Journals for K.P.P Placement
Students With Disabilities Awareness And Sensitivity Program In School Curriculum

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Today I went for my meeting/interview with Kawartha Participation Projects. There I met Carol, the executive director, who introduced me to the organization and informed me about the project I will be working on with an "education facilitator" who is yet to be hired. A description of the organization and the project goals is provided in this package. The people seem nice and the project seems like I good one. It suits my interests perfectly. At this point I know I want to go into the field of working with people with disabilities and the educational system. Whether I want to become a special education teacher or do graduate studies in education (and/or psychology) is still unknown. Working to help develop and implement a program into the elementary school curriculum that increases the general public's (specifically future generations') sensitivity and awareness of the needs and experiences of people with disabilities, is something I truly support. This is an invaluable opportunity and experience.

October 1, 1999

I've been doing some reading on various disabilities and on the Canadian educational system and students with special needs and have learned some important things. One important point I learned from the book Children with Exceptionalities in Canadian Classrooms by Winzer is that the child comes before the disability; they are not "special needs children" that I will be learning and talking about, but are children with special needs. Although this is a simple point, it's one that is easily overlooked by the able bodied community. The power of language is something I'm going to need to be very aware and thoughtful of. It will also be good for me to look into research on the benefits and problems associated ~~to~~ with "mainstreaming" and "inclusion", the debate surrounding labels, possible interactive ways of teaching 8 and 9 year old children and their teachers about people with different abilities and needs. I've been trying to find good resource contacts and have been looking into research material on these subjects.

I started my volunteer position at Queen Elizabeth Public School this week. I will be helping grade 1 special education teacher Karen Mckinsky with her class of 8 students identified as having (various) communication and behavioral disorders. Before spending time with these kids I used to think that "inclusion" was a great idea; now I'm not so sure. Its an issue I'll have to research more in order to develop a more informed opinion, however, presently I feel afraid for these children who are to be "included" next year. I got to see and experience hands on how much the extra attention a special education teacher/class can provide these kids. These children can learn, but not in the same manner that "normal" kids do/can. Special attention and creativity is required in some cases and I fear that this will not be there for these kids unless they become the few privileged ones to get "evaluated" by the board and granted the assistance of an educational assistant. .Karen was explaining to me that she only gets to choose one child out of her class of eight obviously needy children. If these kids do not get the extra assistance they get frustrated like we all would in situations where we feel overwhelmed, overlooked and incapable. You can also see on their little faces how fragile their self-esteem is and where the root of their "behavioral problems" lie. You can also see the joy ~~I~~ in their eyes and feel the confidence and hope that comes with the learning that can be achieved if only that extra mile or different road is taken. This is going to be an interesting debate in myself, because I also feel that labels and exclusion can be restrictive and detrimental to the individuals with special needs as well as to society at large.

October 4, 1999

Today I met with Robert Silvestry at Trent's Special Needs Office who specializes in the area of learning disabilities and education. He will be a great contact for me. We had a very interesting discussion this afternoon regarding the implications of this job. One thing we discussed was how crucial it is that I get through to the teachers of the children I will presenting this program too. Although the intention is that the program is to reach the students (peers of the children with exceptionalities), it seems almost more important to me to influence the teachers for it will be them who carry on the message to their students when the presentation is over and I am gone. To do this all well is a huge job. I would like to get the ball rolling and on the right tract though. Perhaps I can create a general reference book for the teachers about common disabilities and important issues relating to the special needs of children with such challenges. If I can find some good material on teaching in a positive and inclusive way, that would be good to include as a resource also. I curious as to what ideas the person I'm going to be working with has, what expectations KPP has of me and how the teachers etc. feel about mainstreaming and this program being implemented in the curriculum.

November 7, 1999

The placement has not officially started and thus, my journal entries have been scarce. I have been doing a lot of reading on the topic of inclusive education and attitudes of parents, educators and students as I felt that I needed a better understanding of such basic knowledge. I've learned a lot about the philosophy and assumptions of inclusive education (mainstreaming to various degrees) as well as the realities of the educational system and some backround information as to why its such a controversial debate. To sum up what I have come to understand of it is I would say it's a great theory but the supports aren't there (in many cases) for it to work. It involves a total restructuring of the educational system and a change of attitudes and ways of general education teachers. Such a major change can not come from external pressures nor can it be expected to work without the essential supports and resources. I now feel more comfortable with the job I will be doing as I feel like I understand the different perspectives much better now. I also realize how important it is to get through to the teachers and children I will be working with. Hopefully I can make them think about their own attitudes and hence, educate them a bit and inspire not only compassion for children with special needs but also, some interest in the holistic approach to education that is fundamental to inclusive philosophy. This is a very rough version of my journal as the placement has not officially started and so I still am not sure exactly what I will be doing. I am apparently going to be starting the week of November 15.

need to define what these are

November 25, 1999

Kawartha Participation Projects (KPP) is an organization that is dedicated to supporting and enabling people with physical disabilities to live as independently as they choose. They offer attendant outreach and supportive housing services to people with disabilities in the counties of Haliburton, Northcumberland, Peterborough and Victoria. The project I will be working on with KPP involves working in a multi-disciplinary approach to develop and implement awareness and sensitivity within the school system and as an integrated part of the school curriculum. The program is based on an awareness package developed by PROSPECTS (Peterborough & Region Organization for Special Parents of Exceptional children Talking and Sharing). My role will be to work along side of Mary-Anne, the education facilitator, and give these 1 hour sessions in grade 3-4 classes in the Pine Ridge School District area. Also, we are going to receive input from the school board staff regarding revisions to the teaching package required for this information to fit into the ongoing school curriculum criteria and evaluate and revise the teaching package as indicated and proceed with ongoing presentations within the school system throughout the school year. The anticipated outcomes of the program include the development of an awareness of how disability can affect the body and for the participants to observe how disability can affect a person's ability to participate in an activity and to brainstorm ideas about how to help people with disabilities (in the classroom, in the yard and in the community). It all sounds very interesting to me. I'm eager to get started.

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Things at KPP have been a little slow to get going. The organization was slow to hire the educational facilitator that was to be my supervisor and partner in this project. Finally they hired someone and the project was to get underway, however, there was an unexpected accident in her family postponing things further. Therefore, in the meantime I've been doing some independent research on topics related to inclusive education so that I could develop a more educated opinion and a broader understanding of the varying arguments for and against this new trend in Canadian schools. The following is what I was able to put together from my readings. I was going to write journals ~~like~~ as we discussed but I found that consolidating the information like this was more interesting for me (and probably you to) than just doing short summaries of each article. I've read more articles than what is included in this write up, however, they all generally support the same ideas. The list goes on and on and I wasn't sure how far I was supposed to take things since this isn't even part of the placement I'm actually doing. The background knowledge I've gained form this research has been invaluable to me though~~t~~ because its challenged my own views of my society. For instance, it has opened my eyes to how discriminatory our society is towards people with disabilities. Ablism is the one "-ism" that has been is so powerful, it's barely noticed. Racism, sexism, classism, etc. are all hot topics of debate that we, as a society have worked hard at breaking down. Ablism, however, is largely ignored. Many people are not even aware of the extent of the discrimination these people face. I never really noticed until I started really paying attention how inaccessible our society is to people with disabilties and how much people with exceptionalities are excluded and separated for "normal" society (ie. in the work place, educational system etc.). I could go on and on about this issue. It's been interesting for me to challenge some of my own ideas about ability, potential and opportunity and to see how our public education system is not as "public" as it claims.

From my readings I've found that throughout history there has been much debate over the educational rights of people with exceptional learning, physical, mental or other needs and over the related issue of what constitutes the ideal educational environment for all students. During this century there has been a major shift in views from qualitative conceptions of exceptionality to quantitative ones and the resulting reforms in special education throughout the century. Historically, people with special needs were segregated from their "normal" developing peers and community. Overtime the individual deficit model of disability has gradually become less pervasive. The view of people with disabilities as deviant and different has slowly been replaced by conceptions of exceptionality as a matter of degree, not kind. This in addition to the increasing beliefs in the detrimental effects of labels and segregation have led to the increasing integration of children with disabilities enrolled in general education classes and schools.

By the 1970's a major change had evolved. The educational system had come to adopt an inclusive philosophy that all children, regardless of type or degree of exceptionality, had the right to free and appropriate education in their local communities. The educational system began to incorporate mainstreaming principles and hence, the gap between general and special education began to be recognized and decreased. Children with learning, behavioral, physical or other problems were seen as having the right to be instructed in "normal" classes to the greatest extent possible. The amount of integration was based on the concept that the unique needs and abilities of the child must be considered and that a range of alternative placements provided. This was met by the coexistence of two separate (special and general) education systems that for years functioned cohesively (Lupart, 1998). Integration efforts increased into the 1980's with the Regular Education Initiative (Wills, 1986 cited in Roberts & Mather, 1995). The regular education class was increasingly being seen as the best learning environment, in which the needs and capabilities of both the child and the system were considered and special education still played an integral role as support system. At this time a real push for a merger between the two systems of education was created and the implementation of inclusive concepts was further advocated.

Over the past decade economic and political pressures and competition between the separate school systems have been building. More and more students were being identified as "disabled" and in need of special education support. At the same time, general education teachers became less committed and capable to deal with "difficult-to-teach" students (Lupart, 1998). The difference between the two systems grew and a "culture of segregation" (Mamlin, 1999) became firmly entrenched. Special and general education had come to have different and incompatible foci. Equity became the central focus of special education and achievement and excellence has become the goal of regular educators (Lupart, 1998). Also such changes as increased class size and consequential time restraints on general education teachers further intensified this difference.

Inclusion advocates have argued against this division and competition for resources and for a more holistic system in which children would not be differentiated and separated from their ("normal") peers based on some labeled deficit. Inherent in the inclusive education philosophy is a focus on abilities as opposed to "abnormalities"; it embraces diversity and the idea of maximizing one's social, behavioral, and learning potential. This is in sharp contrast to the present educational two-systems approach to helping children with "disabilities" overcome their deficits. As a consequence of the timing between inclusion advocacy and increased external pressures on the Canadian educational system many school boards and districts are starting to adopt (so called "full inclusion") policies and practices whereby all children are integrated into the general education program (Lupart, 1998). The problem however, is that fundamental principles of inclusion are being misinterpreted and ignored. The restructuring of the educational system into a unified and truly inclusive framework (in which special education values and expertise is incorporated into the regular system) is not occurring; the reforms of the past (protecting all students' rights) are in jeopardy of being lost (Lupart, 1998; Roberts et al., 1995).

The basic philosophy of inclusion is essentially that all children (of all races, socioeconomic statuses, abilities etc.) be instructed to their maximum potential, together in age appropriate and representative (of their communities) classes. Inherent in this ideal is a major restructuring of the present dichotomous education system and a shift from seeing disability as an individual deficit to a social "minority-group" problem (Lupart, 1998). For this to occur the two systems of education (special and general) need to be reformed into one unified system that contains both systems' qualities and expertise (Idol, 1997; Mamlin, 1999). In this way equity and excellence would be merged into one "adhocratic" (Skirt, 1995 cited in Lupart, 1998) system and hence, education would be truly democratic. The success of the move towards complete inclusion depends on the restructuring of the educational systems into a collaborative and cooperative team of faculty that collectively shares the knowledge, values and skills of both special and regular education. If what Mamlin (1999) calls a "culture of segregation" (a hierarchical and separate systems approach) still exists in the school and/or district then, the move towards integration of all students into the regular classroom for 100% of the time is dangerously premature. For the education system to become truly inclusive a major ideological shift needs to occur. The current implementation of more "inclusive" practices in Canadian schools, I fear, is the result of external pressures instead of a true change in attitudes and values.

The philosophy behind integration is holistic; it is not the moving of one system (special education) into the other (the "mainstream"), but rather, it is the collaboration and integration of the two into one new and unified whole. Thus, fundamental to inclusion of all students in the same classroom is providing all students with an education appropriate to their individual potential (or needs) and any support services needed by them or their teachers (ie. Stainback & Stainback, 1992 cited in Roberts et al., 1995; Idol, 1997; Mamlin, 1999). The success of the inclusive ideal of an integrated whole-system approach to education depends of several factors including the willingness, abilities and readiness (existence of such a system that offers a rich network of support) of educational personnel and system.

The idea behind integration is not simply that exceptional children get educated in "regular" classrooms, but that all children are included in "inclusive" classes. The teachers are thus, assumed to be supportive of inclusive philosophical ideas and to have positive attitudes, expectations and acceptance of all students. Although this is an integral to the success of integration efforts, research suggests that this is not the case. Educators have been found to reject children with exceptionalities (Gresham, 1982; Sabornie, 1985; cited in Roberts et al., 1995) and to be less patient and tolerant of "deviant" behavior (ie. screaming, hyperactivity, acting out etc is characteristic of many of such children) (Ritter, 1989 cited in Murphy, 1996). Also, they tend to believe that it creates too much work for them (Farnhart, Hauang & Mellblom, 1992 cited in Murphy, 1996; Gersten, Walker, & Darch, 1988 cited in Roberts et al., 1995) and to feel that it's unfair (Kaskinen-chapman, 1992 cited in Murphy, 1996)to put children with special needs in their classrooms. From this literature review it was found that in general teachers don't feel confident in their abilities (Coates, 1989 cited in Murphy, 1996; Soodak & Podell, 1994) and report that they do not support the recent pressures to integrate all students 100% of the time. They also have been found to be reluctant to accept responsibility of teaching all students (Conway & Gow, 1988 cited in Roberts et al., 1995; Soodak et al., 1994).

Many studies reveal that the majority of general education teachers are against inclusion practice. For instance, the American Federation of Teachers (1994) reported that 77% of their respondents did not support the implication of inclusive principles in their classrooms (cited in Murphy, 1996). Similarly, Farnhrt, Hauang & Mellblom, (1992 cited in Murphy, 1996) found that 60% of the surveyed teachers agreed that they did not want children with special needs in their classes. Many teachers don't believe in the wisdom of inclusion or in the prospect of student success (ie. Semmel, Abernathy, Butera & Lesar, 1991 cited in Roberts et al., 1995; Bearn & Smith, 1998) and the separate special education system is believed, by general educators, to be effective; they believe that it should be expanded, not curtailed (Viadero, 1990 cited in Roberts et al., 1995). Also, a majority (70%) of teachers were found to have negative attitudes towards individual instruction fundamental to inclusive principles (IEP) (Ammer, 1984 cited in Jenzen, Wigosh & Mcdonald, 1995) and many do not support the idea of adapting to meet the needs of only a few (Bearn et al., 1998).

