the child, but also his or her friends and peers, the school system, and society as a whole.

Integration into the mainstream is a vital issue for all. Anyone interested in furthering these goals and principles is welcome to join with us.

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Recommended Reading

Blatt, B., Biklen, D. & Bogdan, R. (Eds.). (1977). **An alternative textbook in special education: people, schools and other institutions.** Denver, Colo.: Love Publishing. 402 p.

The authors suggest that if goals for people were individualized to the degree that instruction is, we would not need segregated programs. The book offers challenging questions regarding educational issues.

Biklen, D. (in press). **Achieving the complete school: effective strategies for mainstreaming.** New York: Teacher's College Press.

For parents, teachers and administrators. This is a complete discussion of integration in education.

Biklen, D. (1975). **Let our children go.** Syracuse, N.Y.: Human Policy Press.

An organizing manual for advocates and parents who want to fight for the needs and rights of children.

Brown, L., Branston, M.B., Hamre-Nietupski, S., Johnson, F., Wilcox, B., & Gruenewald, L. (1979). A rationale for comprehensive longitudinal interactions between severely handicapped and nonhandicapped students and other children. **AAESPH Review**, 4, 3-14.

Brown, L., Ford, A., Nisbet, J., Sweet, M., Donnellan, A., & Gruenewald, L. (1983). Opportunities available when severely handicapped students attend chronological age appropriate regular schools. **Journal of The Association for the Severely Handicapped**, 8, 16-24.

Bruni, S.L. (1977). **Issues in integrating handicapped children into typical educational settings.** Atlanta: Georgia Association for Retarded Children. 36 p.

A paper dealing with integration and program quality in the education of handicapped students. Designed to help parents become aware of issues and alternatives in planning for their children.

Certo, N., Haring, N., & York, R. (Eds.). (1984). **Integration of severely handicapped students: rational issues and progressive alternatives.** Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

An excellent, comprehensive discussion of issues around integration. Aimed at teachers and administrators.

Flynn, R.J., & Nitsch, K.E. (Eds.). (1980). **Normalization, social integration, and community services.** Baltimore: University Park Press. 425 p.

A scholarly work offering a preliminary assessment of the accomplishments of the normalization principle since the appearance of Wolfensberger's text in 1972. Clarifies the meaning and implications of the principle and outlines current problems and misunderstandings.

Gould, S.J. (1981). **The mismeasure of man.** New York: W.W. Norton. 352 p.

Examines various attempts to measure intelligence, from the 19th century 'science' of craniometry to modern psychological testing. Draws attention to the often unrecognized cultural constraints upon science which have caused much illogical discrimination on the basis of handicap, class, race and sex.

Kunc, N. (1981). **Ready, willing and disabled.** Toronto: Personal Library. 111 p.

The author, who is himself disabled, deals with the process of integrating a physically handicapped student into the regular school system.

National Institute on Mental Retardation. (1981). **Orientation manual on mental retardation.** The Institute. 151 p.

Suitable for general public, volunteers and students. Includes: history, with a focus on Canada; rights of handicapped people; causes; definitions; normalization principle; new trends in services; and a chapter on the consumer movement.

Posternak, Y. (1979). **Integration of handicapped children and adolescents in Italy.** Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. 57 p.

A report representing an example of innovative approaches and advances in the integration of handicapped young people in ordinary schools and open employment in several provinces in Italy.

Schaefer, N. (1983). **Does she know she's there?** Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside. 256 p.

Catherine Schaefer, now in her early 20s, has severe multiple handicaps. In this moving and often entertaining account, her mother pleads for the community supports that would enable all parents of handicapped children to keep their family units intact.

Wilcox, B., & Bellamy, G.T. (1982). Design of high school programs for severely handicapped students. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes. 267 p.

Excellent source of basic information and practical programming ideas for school, pre-vocational and residential personnel working with teenagers and young adults.

Wolfensberger, W. (1972). The principle of normalization in human services. Downsview, Ont.: National Institute on Mental Retardation. 258 p.

Exposition of philosophy which provides a new ideological basis for services to handicapped and disadvantaged members of society.

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