Besides having negative attitudes towards the inclusion of children with exceptionalities in their classrooms, many teachers also revoke responsibility of teaching children with special needs (ie. Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Stainback & Stainback, 1992; Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995; cited in Lupart, 1998). For instance, in a study by Soodak & Podall (1994) 104 out of 110 teachers suggested outside, non-teacher solutions to a hypothetical student having reading difficulties. The majority of the respondents believed that non-teacher suggestions (ie. parental assistance etc.) are the most effective and attributed the cause of the child's difficulties to factors outside the educational system. The teachers studied clearly revoked responsibility for remediating students' difficulties. They were found not to believe in classroom based intervention nor in their ability to implement it (Soodak et al., 1994). Others have found similar findings. For example, compared to separated special education class teachers, general education teachers were found to feel unable to meet students' needs and less confident in their abilities. They were harsher in their judgments of "integrated" students' skill development, and requested more outside help more often (Marcovitch, Vachon, MacGregor & Campbell, 1993). Even when teachers have the knowledge, training and support to adapt the curriculum to students' needs, they have been found not to (Bos & Vaughn, 1994; Fuchs, Seshler & Sigmond, 1994; in Roberts et al., 1995) reflecting the point that teachers often don't support inclusive education efforts. They do not want the responsibility, feel unprepared and overwhelmed by a system that does not, as of yet, have a sufficient support system in place.

Although the success of inclusion depends on teachers' supportive attitudes, beliefs and actions (Lieberman, 1985 cited in Lupart, 1998) the infusion of special education values in general education may unfortunately not be the current reality. It seems that the change is not occurring because of an ideological shift, but instead because of political and economic pressures. If the principles of inclusive education ~~is~~ are to be realized teachers need to believe that all students are within their teaching range; appropriate infusion of special education values and services within the general education system can integrate equality with excellence. As Bearn and Smith (1998) assert, the separate conceptions of "specialness" and "commonality" need to be challenged and unified into one discourse of "normality". The philosophy of and move towards true inclusive education are good ideals. The concerns raised by recent research, however, indicate that if a "culture of segragation" (Mamlin, 1999), in which children with special needs are viewed of as inherently different than others, exists, inclusion efforts may not be fulfilled.

In addition and related to willingness on the part of the teachers is their ability to implement inclusion ideals in the classroom. Research reveals that regular education teachers are for the most part unprepared and unsupported in this movement towards greater inclusion in the schools. Many teachers have been found to be unprepared to provide diversified instruction methods (Silver, 1991; Ellett, 1993 cited in Roberts et al., 1995) and hence, that the knowledge and skills of special education has not be merged into the general education system into which "special" children are moving into. In the survey by the American Federation of Teachers (1994 cited in Roberts et al., 1995), for example, only 22% reported having had any training and of them, only half said it was good. As mentioned above, the majority of teachers felt unprepared to teach students with special needs.

Not only are many educators inadequately prepared in terms of training, there is also a major lack of inservice support and resources (Murphy, 1996; Marcovitch et al., 1993; Mamlin, 1999; Idol, 1997). Idol argues that the essential service delivery system consists of a combination of supports including cooperative teaching, a consulting team, instructional assistance in the classroom (ie. paraprofessional aids) and teamwork amongst teachers (1997). Others too, have suggested that adequate emotional, physical and practical support for teachers are fundamental to the success of inclusive education (ie. Janzen et al., 1995; Marcovitch et al., 1993). The lack of available academic and emotional support systems compound with large classroom size and lack of confidence thus, adding to teachers struggles and decreasing the realization of successful integration (Soodak et al., 1994).

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Not only is cooperation and collaborative support not readily available to teachers, but they tend not to even believe or try to use it. Soodak and Podell (1994) found that only 25% of their respondents even suggested consultation with a collegue as a possible solution and only 1 respondent believed that this would be effective. Bearn and Smith (1998) in their study of attitudes towards classroom support found evidence for hierarchical and territorial attitudes indicative of a separate-systems approach in a so-called "inclusive" classroom. Even when supports are available for teachers collaboration between special and regular education is not occurring and cooperative, integration amongst faculty is not a reality. Mamlin (1999) attributes the failure of inclusive efforts at Watkins Elementary School to such a separate systems ideology. Lupart too, attributes the greatest barrier to inclusive education to the very development and implementation of the special education system within the schools and hence, to the dichotomy between special and regular education (1992 cited in Lupart, 1998). To be ready and able to implement inclusive education in the schools it is essential that both special and general educators share their knowledge, strategies, and values and an integrated system of collaboration and support between the two is established. It is important to note that without support, even the best of intentions can go unrecognized. The teachers themselves are not to be blamed; the fact is they are overwhelmed by a changing and demanding system that has not recognized their needs and concerns.

Current pressures and efforts to adopt "inclusive education" practices in the schools are incomplete and misguided. Inclusion is a philosophical whole-system approach to education. It requires a total restructuring and a complete merge between the two separate (general and special) education systems. Simply eliminating special education and "integrating" children into the general education is missing the main point of inclusion and may have detrimental effects. Inclusion principles depend on attitudes that value individual potential and the collaborative and cooperative integration of all members of a dynamic and whole system. At present the philosophy of inclusion, for the most part, is not supported in either the classrooms or amongst the educational faculty themselves. The educators are not willing, ready or able at this point because the appropriate reforms have not yet occurred. Inclusion is a great theoretical model of integrated equity and excellence, but it is not, at least currently, a reality in Canada. One can only hope that the educational system is able to adapt quickly. Inclusion of students into a "culture of segregation" is not the point; integration of and within the system at large needs to occur before it is implemented in the classrooms.

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My involvement with Kawartha Participation Projects ~~is~~ has been very enlightening thus far. I have come to understand that although current trends in the Canadian educational system seem premature and potentially detrimental, things can and are being done by many people and organizations that believe that the change is a move in the right direction. The issues of concern seem to be about the lack of support and education within the system itself. Programs such as the one I'm participating in are thus, really important. At the onset, I was concerned as to what I felt about supporting the "inclusion" movement because all I saw was the potential problems in it. I was only seeing the difference between theory and practice. Now however, I've come to realize that change takes time and effort. It's kind of like the chicken or the egg delemma. Attitudes need to change and be supportive if inclusive education is truly going to work In the favor of all children, however, the change itself may be exactly what's needed to help the shift in ideas and values that are needed. Programs such as the one I'm involved in are designed specifically to address the issues of sensitivity, awareness and education as well as to offer a support system (resources, information, incorporation of such activities and lessons into the future curriculum etc.) for the educational personnel. I'm excited to actually start putting theory into practice and start seeing the effects of the program. I think that the discussions with students and teachers about what they learned and gained from the program is going to be really interesting. I've learned a lot thus far and am sure that I will continue to be challenged by this experience. This is a great way to learn because I'm truly having to integrate what I'm learning into my life, thought, and being.

December 2, 1999

Today I met with Mary-Anne, the educational facilitator who I will be doing the program with for the rest of the year. We went over the program and had an interesting discussion about our hopes and expectations of what we will be doing the rest of the year. We both agreed that although the experiential learning will be a good experience for the kids, the discussions we are able to generate and ideas that we can help the kids start thinking about is one of our main goals. I've come to realize that this program is a really good step in the right direction because its focusing on the issue that is of most concern, support and preparation for the teachers. With this program we will be opening up the dialogue and helping to initiate the attitude change that needs to occur in the classroom for integration of children with special needs into regular education classrooms to be an success. We will be introducing the subject to the kids and in this way not only support the teacher by starting to educate and prepare the kids, but also by providing models for teaching such issues as disabilities and empathy teaching. We also intend to make up a package of resource material for the teachers as well as revise the program based on the teachers' input and evaluations. We feel that supporting the teacher and helping to facilitate a supportive classroom atmosphere is of the utmost importance for the success of inclusion. Integration I believe can be very beneficial to the child with special needs, the other students, the teacher and society as a whole if efforts have been taken to make this transition a smooth and educational experience as opposed to a burden for the teacher, class and child. On Thursday, December 9th I will be going to observe a presentation being done. It will be interesting to see how the kids react and what they have to say in the discussion section. I'm also curious to see how the teacher seems to be responding to the session as well how Lynda and Lyn, parents (affiliated with P.R.O.S.P.E.C.T.S) of kids with developmental disabilities, relate the information with the kids as compared to how we feel about and do it in the future.

Thursday, December 9, 1999

Today I went to Otonoby Valley Ementary School to observe presentations done by members of P.R.O.S.P.E.C.T.S to a grade 4 class. The presenters names were Lynn and Linda. Both of these women are mothers of children with special needs and were able to discuss their experience with the kids with a level of warmth and sensitivity that will be hard to follow. In the new year Maryann and I will be giving these presentations to many schools in Peterborough and surrounding areas. My observations of the presentation today made it clear to me that to get through to people (the kids and teacher) the information we're conveying needs to be made real and tangible. Stories, pictures, etc. are very powerfull tools because it helps make the abstract ideas of "awareness" more personal. Watching the children try to truly empathize with how it would feel to be excluded, labeled as so totally different that people avoid you etc. The kids seemed to have fun with the activity and to be eager participants. The discussion went well. I found the children's insights somewhat surprising. The ability for kids of this age to understand and care is definitely there. It made me realize how influential this type of work is. To make the political, personal and to touch the hearts of the younger generations is, in my opinion, a very powerful way to effect the community and society at large. All we are doing is one presentation for an hour, but the hope is that we spark some interest and insight in these kids. If they then go home and talk to their family and friends or if the discussion in class continues as advised, then I believe we will have made a step in the right direction. Simply by starting the dialogue and/or by encouraging thoughts and ideas related to the issues we discuss change can be made. The point of this whole thing, I think, is to try and decrease comparmentalization and segregation in people's own minds and hearts; to try to increase awareness, sensitivity and empathetic thinking. The main message I've gotten out of this material and from my experiences in the field is the realization that despite obvious distinctions, we are in fact more similar than we are different. I think we have a tendency to dehumanize those people we don't understand, those who are different and we feel we can't relate to/with. This is the root of racism and prejudice, I believe. When you can get beyond difference and realize that we all have human feelings, hopes, dreams, etc. then you can see that differences are minor and/or simply part of a greater and wonderfully complex system-life. I see life, society et al as needing differences and variance to be healthy and vibrant. I believe difference is good. What I disagree with is when a hierarchy or value system is applied to this. Personal, physical, intellectual, spiritual, cultural etc. differences all have something to offer and teach others. "It's all good" is the expression that applies here. We are all different, yes, but we are also similar and different does not have to mean separate.

Also a point in this project to try and deliver the message I have learned from working with Maggie (the microcephalic girl I work with), that difference/disadvantage/challenge etc. does not necesarly mean less fortunate and in need of pity and support etc. Challenges make us stronger. We all have are strengths and weaknesses. People with disabilities are often labeled according to their weakness with no regard for their strengths (which may be better than "normal"). Hence the terms "dis-abled"and special "needs"! Maggie can't talk, but her non-verbal communication skills are excellent. How frustrated would you or I be if we could not talk and if very few people took the time and paid attention to what we were saying. Not being able to talk is not at all the same thing as having nothing to say! Also, she is the most honest and genuine person I know. People with learning disabilities, for instance, may not be as good or efficient at reading and writing, however, they perhaps have developed keen observational and alternative (ie creativity, visual-spatial, interpersonal) skills. Why is the focus on the difficulty rather than on the skill and strength? Don't we all have a composite of things we do well and with ease and those that we struggle with? Finding something more difficult than others do is not the same as a disability but the concept is the same. We all have limits and the ability to learn in many different ways. We are not all the same, but in terms of the feelings and needs we have in life (emotions and need for love, security and support) we are very similar – all of us. Why are we so competitive and narrow minded as a society? Someone referred to as "retarded" I think can be a very powerful teacher. Even if on the surface it appears obvious or dumb etc. certain lessons in patience, empathy, enjoyment of simple pleasures, nonverbal communication, creativity, observational learning, visuo-spatioal skills etc. are very important lessons to be learned if we are ever going to have a peaceful and respectful world. I dream not of a simple respect for difference or an ideal of sameness, but for a world that honors uniqueness and holistic understanding of each other and our own limitations and varied talents.

The kids had many stories to share about who they know with a disability, what struggles they have themselves that may not be obvious to their peers and how it feels. "Do I have a disability they would ask with fear of the burden of the label"? This ~~is~~ I think is a positive sign because it means they are thinking about how difficult and frustrating it would be to be labeled. Also, it opened up dialogue. At the end a teacher added that she was epileptic and she feels much better now knowing that if she had a seizure that the kids would be more understanding and empathetic. It was a perfect ending because it made what we (the strangers to them) has talked about a real and tangible thing in their social world. She wrapped up the presentation beautifully and restored my faith in teaching. I wonder how it will be for Mary-Ann and I when we start doing presentations.

January 11, 2000

Today I met with Mary-Ann to do research at library. We were looking for material on how to assess attitude changes in children and for sample surveys. There was very litter material on this topic which I found surprising in light of all the big changes that are happening in this regard in the educational system.

We discussed ideas of our own on how we could assess attitude changes and hence, the effectiveness of the program in order to revise it later. We also talked about the logistics of the presentations we will be doing next week and organized who is going to do what section and what our main emphasis is going to be on.

January 18, 2000

Mary-Ann and I met again today to go over the presentations one last time. We talked about what stories we were going to use as examples and what questions we wanted to stress and/or change from the outline form P.R.O.S.P.E.C.T.S. We agreed that I will talk to the kids about my personal experience of having a learning disability and of my work experiences with Maggie (the microcephalic girl I'm a contract worker for). She was going to speak from the perspective of a mother who has a lot of work experience in the field of people with disabilities. We decided to not discuss the part of the original package outline that explores the idea that a team of professionals works together to support kids with disabilities, but instead to focus on feelings and friendships. We made this decision because this was of least importan~~t~~ce considering the time constraints. We thought the few minutes saved would be better used in open dialogue and as a question and answer period.

We also discussed future plans of this program that involves the recruitment and training of volunteers to help us with presentation for the end of this school year and for future years and what the propose of this trial period is. I was informed that Mary-Ann and I are to test pilot this program, assess and revise it in order to apply for a grant for next and future years so the program can be expanded to other grades and become part of the elementary school curriculum. Kawartha Pine Ridge School District selected five schools to be "test" schools. These are the schools we will be going to in the following couple of months. Once we revise the package based on our experiences in these five schools and on the evaluations and suggestions from the teachers and students we will then train volunteers and have presentations in any school in the five county district that requests it.

January 20, 2000

Today was a big day. We met at 7:45am and headed out to Bowemanville to do our first day of presentations. We went to four classes, three of which were grade 3 classes with the other what was it?

was a grade 3-4 split class. Most of the teachers seemed quite interested and supportive of what we were doing however some had not done the preparatory discussion that we had asked them to do. The vice-principal that we talked to sounded very supportive. I was impressed in light of the research I had done earlier.

The presentations seemed to flow pretty well and the kids seemed interested. We focused on feelings and how although people have differences we are mostly similar in that we all have feelings, want friends, and feel sad and lonely when socially isolated. The children seemed quite responsive and very eager to participate. They (especially the younger ones) had a difficult time discussing (labeling) their feelings. When asked how would that/does that/did you feel? many of them responded in terms of actions. For example, they would define their feelings in terms of activities. "I felt like I couldn't walk" or "...like I had no friends" or "...like I couldn't see anything". They also tended to focus on exteriors like clothing and physical appearances. When pried, they seemed only to describe their feelings as "bad". We tried to focus on how people are the same inside and tried to pull what feelings (ie. sad, lonely, embarassed, shy, scared, confused, frustrated etc.) they were having from them. For the activity section we found that many kids had a lot of trouble with the pretend learning/reading disability but seemed to have fun with the others. We found that the instructions should be simplified for the grade 3's because they get the kids confused. It seemed that the kids did really get a taste of how it would feel "if they felt like that all the time". We also found that more kids really wanted to be involved and they all had lots of stories and questions of their own. The kids seemed to really understand the idea of inclusion (that if you are creative you can find ways to include everyone in all activities) and the concept of respect and being nice to people. We talked about teasing -of how it feels to be teased and that we all have done it. I was my idea that perhaps we should discuss why they think people tease others (ie. because of misunderstanding, ignorance and fear).

One thing I realized in retrospect was that the program really focuses on how to become friends with people with disabilities and almost fosters token sympathy. I personally would good point Are you going to [illegible] role models?

rather see an increased respect for the abilities and strengths of people with disabilities than to teach kids to pity them and offer token kindness. Empathy is important but respect and understanding should not be neglected. Mary-Ann and I discussed possible revisions on the drive home. We brainstormed such ideas as encouraging the kids to just take a wild guess and do their best as opposed to offering them the opportunity to just pass if they don't know what to do, to simplify the instructions, to try and involve more kids, etc. I am curious of what the follow-up (teacher and student evaluations) reveals.

January 25, 2000

[illegible]

Today we went to Cobourg and did four more presentations in Terry Fox Elementary School. Before we arrived I discussed some of my ideas with Mary-Ann and we decided to give some of these changes a try. We tried tying the arms of one of the volunteers instead of their legs in order to make the social interaction of a high five more difficult and we added a discussion of stereotypes. We talked a little about Superman (Christopher Reeves) and Ric Hanson to challenge their ideas. I also discussed my experiences of growing up feeling "stupid" and "different", but now having an A+ average in University and high career aspirations and capabilities now that I've had the support and education I needed. I also suggested doing a group brainstorm of possible feelings so as to help the kids identify some of their own. We tried this and found it helped a lot if we did it prior to the activities and discussion and left it on the board for them to refer to. We both agreed that the instructions definitely need to be simplified because the kids watching get restless when the "volunteers" get confused or have trouble reading them and take to long. Once again we stressed the idea that its good to treat others how you would like to be treated but this time we be clarified that you don't have to be best friends with everyone, but that respect and kindness is important. The kids seemed to be really impressed by the discussion of disabled role models and one again had many stories or their own to tell. Asking a lot of questions and then redirecting them back to the class is a good way to maintain their attention, we found. We were with one grade 4-5 mixed class and the insights of these students were quite impressive. I'd like to see this program be given to more older students who can intellectualize these ideas further than their younger peers and perhaps, in the future, act as role models for them. Follow up and perhaps repetition of these discussions next year will be interesting because we will be able to see whether they put any of what we talked about into practice or internalized the messages at all. The kids all seemed to understand it well. The teachers seemed to like it too. How well it goes really depends on the class though. Some classes are more scattered and harder to involve than others and this seems to depend on the preparation work done by the teacher. A couple of teachers complimented us and were very supportive of this project. This again goes to show that although many teachers are overwhelmed by the idea of having kids with exceptionalities in their classes has more to do with feeling unsupported and unprepared than a clear disinterest or opposition. Interestingly though, we did overhear some teachers talking in the staff room about how one was getting another kid in their class and what a pain that will be. The teachers all seemed overwhelmed by the large sizes of their classes and label new students as unwanted and just extra work before they have even arrived. This is too bad.

good point

[illegible] ?

✓

Feb 2, 2000

Today I met with you, Professor Struthers and realized I have not included more of my personal thoughts about working for K.P.P. in general. I believe that all in all this has been a really good experience for me. I was initially so intimidated by the job description and the titles associated with my supervisor's position and the fact that mine was just "Trent student volunteer". Whatever "educational facilitator and program co-ordinator and director" (Mary-Ann's title) is, it sounds important. That's what my initial thoughts were. I remember reading the descriptions of the different placements from the center for community based education discussing with a friend how interesting this position sounded but that I didn't think I was "qualified" to get it or know what to do. It seems so funny now. I am a good student, a hard worker and have quite a lot of experience working with kids and with issues such as disability. I also have personal experience with being "dis"abled and trying to be independent and myself. I had a bad back and hip injury that left me unable to walk for two years and with little hope of neurological recovery. Although I healed, it was not expected and I had a real taste for what life is like when you feel ostracized by something out of your control in addition to feeling like your body is letting you down by not doing what you want it to. Although I've had some experiences with sexism I have been raised to believe in myself enough and with the priviledge to not have it ever really hold me back form expressing or being myself in quite the same way that I experienced when being physically "different". Ablism is a invisible "ism". It's a form of discrimination people with disabilities are faced with every day in everything they do and yet its one of those social problems that no one ever really addresses. It's so discriminated against that its not even known or a considered worthy as is racism or sexism for example. When you have a disability you have challenges in every moment. Things that people take for granted are very hard for you. You're always aware of your difference. You not only act different and look different, you feel different. You feel separate form your own skin and you can't get out. People with disabilities are "ab..normal", "dis"abled....different form even each other. Someone with cerebral palsy faces different problems (other than social and personal history or character related ones) than someone else with the same medical classification. Sometimes CP causes mental retardation while other times it has no effect on intelligence. Imagine being aware that people are assuming you are retarded just because you have trouble speaking (due to poor muscle control)? Someone in a wheel chair is lumped together in the same category as someone who can't hear or who is has extreme limits on their cognitive capabilities since birth all because they are all different than "normal". There have been amazing changes in this century around issues of racism and sexism. People of different cultures and ethnic backrounds, of different skin colour or sexes or even sexual preference have many more rights and more access than used to be available to them these days. I am not suggesting that discrimination is over or non-existent for these people. Its not. The world is far from equal. However, if you spend even one day trying to get around life with a disability you would realize just how far away form equal acess the world is for people with disabilities. The part that's really bad about it is that if buildings (important businesses, public washrooms and transport, theatres etc) did not permit African American individuals, for example, there would be major social protest. This however, is a reality for many people with physical disabilities. Even doctors offices, physiotherapy and stress clinics are often either inaccessible or extremely hard to get to (ie. parking considerations, stairs at entrance etc.) when you have difficulty walking. I was shocked to discover this and to realize that I had never before even noticed or thought about these "minor" details that are everything to one's independence, reality and state of mind if your "dis"abled. To top it all off, you're supposed to be happy. If you are stressed, sad and/or angry people are that much more uncomfortable around you and isolate you even more. Have you ever noticed that the escalators only go up not down at most T.T.C stations that have escalators and many have only stairs (and lots of them)? How many people with wheelchairs have you ever seen on the subway? Think about it. I never did before I was forced by circumstance to notice. If you were wheel chair bound and had trouble articulating words clearly due to an accident, for instance, how do you think others would treat you? Would they interact with you? Would they condescend you and your intelligence (with that super nice pitiful smile that people give to disabled people from a safe distance) or related to you as any other person? Can you imagine how terrible it would feel to have cerebral palsy, for example, not be able to talk (or have difficulty) and be treated as if you were retarded when you just as likely equally or more intelligent. I had the fortune being able to see that world and then leave. I also had the fortune to enter it with total ignorance. I thought I was a considerate, aware and kind person. I had no idea that I too was guilty of all the things that I found so hard to deal with when I was "disabled"…. the fear and discomfort or people who have differences that are out of their control and that doesn't defined the totality of who they are. This is kind of what we hope the kids can get a taste of when they do the activity in which they are assigned a "pretend" disability that makes the simple task of going and giving your friend a high five difficult if not impossible. Why do people fear what they don't know? It's a terrible place to be in when you know you make people uncomfortable but aren't given the chance to explain and/or show them that you think and feel and are human just like everyone else. You have things you have to do to get by and the frustrations that go along with having everything be a "challenge". I feel I can empathize. I truly believe in the value of what this program with KPP is doing. I think that's why I enjoy it so much. I'm amazed that I doubted myself so much. I feel I need to point out that I understand both points of view because I am not a "disabled person". I recovered form my illness and have resulting problems that are medical and health related but do not classify as a "disability". People with disablilities do not get better; can not follow a health plan etc. and reverse their problem because of it. Some illnesses, I believe, are on par with disabilities in that they are chronic and majorly take control of your life. We make a point of discussing the differences between illness and disability and between putting on a pair of blackened glasses for an activity and a true disability. I think it is somewhat natural for us to be uncomfortable with the unkown. This is why I believe in programs such as this one where we try to make the realities and the person inside the disability known to others– to reduce the mystery, the fear-the difference. If I've made one person realize that we are all not as different form each other as we may appear, that we all have feelings and want/need love and acceptance than I will feel like I've done a good job.

Also as we've been working I've realized that my intimidation of Mary-Ann was unfounded. She's a great and very knowledgable and competent lady but I no longer think the role of her position warrented the fear and humility I gave it. It's just a job and I could probably do it just as well as she (if I was old and was able to earn the respect form principles etc). Many of the suggestions that have been added to the revised package were my ideas, I added to and contributed quite a lot of insight to practice ally everything that's been done and yet, my name is not on anything. I am just the volunteer Trent student, not the "program co-coordinator". I understand this and value the experience I've had. It's just that I know that I had no need to be afraid and to doubt myself and nor do I for future endeavors. It's all part of living, learning and adapting. I trust I am a good learner and hard worker. I've also been opened up to a world in which people do all sorts of interesting and different jobs that I had never really thought or knew about before. A future full of possibilities has been shown to me. That's what this experience with the community based education program has given me. Thanks.

That's the point of the TCCBE's [illegible]

This whole [illegible] was a very helpful [illegible] reflection [illegible] experience

Feb 3, 2000

I met Mary-Ann at Country Style Donuts and discussed the volunteer recruitment training sessions that will be starting soon. We decided that its good to work in pairs because it helps to have someone else to bounce ideas off of and its good to have more than one way to express something. The plan is to start with this aspect of the program in March. We are going to recruit volunteers with disabilities and train them to give the "revised" presentation to schools that request it on a voluntary basis. So far Mary-Ann and I have been doing the test pilot presentations in an effort to revise the program.

We also looked over the new package to be given to teachers that Mary-Ann typed up. My suggestions were to reference/credit Lynda Viscardis who is the author of the program (of which we're revising only minor details), to be aware that the cover page picture of all sorts of different kids does not include any children with disabilities (interesting than that was not noticed?), that material be provided for teachers (ie. suggested answers and guidelines for the pre and post discussion questions we ask them to do. I think that we're assuming that general education teachers know about issues about people with disabilities and trusting that they are going to set and wrap up our program by reaffirming our message. I don't believe this assumption is fair or grounded. I suggested we include references, some brief notes and suggested answers to the questions we request they ask so that this package is not only more complete but less intimidating (more doable and user friendly) for the teachers. We also talked about the pamphlet and I made some suggestions about simple layout concepts such that would make the pamphlet easier to scan and grab the attention of already busy teachers. The new package is essentially the same as Lynda's but it's simpler and more concise. We were finding that the teachers were not only overwhelmed by also confused because the old one included information about what we were going to do and use and stuff that they didn't need to know.

We then went to Queen Elizabeth school and I attended my first meeting with the teachers. We presented our proposal to the teachers, informed them that the Kawartha Pine Ridge School District chose Queen Elizabeth as one of the five pilot test schools for this program and tried to work out a time to do it with their classes. The teachers didn't seem all that interested. They were hurried, unenthused and seemed to see it more as an obligation that an interesting thing. That was a little disheartening. I confirmed my idea somewhat that we can't assume that the teachers are unbiased and interested in doing this program well or thoroughly. We have to make it as hassle free and easy for them as possible if we don't want it to get tainted by a negative attitude. I'm not sure if Mary-Ann really considers this important and thus, it may not be actualized. In light of the research I did last term and from what I've seen thus far I believe it is an important issue worthy of consideration and effort. The teachers seem to think the message we're delivering is a good one and that the presentation is good. They've all thanked and complemented us even though no evaluations have been returned despite our prompting. Most teachers, however, have not done the preparation work and I am somewhat skeptical that they will follow it up much either. I believe this is not due to bad intentions or a lack of interest or value, but is instead a reflection of their feeling of being overwhelmed, unprepared and just too busy. My experiences so far have confirmed my initial thoughts that it's the teachers that we need to get through to. Some teachers are interested and this passes onto their students. In some of the classes we've done the presentation in the teachers did a pre-discussion like we suggest. In these classes the kids seem alert and sensitive to the issues we discuss with them. They have thoughtful questions, good anecdotes and are able to identify their feelings better. Most of all they seem to come up with our theme on their own. When we ask them questions like "so, how should we treat people with disabilities?" for example, they respond on their own with "just like we would treat anyone which is they way we want to be treated ourselves". They seem to get the idea that we are all different and although some differences are more obvious than others, we are all the same inside in that we all have feelings, want friends, need help sometimes, can learn, like to have fun, be good at something, be accepted and included. Most teachers have not done the preparatory work we asked them to do, have not even told the class we're coming and made little or no effort to maintain the attention of the students (ie. some teachers have even assigned other work for the kids to do such as drawing during the presentation). These classes are more disorganized, unprepared and unattentive. The students respond to the teachers' attitudes. The kids are restless, difficult and not very interested about what we're discussing. The students of teachers who themselves are not paying attention or interested are less able to answer our questions and sometimes even make bold and disruptive responses. Some of the kids seem interested, but we end up having to slow down in order to keep the whole class unified. Sometimes it feels like you're pulling teeth for answers from them whereas in other classes the kids amaze you with their insights. I hate to blame this on the teachers since we have such a small interaction with them and the class itself. It does seem, however, that if the teacher is enthusiastic and believes in what we are doing he/she has prepared the class in a way that really does facilitate a positive outcome of our presentation. This is an important consideration for us, I think, in our design and presentation of the program to future (undesignated) schools.

For the volunteer training we want to discuss issues around our own biases, be clear about what are focus and emphasis in the program is and to discuss communication skills for dealing with kids aged 7-10. Mary-Ann discussed things with Lynda to understand the point of view she has and the intent she had for the program that she developed. The focus of PROSPECTS according to her was to teach kids that it is their responsibility to be kind, respectful and inclusive towards kids with disabilities. Our focus is more on respect via empathy (or the ability to try and see things from someone else's view point) and on getting kids to think about how to be inclusive not just that they morally should do. Mary-Ann and I talked about this at length. We feel that getting kids to come to the conclusion that kids with disabilities are kids and students who like to learn, have friends and play just like them. And more importantly we discussed how kids (this age especially) make friends and understand things. We believe that this is largely by shared activities and proximity. We want to facilitate their ability to truly include others and to know why they should not just that they should. We therefore try to place a lot of emphasis on getting the kids to actively brainstorm with us about ways in which people with various different disabilities could play different games or take part in different activities despite their challenges and/or limitations. We use games that the kids tell us that they like to play and then brainstorm as a group as to how a hypothetical classmate with a particular disability could participate (we describe the behaviors and abilities and limitations of this person rather than labeling them as having a particular kind of disability). We've decided also that the brainstorm of feelings chart is a really good addition. We also added the shirt and mitts activity and earmuffs to the activity because it allows for one more participant. They all want to participate in the activity. I've also found myself introducing myself more as a friend of people with disabilities (or Maggie whom I describe a bit and explain why I love her) and as person who has an "invisible" learning disability. I explain that I have dyslexia that affects my reading and writing but that I am also a university student and have career plans and capabilities just like my "normal" peers.

all great [illegible] your [illegible] input to the model

Feb 8, 2000

I got a phone call form Ester form Cogeco cable company this morning. Apparently they want to do a show on me as a representative of the Community Based Education Program at Trent. I talked to her about my involvement with KPP and the program Mary-Ann and I have been doing for almost an hour. It was good. I described our program and what I've learned form my involvement in this course. I explained that I love having the practical real-world work experience as opposed to just theoretical school work for a change and that I've learned a lot about my own future interests (my realization that I really do like working with kids) as well as about business in general. I discussed with her that this experience has been invaluable for my confidence and learning. By third year university I have already learned how to learn via books and pen and paper tests. This course has taught me how to apply my thoughts and education to practical situations; I've learned how to work in a team setting and to present my ideas as part of a group. We are all just people trying our best at the jobs we are given. I've learned to trust that I am a smart person who is a hard worker and good learner. I may not be an expert in the exact thing the job pertains to and I may have my own views and biases but that doesn't stop me from being able to do a good job and being capable and "hirable". This experience has had an important influence on my self-confidence.

That's good

Feb 10, 2000

I met Marry-Ann at Dreams and Beans Café and discussed details about next weeks sessions, new revisions, ideas, research etc. Nothing terrible new got discussed. We went over the edited package and pamphlet and I agreed that they looked better. We reviewed or focuses and who was to do what for the presentations. I gave Mary-Ann some articles I had found in the library about influencing high school students attitudes towards their disables peers. I haven't had a chance to read them myself yet, but she said she'll return them to me next week. Generally, nothing that exciting transpired over this meeting.

Feb 15, 2000

Today Cogeco filmed me for the "Plugged In" episode their doing. They did the first film shoot at Trent Library. They wanted shots of me researching, using the computers, getting books, working etc.. We did a small interview at the beginning. It went alright, but I'm definitely not movie-star material. I got really shy and didn't give answers that we're half as insightful or intelligent as when I was on the phone with her. A camera in front of my face makes me very nervous. Oh well, they assured me they edit! They next want to film a presentation Mary-Ann and I give to a class. That will go much better I think because I'll be doing something I know and am more comfortable with. The kids and the presentations are really what this whole placement is about anyway.

Feb 17, 2000

Today we went to Queen Elizabeth Elementary School and did presentation to two classes. The first class we did was a class of nine special education students of ages varying form 7-12. It was quite interesting talking with this class because the kids and teacher were not only very keen but also had a really interesting perspective. All these kids live with the isolation and discrimination people with disabilities are faced with every day. These kids although considered "behind" or "less than" in so many ways were really interesting to talk with. They were the best so far at labeling their feelings, having the ability to see things from another point of view, and in being creative in finding ways to include others who can't do things the "normal" way and/or see and go about solving a problem from another angle. This was the only class in which the kid asked to try and do up buttons on the man's shirt with mittens on was actually able to complete the task because he did not get frustrated but instead was innovative and used his teeth and body to assist him. Kids in other classes have since been amazed to hear that someone has actually been able to do it and he himself was "disabled". We don't normally do special education classes because we feel that its really other kids that this program is aimed at getting through to. We assumed that kids with disabilities live through it every day and don't really need to be taught empathy on this issue. The teacher, however, was very eager that we come to her class for she felt that it was important to include her kids in this too and to hear what they had to say and contribute. In retrospect, I think she's right because the kids really do have fun when we do our presentation and its not really fair that special education classes get segregated and left out. The kids of this class did have lots to contribute and the seemed to find it just as interesting as the other kids do. In nothing else, I think we helped validate a reality for them. They may know what we teach already in a sense however, they don't necessarily know that we know or that we think what they know is a good thing unless we include them. One of the kids in this class named Kyle really pointed this out to me. He made points that we hadn't even addressed such as "even though you could go to a teacher if someone was picking on someone whose disabled and that wouldn't be tattling its still hard to be friends with someone who has a disability because others might think less of you". When we then asked him in response "how might one then go about meeting someone without putting their own status at risk?" the kids offered such suggestions as "get a cool kid to come with you", "as a teacher to make you partners for an assignment" or "ask a parent if you can do something after school together" or "create a game that everyone can play". We've since started adding these points to our presentations. I think we made these kids feel good about themselves today and that in itself was worth it. It made me feel good and I thank the teacher for her assertiveness for she was right.

good

cool idea

The other class was a grade 2-3 split class. The teacher was not that interested. He sat at his desk ignoring us mostly and the kids were kind of out of hand. One boy in particular was being quite rude and the teacher did nothing to stop or reprimand him. It seemed to totally invalidate what we were trying to teach since the teacher himself didn't seem to have any respect for us. One of our main points is to send out the message to treat others the way we ourselves want to be treated. The teacher couldn't even do that for us. To think that the kids don't pick that up on some level is naive I think. We are only with the class for an hour. If our message is really going to get out to these kids we have to hope that we get through to the teachers and that maybe we gave them some suggestions and ideas to work with so that they can carry it on when we're gone. If we can't have faith that the teachers are going to do the post discussion because they simply aren't interested our hopes won't be realized I don't believe. Several of the teachers so far

Key point

have not seemed all that interested and most have not done the pre-discussion work. This is daunting, for it only further supports the research I did this fall. Inclusion might just be dangerously premature. If teachers have bad attitudes about it and/or aren't prepared to prepare and work with the class then it might have harmful side effects. However, the kids might work it out amongst themselves and inclusion may happen simply as a result of proximity and shared activities and experiences.

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It seems like the girls have more insightful things to say. Both boys and girls want to participate, but it seems to me that the girls (in general) seem at bit better at labeling emotions in themselves and others. I guess this is not such an unheard of sex difference; socialization differences might have a lot to do with this. I am not being very scientific in my observations though so perhaps I am subject to my own biases.

Also it's worth mentioning that the boy in the second class that was really disruptive I remember from this summer. One day I was working with Maggie and she was playing in the stones in the playground while I had to go to something. On my return I saw and heard this boy picking on Maggie and being really mean to her. Maggie is so severely disabled that she doesn't appear to even notice (however, I know her subtleties enough to know that she is uncomfortable though not understanding why). This boy found this very humorous. When I tapped him on the shoulder and asked him what he was doing he got scared and ran away. It was interesting to see him again in this class. I wonder if he learned anything. I doubt it and that makes me sad because it's these kids that can cause so much harm. Reality is also complex. I'm sure this boy is missing some important things from his life such that he's learned to be a bully and too bold for his own good all by the age of 6 or 7. I don't blame him. I blame society. I blame us all for not standing up and teaching this kid that that behavior is just not acceptable. I blame his teacher for saying nothing to him. For no adult (as it seemed) taking the time to talk with this kid and try to understand and untangle this boys concepts of people, relationships, society and fairness. How is it that such young kids know how to be so mean. I don't believe they're born that way.

Feb 21, 2000

This seems to be a recurring theme

Today we had a session at in the morning with a class whose teacher was definitely not very interested in what we were doing. She hadn't even read the package we gave her let alone done any sort of preparation with the class. The class was a 3-4 split. The kids seem to enjoy it and get something out of no matter what the teachers attitude seems to be, however their ability to abstract from the ideas we're talking about and to accurately label emotions seems to suffer.

The first class we went to went pretty well. In this class there was a girl with a hearing impairment so we had to use a FM and structure our discussions so that we were not talking back and forth and making a point of looking at her. She didn't contribute any insights any different than the other kids which kind of surprised me, but the class had a generally inclusive attitude so I guess that makes sense. I was aware that we have to be careful not to make it sound like we're clumping all people with disabilities into the same category. I realized this as we were talking and had made the point since to be careful to describe the specific limitations one might have before presenting the question 'how do you think it might it feel (to be disabled in THIS way)". I also learned to try and make the point that everybody (with or without disabilities of whatever kind) is different in the kinds of emotional reactions they may have to certain situations, in their social extraversion and interests etc. This was an interesting lesson me.

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[illegible]

We also made a point of asking questions in a very stepwise fashion. We realized that kids of this age really think in a linear sort of a way in that it really helps them to develop their ideas is you go form the concrete basic ideas that they can relate to and then to the more abstract concepts. We thus, started asking things such as "What do you do at recess?..."Do you think someone who couldn't see would be able to play that game?...Why?...How?...Can you change the rules of the game a bit to make it so that they can be part of the game?...How might you do that for the game you like to play?". Or, as another example, "Who here has a friend?...How did you make that friend?...Do you think someone who couldn't run and thus, would have a hard time running up and catching you in tag (for instance) would find it hard to make friends that way?...How could you maybe take that in consideration and try and become friends with them?”. One idea I like developing with them is “Who here has ever teased anyone (brother, sister, friend, schoolmate etc.)?” At first only a few kids put up their hands but as they look around and see our hands up (and the teacher’s if he/she is paying attention) they too raise their hand. “Who has ever been teased?” We all put up our hands again. “How does it feel when you’re being teased?...”Is there a fun kind of teasing? What’s different between that and the bad kind of teasing?...Why do you think people tease (they usually need some help with this one...do you think their trying to make themselves look or feel better by making someone else feel bad? etc.) ...So then, if we say it feels bad (makes you sad, angry, nervous etc.) when someone teases us then why do you think we all tease? Do you think that’s a cool thing to do? What could you do if you saw someone teasing someone is a bad way? Would it be tattling to tell on them and ask for help? Who could you tell? Etc.

February 29, 2000

Today we did another presentation at Queen Elizabeth elementary school. It was a 3-4 split class. The teacher was away and there was a substitute. The class was wild. Also the camera people from Cogeco came to film the presentation today and the camera made the kids even more high strung. Unfortunately it didn’t go as smoothly as usual. It still was all right, but we didn’t get through the whole thing because so much time was wasted trying to keep the class under control. I spoke with a girl at the beginning who said the teacher never talked to the class about disabilities or about us doing the presentation. This was a teacher that had appeared to us quite eager and interested when we talked to her about it. I am very curious to see the returned evaluation forms and any class/student feedback they may provide us with. Unfortunately though, there still have been none completed and returned yet. Next week Mary-Ann and I start working more specifically on the volunteer training package. That should be interesting.

All in all, I'm finding this experience very interesting. I love working with kids and learning how to discuss complex and/or more abstract concepts with young children in a language they can understand and participate with. It makes me think that maybe I'd like to be a teacher. Honestly though, I don't know If I could handle the educational system or the stress it seems the other teachers are burdened with. The actual teaching part I think I would enjoy and this job has showed me that I might be good at that too! It's been really fun, interesting and empowering.

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Friday March 3, 2000

Mary-Ann and I reviewed some of the evaluation forms we received back form the teachers. See the appendix for a summary of Evaluation of the field test sessions. All feedback was positive. All the teachers said they thought the presentations were worthwhile and effective. Unfortunately we did not get anything back that the kids wrote or drew themselves. We're hoping that now that schools will be asking us to come on a volunteer basis, that the teachers will be more interested, enthusiastic and supportive (ie. will do the pre-discussion and follow-up with the kids that we request).

Monday March 20, 2000

This evening Mary-Ann and I had an interview with Ester from Cogeco on her radio program (for Trent Radio). Overall it went quite well. She asked me questions about how I got involved with Kawartha Participation Projects through the Trent Center for Community Based Education, what I've been doing, how I enjoy the placement and what I've learned from the experience. I explained process involved in doing such a course and talked about how I've found the experience to be really interesting and enjoyable. As I've discussed in other journal entries, I have found this experience to be really good. I've learned a lot about the "business world", my own abilities and interests. The chance to have so much experience in primary school classrooms has been invaluable since I thought I wanted to become a teacher when I started this placement. I still have not made any conclusive decisions about that, however, I have learned some of the things that I like and dislike about myself in that role. I really enjoy talking with kids and facilitating them to stretch their minds. I have also learned, however, that I think I prefer to talk with kids in smaller groups or on a one to one basis rather than to a class of 30 or so students as is the norm in public school classrooms today. I've become more aware of some of the realities of teaching that I wasn't really thinking of before that will effect my decision to pursue such a career in the future. For instance, I personally find the experience of knowing how to help some of those kids who just need some more attention, but being unable to focus on them due to constraints (ie. a large class, curriculum or course content to cover within time constraints etc.) really quite bothersome. I think everyone has the potential to learn if they are given the attention they need.

Afterwards Mary-Ann told me about the principles meeting she went to where she discussed our program. She said there was much interest expressed and several schools have already booked sessions for this spring.

Thursday March 23, 2000

Today Mary-Ann and I met to discuss the volunteer training sessions that we hope to hold in the beginning of May and then again in the fall. I realize that this course is over in April, but I'm enjoying my involvement with K.P.P so much that I agreed to continue on a volunteer basis.

Volunteer requests have been sent to each of the associated community organizations (Canadian Hearing Society, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Five Counties Children's Center, Four Counties Brain Injury Association, Peterborough Care Access Center, Peterborough and District Association for Community Living and P.R.O.S.P.E.C.T.S) as well as K.P.P. We are requesting that volunteers be people with disabilities. They will be giving the awareness session to the classes with either Mary-Ann or myself. Mary-Ann would like to do a personal interview

[illegible] education

with each of the volunteers before they attend the training session to see if their ideas and abilities are compatible with the program. I also emailed all the students who use Trent's Special Needs Office to request for volunteers for this spring or next year.

Mary-Ann informed me that we already have several volunteers (2 from CNIB, One woman with cerebral palsy that uses a well chair, and a couple students who have a learning disability) and we discussed what we wanted to do for the training session. We did an outline of the training session. I think it's good that we have an outline to follow, however I would like to see the sessions done in a more casual way than I think Mary-Ann has in mind. She intends to essentially "teach" the volunteers (with use of overheads, hand-outs, note taking ect.). I think these people probably understand since they live with it everyday. I personally would do it in a much more relaxed fashion such as get together and simple talk about the issues outlined (as a group), have them read over the presentation package, and maybe observe one or two of our presentations and then just take it from there. It's going to be much more formal than that though. Since two of the volunteers are blind, we are going to have to find a way to may the material acessible to them (ie. audio instead of visuals etc.). I'm curious about how it goes and who these people are (as people). It'll be nice to get to know others and hear of their experiences.

The training program that we developed is as follows:

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION OVERVEIW:

-approx. 7 hours will take place in 3, 2.5 hour sessions. The time of the sessions will be established when the volunteers have been selected.

SESSION #1:

Introduction:

-welcome
- getting to know you ice breaker (ie. introduction + name something that you're good at)
-history of the Project – including the role of volenteers in the presentations
-agenda for the training sessions

-Assumptions, Myths and Stereotypes held about persons with disabilities:

- -are sick
- -are more comfortable with their own kind
- -its rude to ask a person about their disability
- -are to be pitied
- -are a burden to others
- -are eternal children (dependants)
- -are not quite or fully human
- -are helpless
- -are hopeless

-Overview of key values and messages of the disability awareness sessions:

- -what is a disability? Having a disability is not the same as having a lack of abilities
- -people have differences
- -differences are not bad or wrong
- -disabilities are a type of difference
- -people with disabilities are people first with the same feeling, hopes, dreams, challenges as you
- -people with disabilities are unique individuals
- -you can make a difference in the life of someone with a disability
- -it's ok to ask someone about their disability
- -people with disabilities have some abilities that are above average and thus, deserve respect from their talents, creativity, and problem solving strategies

-Brainstorm some commonly asked questions by the children to people with disabilities:

- -disability specific
- -adaptive equipment and alternative ways to do things (ie. brail reading etc.)
- -home and family
- -illnesses vs. disability
- -how do you get a disability?
- -work or education
- -how to/how do?
- -personal stories

-Homework: to review the disability awareness package

-Evaluation of session & check out

SESSION #2:

-Welcome

-Questions/issues arising from previous presentation

-Literature overview: attitude change presentations

- -Effective Presentations:
  - -simulations are helpful if carefully structured allowing form the observations and reactions of non-disabled persons (and use of audience input)
  - -live presentations are more effective than videos
  - -unstructured situations can create experiences that reinforce stereotypes of people with disabilities (ie. its important to go from concrete to abstract ideas with kids to show clearly how people with disabilities can and do live a meaningful life and that positive images are emphasized as opposed to just "dis"abilities
  - -present enough information to contradict the presently held stereotypic view
  - -informational sessions of specific disabilities can positively modify studens' attitudes by replacing misinformation with facts
- -Effective Presenters:
  - -convey information about what it is like to have a handicap
  - -tell the audience who they are as individuals
  - -present non-stereotypic images of people with disabilities
  - -admit they don't know if a child asks a question about something you're not sure of and discuss how you might find out the answer
  - -redirect questions so that the kids come up with the answers themselves
  - -facilitate full-circle thinking (let the kids come to their own conclusions and then clarify the key issues)
  - -facilitate dialogue and brainstorming

-Demonstration of disability awareness session

-Individual activity-identify your comfort zone and strengths for presentations

-Dyad activity-role play

-Questions

SESSION #3:

-Welcome

-Question/issues from previous session

-Characteristics of the 7-10 year old learner

-Dyads present to group-audience ask questions

-Group feedback

-Brainstorm responses to questions and/or how to phrase things in "kid-language"

-Review of resource list and resource handouts

-Scheduling of individual follow-up with volunteers

-Evaluation of sessions

SESSION #3:

-Welcome
-Question/issues from previous session
-Characteristics of the 7-10 year old learner
-Dyads present to group-audience ask questions
-Group feedback
-Brainstorm responses to questions and/or how to phrase things in "kid-language"
-Review of resource list and resource handouts
-Scheduling of individual follow-up with volunteers
-Evaluation of sessions

Thursday April 6, 2000

Today Mary-Ann and I did three more presentations in Baltimore, Ontario. Two of these classes were grades 4/5 splits and one was grade 3. For the most part things went well. The kids seemed to have learned something and enjoyed doing the activities, but the older kids definitely had less enthusiasm and input to contribute. The kids at this school, for some unknown reason, seemed less able to make the connections between their experiences in the activity and the hypothetical experiences in everyday life of someone with a disability. The kids did seem to get the idea of the "same/different" activity we do- they seemed to understand the message quite (that despite our differences, we are all people with feelings, needs, desires, wants, goals, hopes, fears etc.) quickly. During the simulated disability activity, several of the kids were quite rowdy. Many didn't seem to pay too much attention to the feelings that were being experienced (or at least weren't very able or willing to discuss it with the group afterwards). It's amazing how different each class and school is. One girl stood out though. She talked about how it is sometimes hard to be strong and do the right thing. "You may lose some friends" along the way, however it's important to be a "good strong person and know that anyone who won't be your friend anymore because of who you are nice to is not worth it". "You may lose some friends, but you will also make new ones". It was a pretty interesting and insightful point coming from an 8 year old. I was impressed. Interestingly, this girl had her desk isolated in the corner of the classroom.

good quote

why ?
I wonder?

Also interesting was the observation of a couple of kids in each class being secluded (desk off to the side away from the other kids) who all didn't put up there hands when we asked "who here has at least one friend?"; we did not realize that some might not feel like they can participate. I felt badly for this error on our part. I find it quite perplexing how we (as adults, teachers etc.) use isolation as punishment or management of a social or behavioral disturbance. Perhaps that's the problem, not the solution. How does seclusion improve social skills? ✓

The teachers at this school did not seem all that supportive. In one class I was amazed at the teachers outright lack of respect for what we were trying to do. She not only was not prepared but, she had a friend come visit her and chatted (laughed and gossiped) quite loudly at the desk while were trying to talk to her class. It was quite distracting and disturbing to say the least. She even had the nerve to yell and threaten her students when they were talking. What we are talking about is important, but I think the most important/influential mode of learning for kids of this age is through example. ✓ How are we to get the message across that this is an important and serious social issue and responsibility if the adult role models in these kids lives (ie. teachers) cannot even be respectful for an hour? How are we to get through to these kids at all when they can see that their teacher doesn't even take it seriously? Mary-Ann also informed me that another teacher responded to the principal at his request for these sessions, "Do you think we really NEED this?". This is interesting because it suggests that some teachers view this as more of a problem solving solution or something in their schools instead of as an important social issue that is worthy of being discussed with the kids for its educational benefit alone. It was a little disheartening.

You need a session with the teachers

April 20, 2000

Today we went to King George Public School here in Peterborough. The kids at this school seemed to understand what we were talking about and seemed to enjoy the sessions. For the most part it was a good day. It was interesting, however, to note that this school is very inaccessible to people with (physical) disabilities as it has stairs everywhere (to the entrance, to the playground, to the classes, to the office….). I did not notice any children with disabilities while I was there and no examples from school were offered. ✓ Since the kids were able to talk with us as if they were getting it, it makes me wonder how much they really do get it as opposed to just knowing what to say in response. By this I mean, do they just know how to abstract about such issues, but not actually internalize the message or practice the kind of behavior they can speak of? It's hard to know. I can only hope that we provoke a few kids in all of the ones we talk with to not be afraid and possibly include or start a conversation with a fellow student, neighbor etc. with a disability.

good point

The need to be very specific with our questions is especially evident with the younger kids; it's really important to take the concrete to the abstract – to make what we're talking about good e.g.

relate to their lives and experience some how. We have tried to do this in the way we ask the questions (ie. What is a friend? How did you make a friend? Would that be harder if you couldn't hear, for exampe? Why? How? What could you do to make it easier for someone? etc.). We've also started using more examples (personal stories) which I think have an effective impact. When I tell the kids about times when I was their age that I would go and cry in school yard after the annual provincial reading and writing tests because I always felt stupid for not being able to finish and do well like my friends, I think it hits home to them more because it's me there telling them about my personal experiences. I think the fact that I'm a university student also challenges their stereotypes of people with learning disabilities as being "less intelligent and/or capable". In my own life experience I have encountered many adults who stereotype me in this way. I've had professors (at Simon Fraser University, for instance) accuse me of cheating and of "abusing the system" because "people with a real disability cannot get A's". I remember being insulted and told I was a liar and a cheat (to the point of having me in tears) during my examination time by a professor; this was all because he did not understand that my need for extra time has nothing to do with my comprehension level. He had no idea of how ignorant he is/was. Obviously he did not recognize how much harder I work (how much more time I spend on my readings and assignments) relative to my peers and that my marks reflect my determination, coping skills and "abilities". I try to get this message across to the kids. Having a learning disability does not mean you are "dumb" or less intelligent than your "normal" peers. In fact you can have an IQ well above average, good writing skills, comprehension, problem solving skills etc. and still have trouble reading, writing, automaticity (coming up this with the word to express what you mean at comparable speeds to your thinking speed) etc. The idea that someone with a severe reading disability cannot be a doctor, lawyer, scholarship winner etc. is a common misconception. The reason why they may not achieve these statuses as often is a reflection of society's bias, not of their abilities or competence. Many programs such as med-school do not offer part time programs or do not accept part time undergrad students. This is discrimination because if you have a disability (physical, learning, etc) you may have to be a part time student in order to cope with the extra things that you have to do in addition to doing your school work. Its unfair to not accommodate programs for people who have to accommodate their lives in order to be able to achieve. My doing part time school, for instance, does not put me at an advantage over my full time peers. In contrast, the little bit of "extra time" is used fully in order to put me at a more "equal" level. If I have to read something 3 or 4 times for every 1 time my peer reads it, the extra few hours a week I gain by taking a "lighter" course load is used. I however, cannot apply for most scholarships, many grad programs, get no benefits (ie. bus pass, medical coverage, etc.),

good point

have higher tuition etc. even though I am an intelligent, hard working person and a competent student. It seems like discrimination to me since I am not choosing to spend "extra time" on my work. For me an extra 15 minutes on a test and having read something 2 or 3 times instead of once means the difference between failure and an A.grade. This kind of discrepancy occurs only because having read something once, for me, is practically like not ever having read it at all. Its ✓ not the same for someone who can skim read, get the general gist and "wing it". Although A students generally do more than "wing it", they have that ability. I cannot skim read nor write an essay quickly based on the general idea ("bullshit" a paper or test, as many students say). It was interesting too for me to learn that if your part time you get no medical or transportation coverage. Its kind of hypocritical since people with physical disabilities and/or serious chronic ✓ injuries are the one's who need to go part time and have extensive medical expenses and transportation difficulties. When you have to pay for regular physiotherapy and message appointments, go to doctor's appointments all the time, follow a physio program daily, have to have a car to get around, need special equipment (ie. special chairs, tables, crutches etc) and try to be a poor student, it's extremely difficult. You then need to work too? My peers where taking advantage of their messages etc. covered by Trent while I had to pay each time even though I needed it more, had less money and ability to go work and make more money et al all because I was doing one less coursed per year. Does that seem unfair some how? I think so. Students with disabilities often don't achieve as much due to obstacles and constraints they face (time, financial burdens etc) not because of their inability. To get a "higher education" is very difficult and often inaccessible to people with disabilities. Such issues need to be considered more closely by people without disabilities. If nothing else, at least encouragement and social support would help.

how could less pointed more kind wording be used?

Mary-Ann has started to tell a story about Linda's (the woman who designed the original model and founded P.R.O.S.P.E.C.T.S) daughter, Laura who has a developmental disability during the teasing section of our discussion. For three years kids at Laura's school made her go and kiss the wall during recess. Eventually a girl named Sarah went and told a teacher a few days in a row which finally put a stop to it. We then go on to ask the kids questions such as "why do you think Laura kissed the wall?", "do you think she knew she was being made fun of?", "if the person is smiling and laughing along and doesn't know their being made fun of, does that make it ok to tease and laugh?", "why do you think no one ever told a teacher?", "would that be tattling?" etc. The kids seem to understand most of these ideas. What I find really interesting is their responses to the question "do you think Sarah and Laura became best friends after that?". The kids all answer "yes"! We then go on to explain that, in fact they are not good e.g.

friends. This opens up a discussion about how you can stand up, help and/or be nice and friendly with someone without having to be their best friend.

We also have started talking about starring. Most kids believe that to look at someone with a disability is rude – that you shouldn't stare and definitely should not go up to someone and ask them about their disability. We carry on to explain that the main reason we are there in their class talking with them is because many people with disabilities have told us that they want kids to know that it's ok to look and ask questions. We discuss the difference between "nice looking and asking" vs. "rude starring and asking". ✓ We help them brainstorm how they might be able to approach someone and ask them why they need to use a wheelchair for example and what they might do instead of look away when the person with the disability looks their way. We ask them what do they do when they are looking at a stranger who is really tall or has a neat hat or whatever and then they look at them etc. The response is often that they smile and then carry on with whatever they were doing. This is the point we try to get across to them. You don't have to ✓ go be someone with a disability's friend necessarily. You don't have to go up and talk to them. But, you shouldn't look away and pretend you didn't notice them. If they have a visible disability, they know they look different. Instead you can smile or say hi or whatever and not feel bad for having looked at them. There is nothing wrong with recognizing difference. To be scared and judgmental of difference, however, can be very destructive. These are interesting additions to our presentation that I think are quite effective. The teachers at this school seemed to pay attention and really enjoy the presentation, which was refreshing.

April 27, 2000

Today we went to Vincent Massey School. We went to three classes which for the most part went well. I think the stories we've started adding and the questions they provoke are really good (as mentioned in last journal entry).

An interesting thing happened today. Although the kids in this one class seemed to be following what we were talking about (according to their responses), they all broke out into laughter when this one little boy stuttered as he tried to speak. When we tried to challenge the class on the issue and asked them why they laughed, the kids simply said because "he finds it funny too!". When I asked the boy if he wanted to tell the class how he feels, he said no. When I then asked the class "do you think that sometimes you may smile and laugh when people are teasing you even though it feels bad inside? Why?", I heard him say to himself, "yeah, so I don't have to get so mad". He was not comfortable with sharing this with the class. From then on, however, I have started to talk about this issue with the classes. Just because someone is smiling

real instructive thing etc

✓ or laughing along, does not mean that it is ok to tease or that it doesn't hurt or upset them. It's really hard to tell your peers that they are upsetting you especially if you are nervous as it is. We all want friends and people to like us. We don't like to get angry or upset at the people we want to be friends with – it's really hard to do that. It's often easier to pretend you don't mind just so that you can keep your friends. This is a point we are now trying to make.

interesting to learn more about this

Also worth noting is that there were lots of kids with wheel chairs at this school and yet I didn't see any of them in the school yard during recess. I brought this up in later classes we went to and asked "where are they?" I was told that they stay inside. "Why?", I asked. I don't know why. Perhaps, they want to, but perhaps not. We made the kids start to think about how it might feel to not go out to recess like all your classmates every day and just stay inside because no one will help you or because its embarrassing or scary to try to go out all by yourself.

May 2, 2000

Today we went to Port Hope. We did two presentations today. We started asking the kids themselves (at the end) "what did you learn?" since we have not been getting any student feedback through the teachers. They seem to bring up the main issues and so we reiterate or clarify them. I think this is a good addition not only because it informs us, but also because we leave with the issues clarified and restated. Their responses are generally: "what it feels like to not be able to use your hands and do something easy like putting on a shirt" etc., that "its ok to look and ask", that someone with a disability "can play a lot of the things that we play and it's ok to change the rules a bit", "to tease someone with a disability is mean and should be stopped", "we should treat people with disabilities just like we want to be treated" etc. It sounds like they are getting the right message. It's a good way to end the session, I think.

When we put up the learning disability sheet, a girl put up her hand to tell me that they don't know how to speak French. Ha! Ha! It just shows how foreign scrambled letters can seem like and how alienated it can make you feel form everyone else. It was a funny, but good point she unintentionally made. All in all the sessions went well today. ✓

Carla apparently went to observe presentations that Mary-Anne did yesterday. Mary-Anne said it went well. I'll have to ask Carla at the training sessions some time.
We've scheduled the training sessions for May 17 and 18. I'm looking forward to it. Mary-Anne and I will be meeting this week to go over the details of the training session.

John → 742-4736. ®

2:00 ® 2:30

Terry

Rebekah

May 17, 2000

Agenda
Valuing Our Differences Volunteer Training

Session 1

- Welcome
- Getting to know each other — me.
- Agenda review
- History of Project
    - roles of co-ordinator
    - roles of volunteers
    - overview of presentation
- Assumptions and myths about people with disabilities → me.
- Key values and message of the presentation
- Brainstorm of commonly asked questions → me.
- 7-10 year old learner
- evaluation

Session Two

- Welcome
- Review Agenda
- Overview of Literature
- Implications for presenters
- Identifying my strengths as a presenter
- Review of Resources
- Where do we go from here
- Scheduling Individual Follow-up
- Evaluation

Print Resources

1. Fitting In
2. Answer Children's Questions
3. Answering children's Questions
4. Tips for Answering children's Questions About Disabilities
5. What to Say
6. Facilitating Communication
7. Etiquette Tips That Fight Discrimination
8. Positive Attitudes
9. Message in the Medium

Easter Seals

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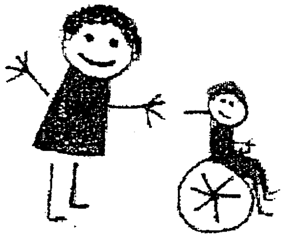
Living with
a Disability

Fitting In

Learning to accept ourselves can be one of the hardest jobs we have to do, especially when we want so much to fit in with our friends and our classmates.

Most of us are very aware of the way we look. Sometimes we wish we could be better than we are at something. Maybe we worry about things that are invisible to our friends and our families, but they are important to us. These feelings and thoughts influence the way we act, or walk, or what we wear.

When you have a disability, fitting in can be often harder. A disability is the first thing other people see. Sometimes it's the only thing, and then people forget to look beyond the wheelchair, or the hearing aid, or the prosthesis. We don't see the person, we only focus on the person's disability.

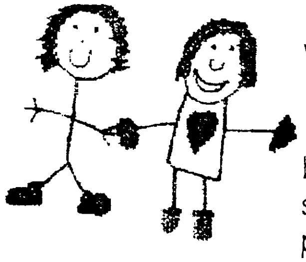


We tend to forget that there are people who could be our friends. Kids with disabilities may seem different, at first. But they are individuals with many interests, ideas and feelings--just like everyone else.

Overcoming fear

Many of us don't know how to act around people with disabilities. We want to be nice, but don't always know what to say or do. Sometimes we're so afraid of doing something wrong that we ignore the person who is disabled--and really hurt a person's feelings.

If we knew more, we wouldn't be so self-conscious, or afraid, or need to laugh and make fun of someone with a disability. The very first thing we need to overcome is our own fear of the unknown.



What is a disability?

A disability can be something we are born with. Spina bifida, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and Down syndrome are just a few of the birth conditions that leave a person with a disability with limitations to overcome.

Or a disability can be something that results from an accident or injury. Head injuries can cause mental retardation, behavior problems or learning disabilities. Other accidents can cause paralysis, or limited mobility. However it occurs, when someone has a disability it helps for others to know what it is.

Ask questions

Remember though that kids with disabilities get asked a lot of questions. And, while they are usually very willing to explain what happened to them, they do get tired of answering the same questions. How you ask also makes a difference. Speak directly to the person with a disability, not through a companion. If you want an answer, remember to ask "Why?" or "What happened?" not "What's wrong with you?"

And when we understand better, it opens up a whole new world to us and to kids with disabilities. It gives us all a chance to make new friends.

Fight stereotypes

Everybody's fighting some kind of stereotype, and people with disabilities are no exception. The difference is that barriers people with disabilities face begin with people's attitudes -- attitudes often rooted in misinformation and misunderstandings about who they are and how they became disabled.

Awareness is the first step towards change.

Some myths and facts about people with disabilities

Myth 1: All persons who use wheelchairs are chronically ill or sickly.

Fact: The association between wheelchair use and illness may have evolved through hospitals using wheelchairs to transport sick people. A person may use a wheelchair for a variety of reasons, none of which may have anything to do with lingering illness.

Myth 2: Wheelchair use is confining; people who use wheelchairs are "wheelchair-bound".

Fact: A wheelchair, like a bicycle or an automobile, is a personal assistive device that enables someone to get around.

Myth 3: People with disabilities are more comfortable with "their own kind".

Fact: In the past, grouping people with disabilities in separate schools and institutions reinforced this misconception. Today, many people with disabilities take advantage of new opportunities to join mainstream society.

Myth 4: Nondisabled people are obligated to "take care of" people with disabilities.

Fact: Anyone may offer assistance, but most people with disabilities prefer to be responsible for themselves.

Myth 5: Curious children should never ask people about their disabilities.

Fact: Many children have a natural, uninhibited curiosity and may ask questions that some adults consider embarrassing. But scolding curious children may make them think having a disability is "wrong" or "bad". Most people with disabilities won't mind answering a child's question.

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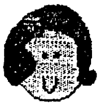

II. Answer Children's Questions

Your Path: Circle of Inclusion Home Page → Circle of Inclusion Guidelines → Facilitating Full Participation → Questions

Young children want to understand what they see and experience and are naturally curious about a classmate who experiences severe disabilities. It is common for children to ask questions about the child and to inquire about his or her disabling conditions. Some common questions are: "Why can't she walk?", "Why can't he talk?", " Is she still a baby because she wears diapers?" These questions should be treated as opportunities for facilitating understanding, positive relationships, and communication. Five important strategies for answering children's questions follow.

- **Answer questions in a straightforward and honest manner**
  When answering children's questions be sure to give them accurate information. Although you do not want to portray the child with a disability as helpless and hopeless, you do not want to give the children false information. For example, a child may ask, "Will Jacob ever learn to walk?" A reply might be, "I don't know for sure. He may not learn to walk in the same way we do, but he is learning to use his wheel chair so he can move around by himself. He really wants to learn how, so let's help him practice every day!"

- **Contribute to children's understanding of disabling conditions and acceptance of a child with a disability**
  By providing information about children's disabilities, preschoolers are better able to develop an understanding of disabling conditions while also developing positive attitudes and beliefs about individuals with disabilities. Withholding information about a child's condition may contribute to confusion and misinformation about disabling conditions. By answering questions and explaining a disability to young children, they can begin to separate the child's individual characteristics from the disability. It is from this understanding that true friendships can develop. For example, you may answer a child's question about why Jacob does not talk by saying, "you're right, he doesn't say 'yes' or 'no' with his words because his muscles don't work like yours do, but Jacob says yes by nodding his head and no by shaking his head no." Or, "Shannon uses a walker right now because her legs aren't strong enough for her to stand and walk by herself."

One child asked if he was still a baby, but another answered, "No, he's not, he's four." The child who said "he's four" went on to say, "I never knew a four year old that had diapers" as if it was still something he had to think out. Then a child may ask, "When is he going to stop wearing diapers?" I try to make it seem that it's more our problem than his problem, because if we had a way to really understand when he wants to go to the bathroom, he could probably tell us. They seem to understand that.

Chris is so smiley and bubbly, at first the children just *wanted to do things for him and several of them commented that he was "just like a baby." I told them that he was not a baby, he was four years old, but he needed to learn to do some things that they could already do because his muscles didn't work like theirs. I asked them how they would feel if someone called them a baby and how they thought Chris felt about it. One day Austin was playing on the floor with Chris between activities. Austin was shaking Chris' foot and knee, and they were both enjoying it. Maralee came over and said, "Stop it, Austin. You know you can't do that. Chris isn't like us." And Austin said, "Yes, he is; he's four years old."*

At first a lot of the discussion about Felix centered on his

- **Answer in a manner a young child can understand**
  Always consider the developmental level of the child in answering a child's question about disabling conditions. Answers which are too long or to complicated can contribute to confusion and misinformation as much as no answer at all! Choose words and concepts the child can relate to and understand. For instance, because preschool children are often in some stage of toilet training or have recently mastered toilet training, they often have questions about preschool age children who still wear diapers. It would be very appropriate to have the child remember back to when they were learning to use the toilet and have them answer some of their own questions. Not being able to tell someone you have to go to the bathroom, not being able to get to the bathroom yourself, not being able to manage your own clothing, and not being able to sit independently on a toilet or potty chair are all reasons that most young children will understand as reasons why a child with disabilities is still wearing diapers.

- **Convey respect for the child**
  Keep in mind that you are speaking on behalf of the child with the disability. The way in which you treat and speak about the child models for the other children how they too should treat and speak about the child. Always remember that the child with the disability is a child first when answering questions or teaching children how to interact with their friend. He or she should be portrayed as an individual with abilities and unique interests which should be represented along with information about his or her disabling conditions. If a question is asked in the presence of the child, do not speak about the child as though he or she was not present.

very small feet. One day we all took our shoes off and compared feet. The discussion ran something like, "You have bigger feet," "You have smaller feet," "Your feet are all different sized, but you're all about the same age." We went on to compare heights, hair color, and other differences between the children that everyone has. It was as if the children were trying to figure out how all these things fit together with everyone being different and yet everyone being the same in lots of ways.

Thompson, B., Wickham, D., Wegner, J., Ault, M. M., Shanks, P., & Reinertson, B. *The process of communication: Facilitating interactions with young children with severe disabilities in mainstream early childhood education programs.* (1993). Lawrence, KS: Learner Managed Designs.

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Answering Children's Questions

Children ask many questions regarding their environment and the people and things in it. Questions about disability will be no exception. Basic rules for answering questions related to disability and the equipment and devices used by people with disabilities are really the same as for answering all children's questions:

- Answer as honestly as you can. If you don not know the answer, perhaps you, together with the child, can look for the answer in an appropriate book or resource.
- Keep it simple. Do not burden young children with lengthy, complicated information when a clear statement will do.
- Use accurate terminology, even if the words seem long and unfamiliar, eg. Disability and accessibility. Children love learning new and "fancy" words and it is important that a child begin to use the correct words.
- Be sensitive to what the child is "really' asking. Sometimes children want information, but sometimes they want to know, "What does this mean for me?"
- Be nonjudgmental in your approach.

As with sex and race, disability bias in language is also pervasive. It is necessary to choose words carefully and to listen to words children use as clues to their attitudes.

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Tips for Answering Children's Questions About Disabilities

Your Path: Circle of Inclusion Home Page → Circle of Inclusion Guidelines → Facilitating Full Participation → Answering Children's Questions

Tips for Answering Children's Questions About Disabilities

- Your attitude may be what the children will imitate. Convey an open and positive attitude when you answer questions about disabilities.
- Answer what the children ask, but be brief.
- Listen for the feelings behind a child's question and talk about them. Let a child know it is okay to express fears or any other feeling.
- Use simple words and examples the child can understand.
- Look for opportunities to show how children with and without disabilities are different and how they are the same.
- Do not criticize the child's comments or questions.
- Give the child your undivided attention and notice his or her response to your answer. Listen to see if there are follow-up questions.
- Whenever appropriate, encourage other children to ask their questions directly to the child with disabilities.

Ways to Help a Child Answer Questions From Others

There are specific steps care providers can take to provide support and skills to children who have disabilities who are answering questions of others:

- Talk with the family to find out how they have explained the disability to the child and others.

- Find out what the child wants to tell others.

- Help children find the words they are most comfortable using and offer opportunities to practice privately what they will say to others.

- Teach children that they have the right to choose to answer, to say they don't want to answer, or to say they would rather the person ask the teacher or the family.

- Let children know that you are available to help them if they are feeling sad, angry, or just tired of answering questions.

Wesley, P. (1992). *Mainstreaming young children: A training series for child care providers.* Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina.

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What To Say

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Children May Say...	Caregivers' Response	Keep in Mind(Adaptations)
Why does he go with that lady? Why is that lady here?	Explain: He is learning to talk (walk, draw) better. He's working on his walking (talking, etc.).	If someone from the child's early intervention team comes to work with the child, it's a good idea to have them do so in the room during a routinely scheduled activity. This way other children can see what happens when "that lady comes." Greet (along with the children) the visitor when he/she arrives. The guest will not be such a mystery. If the child is receiving early intervention services that must be provided outside the room, ask the visiting therapist, educator, etc., beforehand if the child with a disability can choose a friend to go with him.

Children May Say...	Caregivers' Response	Keep in Mind(Adaptations)
How come she doesn't say anything when I talk to her?	Encourage the child to try again. "Susan, do you want to play with me?" If Susan smiles, indicate to the child that that means yes. Explain that Susan doesn't talk with words but that she talks with her eyes or her smile.	Teach children to get eye contact before they speak to each other. If the child with a disability does not talk, share the signs that the child with a disability uses to say "yes" or "no."

Children May Say...	Caregivers' Response	Keep in Mind(Adaptations)
He's messy when he eats.	Explain that the child has a difficult time eating, but he's trying very hard to do the best he can.	Be as matter of fact as possible. Try to pair the child who made the comment with the messy eater during an activity in which the messy eater does well.

Children	Caregivers' Response	Keep in Mind(Adaptations)

May Say...		
He talks funny.	Respond with a reflective listening statement, e.g., "You're having trouble understanding him?" Model to the child what you do when you can't understand him, e.g., "You want the truck?" Tell the child, "Say it again."	It is important to teach children how to respond. Modeling appropriate responses will teach children how to respond to each other. Teach children to get eye contact before they speak to each other. If the child with a disability does not talk, share the signs that the child with a disability uses to say "yes" or "no."

Children May Say...	**Caregivers' Response**	**Keep in Mind(Adaptations)**
She's too slow; does she have to go with us?	A matter-of-fact response will answer the child's question, followed by an explanation of "some of us move fast, some of us move slowly."	When going on walks or field trips, try to pace the activity so the child with a disability can keep up, e.g., riding in a wagon.

Children May Say...	**Caregivers' Response**	**Keep in Mind(Adaptations)**
I don't want him over here; he knocks my blocks over.	Encourage child to talk to the "block destroyer." You may need to model what and how to say it.	Have an adult near areas that the "destroyer" has trouble in. The adult's job is to encourage play and make playing fun. She/he should be sure to catch the child being good. When a child who typically knocks over the blocks is playing nicely, be sure to say so.

Adapted from: Lewis; L. (1989). *We're in this together*. Des Moines, IA: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education.

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Facilitating Communication

Your Path: Circle of Inclusion Home Page → Circle of Inclusion Guidelines → Facilitating Full Participation → Facilitating Communication

Answer Children's Questions

- Answer honestly and straightforwardly
- Contribute to understanding about the child with a disability
- Answer in a manner a young child would understand
- Convey respect for the child with a disability

Add Meaningful Content on Behalf of the Child

- Address ongoing conversation or activity
- Emphasize the similarities among the children
- Relate information as well as experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the child

Teach Children to Interact Directly with Their Classmate with a Disability

- Teach children to recognize and interpert the nonverbal response of their classmate
- Teach children to direct their comments and questions directly to their classmate

Allow Spontaneous Interactions Among the Children to Occur

- Provide assistance without directly participating in the children's interactions
- Step back and fade physically from the children's interactions

Invite and Encourage Participation

- Use warm and accepting manner
- Encourage frequent brief interactions when initially introducing a child
- Invite another child to become involved in an ongoing activity
- Suggest child select new activity to include a child with a disability
- Prompt meaningful participation in a natural manner

Thompson, B., Wickham, D., Wegner, J., Ault, M. M., Shanks, P., & Reinertson, B. *A circle of inclusion: Facilitating the inclusion of young children with severe disabilities in mainstream early childhood education programs.* Manual to the video. (1993). Lawrence, KS: Learner Managed Design.

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Etiquette Tips That Fight Discrimination

Much of the discrimination against the disabled stems from the uncertainty that the non-disabled feel when they first meet someone with a disability. Many organizations, like the National Easter Seal Society, offer brochures with tips on proper etiquette for interacting with people with disabilities.

Language should emphasize the person first, the disability second. For example, rather than refer to someone as an epileptic, say "person with epilepsy" or "John. who has epilepsy...." Avoid language that is negative and inaccurate. For example, people who use wheelchairs are not "bound" or "confined" to their chairs. And, while a person may have spastic muscles, he or she is not spastic.

Preferred language includes the use of:

- "Has" or "with" instead of "crippled with," "suffering from," "afflicted with." For example, say "John has epilepsy" rather than "John is suffering from epilepsy."
- Congenital disability rather than "birth defect."
- Non-disabled rather than "normal," "healthy" or "able-bodied."
- "Condition" rather than "disease" or "defect."
- "Visually impaired" or "hearing impaired" rather than "blind" or "deaf" if a person is not totally impaired.
- "Little person" or "dwarf" rather than "midget." - Other offensive terms and phrases include "victim," "cripple," "crippling," "unfortunate," "dumb," "deaf mute,". "mute," "deformed," "blind as a bat," "invalid," "pitiful," "poor," "deaf and moron" and "feeble-minded."

Stereotypes of individuals with disabilities as "courageous," "brave," "inspiration" or as "sensitive," "bitter" and "full of self-pity" also are offensive. Other etiquette tips that might help interviewers, supervisors or co-workers are:

- Never help a person with a disability until you have asked if he or she needs or wants help and have received an affirmative reply. If the person does want assistance, ask for specific instructions on how you can be most helpful.
- Look directly at any person with a disability when talking to him or her, even if the person has an interpreter present.

- A speech impairment does not indicate that the person also has a hearing Impairment or intellectual limitations. Someone with a speech impairment should be allowed to finish his or her own sentences. But the non-disabled person might consider asking questions in a form that allows for short answers or a nod of the head.
- For extended conversation with someone using a wheelchair, get a chair and sit at eye level with the person.
- Keep hands, cigarettes and food away from your mouth while talking to a person who is lip reading. Use gestures and speak clearly, but don't exaggerate lip movements or shout. An interpreter may be helpful for group meetings, even if the hearing impaired person reads lips.
- Avoid any tendency to shout while speaking to someone who is visually impaired. There is no need to avoid the use of verbs like "see". When walking with a person who is visually impaired, allow that person to set the pace. If the person asks for or accepts your offer of help, don't grab his or her arm. It is easier for him or her to hold onto your arm.

Taken from Business Insurance, July 13, 1992, p. 16, "Etiquette Tips Fight Discrimination", by Sara J Harty.

Distributed by the Center for Human Rights

Direct your questions and comments to: Shirley J. O'Brien, Forbes Building, Room 301, Tucson, AZ 85721. Phone: (520) 621-7145 FAX: (520) 621-1314 E-Mail: sobrien@ag.arizona.edu

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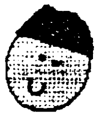

Positive Attitudes

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Strategy	**Sample Activity**
Make sure that architecture, room arrangement, and materials can be used by all children.	Build a sand box up on legs so a child in a wheelchair can use it.
Suggest to children with and without disabilities ways they can interact with and learn from each other.	Help all children to learn sign language and encourage them to use it throughout the day.
Use pictures, books, and dolls to increase knowledge about disabilities.	Make sure books about people with various disabilities are available to the children. Choose books that don't focus solely on the disability, but rather show people with disabilities doing many different things.
Assist children in becoming familiar with equipment and devices used by persons with disabilities.	Include items such as canes, walkers, or eyeglass frames in the Housekeeping or Dress-Up area for children to try out. (It is best to use surplus equipment and devices rather than using a child's personal equipment.)
Provide experiences that enable children to learn about what different degrees of hearing, vision, and mobility are like.	Play a "feelie box" game where children use only their hands to tell what an object is. Encourage a blind child to play, too, and to offer helpful hints about how to identify objects that aren't easily guessed by others.
Correct misconceptions and	Listen for the children's ideas

stereotypes about disabilities.	about what persons with disabilities can and can't do, and find examples to disprove or support their ideas. "We know persons who use wheelchairs can go grocery shopping because . . ."

Wesley, P. (1992). *Mainstreaming young children: A training series for child care providers.* Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina.

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Ohio's Greatest Home Newspaper
The Columbus Dispatch

Vince Pugliese / *For The Dispatch*

Joan and Steve Safran study the film portrayals of people who have disabilities.

Message in the medium

Professors find link between awards, movies that portray disabilities

By Eileen Dempsey
Dispatch Accent Reporter

March 20, 1999

ATHENS, Ohio -- Actors who portray disabled characters have a good shot at winning an Oscar, say two Ohio University professors.

"Hollywood has finally figured out they can make money on disabilities," said Steve Safran, a professor of education. "Many actors see this as their ticket to win awards."

The number of Academy Award-winning films portraying individuals with disabilities has increased dramatically since the Academy Awards were first given in 1928.

Safran and his wife, Joan, also a professor of education at the university, have examined all films that won best picture, best actor or best actress Oscars since the awards ceremony began. Films that had a major character with a disability traditionally served by special education -- emotional, behavioral, psychiatric, sensory, mental or physical -- were identified.

During the first decade of the Academy Award-winning movies only one, or 2.6 percent of the total, portrayed a person with a disability. Frederic March won best actor in the 1931 *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

From 1990 to 1997, 10 films, or 56 percent of the total, featured a disabled person in a major role.

Psychiatric disturbances were the most common disability portrayed in films the Safrans studied, followed by physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, mental retardation and autism.

In the past two years, the best actor Oscar has been awarded for portrayals of psychiatric disabilities: Jack Nicholson in *As Good as It Gets* (1997) and Geoffrey Rush in *Shine* (1996).

The trend could continue Sunday night if Emily Watson wins best actress for her portrayal of celebrated classical cellist Jacqueline du Pre, who dies from multiple sclerosis in *Hilary and Jackie*. Rachel Griffith (Hilary) is nominated for supporting actress.

"The main focus of this movie was not on multiple sclerosis, but on the relationship between the two sisters," Joan Safran said. "The multiple sclerosis is a major subplot, however, because Jackie defined herself by her ability to play music, and when she couldn't play, she felt she had nothing.

Joan Safran saw the movie while attending a conference in Washington. The movie, shown briefly in Columbus, has not yet made it to Athens. That could change, however, if either

Disabilities in films

Academy Award-winning films from the 1980s and '90s in which disabilities were portrayed, include:

ASMP

- **Ordinary People** (1980, PG)
  Best picture
  An adolescent receives psychiatric treatment for depression after hospitalization.

- **Amadeus** (1984, PG)
  Best picture
  Best actor (F. Murray Abraham)
  An obsessed composer with psychiatric problems is jealous of the genius of Mozart.

- **Platoon** (1986, R)
  Best picture
  The film portrays the severe psychological effects of the Vietnam War on a platoon of soldiers.

- **Children of a Lesser God** (1986, R)
  Best actress (Marlee Matlin)
  Romance grows between a special education teacher and a young woman who is deaf.

- **Rain Man** (1988, R)
  Best picture
  Best actor (Dustin Hoffman)
  A young man kidnaps his brother, who is autistic, after learning his father left him with no inheritance.

- **My Left Foot** (1989, R)
  Best actor (Daniel Day-Lewis)
  A man with cerebral palsy becomes a great artist.

- **Scent of a Woman** (1992, R)
  Best actor (Al Pacino)
  A depressed man who is blind takes a trip accompanied by a prep-school student.

- **The Piano** (1993, R)
  Best actress (Holly Hunter)
  A woman who has psychiatric problems is selectively mute. The film details her ordeals/romance to secure her piano's return.

- **Forrest Gump** (1994, PG-13)
  Best picture
  Best actor (Tom Hanks)
  The victories, despite adversity, of a

actress picks up an Oscar.

Academy Award-winning movies generally reach a wider audience, which is why the Safrans limited their study to Oscar winners. For many people with limited exposure to people with disabilities, movies -- regardless of the accuracy of the information -- influence social acceptance and understanding of the conditions.

"Filmmakers are now using disabilities just like anything else, as a prop," said Steve Safran, who teaches a course on portrayal of disabilities in the media. "Like class and race, disabilities have become just another obstacle keeping lovers apart. The disability is something they can overcome and live happily ever after."

man with mental retardation and physical limitations are superimposed on historical events of the 1960s.

- **Shine** (1996, PG-13)
Best actor (Geoffrey Rush)
A man with a history of severe emotional difficulties becomes a great musician.

- **As Good as It Gets** (1997, PG-13)
Best actor (Jack Nicholson)
Best actress (Helen Hunt)
A man with an obsessive-compulsive disorder falls in love with a single mom.

Source: Steve Safran, professor of education at Ohio University in Athens *Dispatch graphic*

But often the images on the silver screen distort the real lives of people with physical impairments or mental illness.

"Academy Award-winning films reflect the trend that people with disabilities are becoming more visible members of our schools and society," he said. "Unfortunately, the high frequency of psychiatric disabilities, the rare appearance of children and youth, and the misportrayal of disabilities often gives viewers a skewed perception that may have little to do with reality."

The Safrans have identified several negative stereotypes perpetuated in movies, including:

- A person with a disability as sinister, evil or criminal, such as Kathy Bates' character in *Misery* or Anthony Hopkins' character in *Silence of the Lambs.* In both movies, psychological disorders lead to irrational, violent actions.

- A person with a disability as a "supercrip" or overachiever, such as Tom Hanks' character in *Forrest Gump.*

- A person with a disability as dependent, unable to participate in daily life, such as Al Pacino's character of the blind, suicidal man in *Scent of a Woman.*

Such stereotypes can create a fear of people with physical differences, Steve Safran said.

Despite the recent popularity of movies portraying disabilities, he said viewers should be careful not to equate the depictions to reality.

In *Rain Man* (1988), Dustin Hoffman won best actor for playing an autistic idiot savant capable of doing intricate mathematical problems quickly in his head. But few autistic people are savants.

Although their study includes only Academy Award winners, the Safrans have watched hundreds of other movies depicting disabilities, including the recently released *The Other Sister.*

They disliked this movie's unrealistic portrayal of problems facing two mentally retarded people who fall in love and get married and expect to live happily ever after without any trouble.

"But if people never thought that people with mental retardation could fall in love and get married, at least this movie may get them thinking about these issues," Joan Safran said. "So even this movie may have some positive messages."

Even though films portraying people with disabilities often stray from reality, Safran still used them in his classes as a tool for examining real issues facing people with impairments in society.

"The portrayals of individuals with disabilities are more accurate, but the situations are more absurd," Joan Safran said. "They're either dangerous serial killers or they're saved by love."

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S.1

2/24/2000

Summary of Evaluations of Field Test Sessions

10 evaluations were received in total. (evaluations from teachers and one from the co-chair of a parent council who observed.)

Presentations by grade:
Grade 3 – 4
Grade 3/4 – 1
Grade 4 – 2
Grade 4/5 – 1
Communications Class – 1

Summary of comments by question:

1. 10 of 10 evaluations stated the session was worthwhile

   - minimum of preparation appreciated
   - children need exposure to understand
   - even though we have many disabilities in our school and classroom the children still need help and education in order to be empathetic to all others
   - students were given a very thorough experience – good hands on experiences
   - reminds students to be aware of others in a respectful way
   - activities and discussion drew them in to the realities of having a disability that hampers your interaction with others and your environment in some way
   - more children with a variety of disabilities and diversities are now integrated within the regular classroom settings. Awareness, education and acceptance should become part of the regular curriculum.

2. Did the students benefit from the session. Please comment.
   10 of 10 evaluations said yes.

   - Preparation and input is essential otherwise students will misunderstand term/conditions/vocabulary
   - Students feedback was very positive. Students seem to be more aware of various forms of disability
   - Students were able to ask their questions and had an opportunity to experience a temporary disability
   - Children need exposure to gain understanding
   - They experienced for a few minutes how a disable person feels much of the time
   - A good hands on experience

- They thought about living with a disability
- Yes especially since they themselves have felt centered out or at a disadvantage in some way
- They enjoyed learning about disabilities (both visible and not) and how we treat every-one with respect and understanding
- Students were eager to participate
- Many were able to relate personal experiences to session. Putting students in role of disabled person sparked much thought

3. Please provide any suggestions for improvement of this presentation.

- Good info about similarities/differences
  - ✓ Have incorporated into presentation
- During activity a lot going on at once
  - ✓ Within the limitations of classroom set ups we have tried to create more space and have clear transition points in the presentation
- Keep reinforcing points
  - ✓ Questions have been structured for a more developmental flow within the presentation
- Perhaps vocabulary visible on cards
  - ✓ We will have vocabulary cards and pictures of well-known personalities available for use. We will use them depending on the responses of the children
- If possible involve more than 6 students in active part of presentation
  - ✓ Have incorporated a total of nine students – this is the limit for the type and length of presentation
- Hold session in gym so all students can participate in experiencing a disability
  - ✓ The activity while a integral part of the presentation is a starting point. We are offering an opportunity for discussion and questions to deepen the understanding of children. We feel this is best done is a familiar and structured setting.
- Hard for kids to sit for an hour even though they are interested
  - ✓ Transitions within the presentation allow for small breaks, where the situation is warranted a stretch break can be incorporated
- Perhaps provide pictures or more discussion about different disabilities. I'm not sure my students understood what the term physical disability meant.
  - ✓ We will have vocabulary cards and pictures of well-known personalities available for use. We will use them depending on the responses of the children
- A sharing session about disabilities in their own (student) families and how the kids feel when people stare, laugh etc. at a member of their family ~~an awful lot of talking~~ -
  - ✓ We have incorporated this question into the presentation

N.B. ✓ = indicates modifications we have already incorp. into the new model

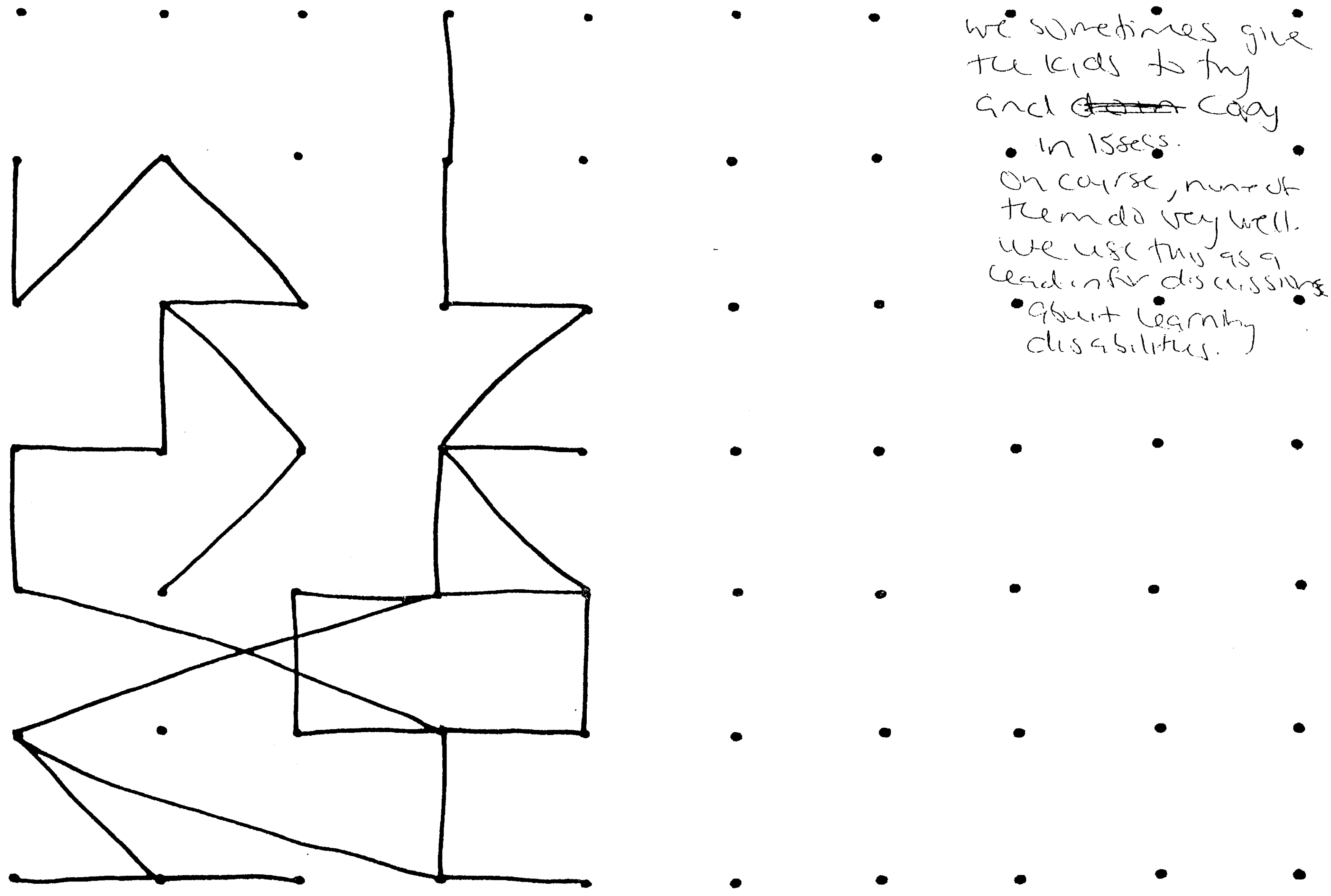
- Some students who are kind hearted and wish to help others sometimes hesitate because their own self-esteem is weak and they feel guilt by association. I appreciated having this discussion and suggestions for how to proactively deal with this and would like to see this become part of the permanent package.
  - ✓ We have incorporated this into the presentation and it has provoked thoughtful responses from the children
- Some students had difficulty naming emotions – perhaps providing a list of emotions to choose from or to include a discussion on emotions in the teacher's prep would facilitate this.
  - ✓ This has been incorporated into the presentation for the past 5 presentations and is an effective strategy to increase overall participation of students in our discussions
- When one of the facilitators has an invisible disability perhaps the students could try to guess what her disability is.
  - ✓ Not sure this suggestion would deepen understanding

5.1

Summary of Changes to the presentation

1. Introduction – we are not parents
2. Emotions brainstorm
3. Simplified the instruction activity card
4. Added an activity – one child puts on a shirt with mittens and tries to do it up.
5. Structured the questions to a more developmental format. One concept which leads to another. We have simplified the friendship question and added a question - if you are nervous about approaching a child for fear of being teased what strategies could you use?
6. Have some picture and vocabulary resources, which can be used if needed.

COPY FORMS IN 15 SECONDS



This is a form
we sometimes give
the kids to try
and ~~[illegible]~~ copy
in 15 secs.
Of course, none of
them do very well.
We use this as a
lead in for discussions
about learning
disabilities.)

Balancing what both kids need - is it really that different?

Introspective continued

messages written, coats, shoes, back packs gathered. Then the next stage of transition - "Are you ready yet?," I call calmly upstairs. I hold my breath, waiting to see what the response will be - calm or chaos. And then it's time to wake Robbie.

Breakfast. The best meal of the day. Reminders about more transitions, to eat, take meds, wash up, brush teeth, brush *all* teeth, straighten clothes, check the clock, watch for the bus. With a flourish, the jacket is zipped and she's off to school. Now I can attend to Robbie.

During the few minutes that are left before Robbie's bus arrives, I try to touch base to see how he is doing. I try to be in the moment with him so he doesn't feel completely ignored. So much of every morning is focussed on Laura. Within ten minutes, his bus has arrived and he flies out the door. Now I can tidy the house, get cleaned up, make any calls that need to be made (to prepare for school meetings, team meetings, plan for upcoming changes), work on completing applications (for summer camp; the annual Special Services at Home application), check my day book to make sure I haven't missed anything, and get ready for a day at work.

The phone rings. Just a reminder that Robbie has an appointment for a Hep B shot. Right. I need to remember that Robbie needs my attention too. I note the appointment time on the family calendar and sit for a moment to contemplate, as I often do, about the imbalance of attention paid to Laura and Robbie. How do I, I ask myself, balance the time I spend with Laura and on her behalf with the time I spend with Robbie. At what point, I ask again, will I be able to dedicate the time needed to appropriately attend to Robbie's needs. When will I come to terms with the fact that Robbie, too, needs my undivided attention. When will I truly accept the fact that Robbie has special needs too. When will I become the advocate for Robbie that I am for Laura. When will I realize that he too, being "identified", needs my involvement in his education. He needs my help in coming to terms with his "giftedness." I can't expect him to do it on his own.

When will I realize that he too, being "identified", needs my involvement in his education. He needs my help in coming to terms with his "giftedness."

Who could have known that two people as different as Robbie and Laura could have so much in common. And yet, their needs are so diverse. How can I possibly find the energy to balance my time spent advocating for an appropriately challenging and modified program for Laura with advocating for ..... wait! ..... an *appropriately challenging and modified program* for Robbie!!

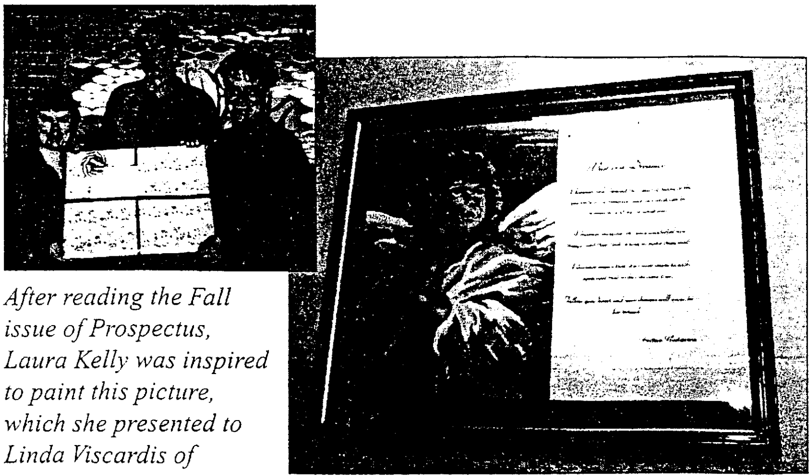
I suddenly realize that Robbie and Laura are more alike than I know! They *both* are very unique individuals with very unique strengths, abilities and needs! They *both* need to be *seen* as unique and *treated* as unique. Once again my children have taught me a lesson. I must find a way to observe both their uniqueness and their similarities while advocating for education that meets their individual needs. That shouldn't be so hard. Now all I have to do is find the time and the energy.

Listening and good communication develops a trusting relationship

Continued from page 9

individual to seek professional intervention. If you feel this is necessary, reassure them that there is help available, and gently encourage them to take this option.

If you have built up their trust in the initial listening and communication stages, they will probably follow your advice in taking this difficult, and perhaps traumatic, option.



After reading the Fall issue of Prospectus, Laura Kelly was inspired to paint this picture, which she presented to Linda Viscardis of PROSPECTS, and Phil Ogden of Five Counties Children's Centre.

Parent to Parent Support: A Guideline

By Alan Dawson

Most counselling is really self-counselling. The listener, "counsellor" merely feeding back to the individual exactly what they have heard them say, and respecting their right to say exactly how they are feeling.

This takes a lot of practice as the natural inclination most of us have is to show our own feelings about the statements we hear, and to try and interject with our own views. Questioning people or telling them they should do something takes away all endorsement of the person's right to their own feelings and solutions to their problem. Remember, it is their problem, and there is nothing you can ever do about any situation or issue, although you can empathize with them and perhaps understand that they have a problem. But you can never know exactly how they feel.

People need to have their feelings and emotions validated

The greatest service you can provide to them to achieve this is to listen. True listening involves giving them your full attention. Eye contact and body language play key parts in listening. It is easy to tell if someone is truly listening or not, and if the individual perceives that the listener is not truly listening, then the communication will quickly begin to break down. Never be judgmental, no matter how shocking or irrational the information you are being given may be.

Dealing with someone at the feeling level is very difficult for most of us, and without practice, can create some discomfort on our part. This is quite normal as most of us have been conditioned to bypass feelings and act on logic and our perception of reality. Feelings are often looked upon with disdain by society as a sign of weakness. However, our feelings play a major role in governing our actions and in determining who we are. Nevertheless, we are generally afraid to admit to our feelings or to get too close to them.

We often hide our true feelings because we are convinced that if people really knew how we felt about a variety of matters, they would be totally shocked. That is why it is so helpful to support an individual who is reaching down deeply into their feelings, and to encourage them to do so. By going so deep, the person can often find their own solution to their problem. That is why talking is such a powerful tool in resolving problems. However no amount of talking will help without a good listener at the other side.

Never interrupt or question. Never be afraid of silence

This silence often happens in a situation where a person is really hurting, perhaps by going through grief, as the result of major loss. It is quite common when listening to someone on the telephone for instance. Always allow the person the space they need and the time they need to cry. Always let them know that you are still there by periodically letting them know you are with them. Simple expressions such as "I am still here", "it's okay", are fine at these moments. If you are in the same room, simply handing the person a tissue will give them the same message. Never try to end their silence or their tears prematurely. Never tell them to "pull themselves together" or ask them "why they are crying?" Never try to crowd them physically. They will let you know if they need a hug or some other physical comforting. They will let you know when they are ready to continue or even if they want to continue. If they choose to end the conversation, let them know that you are ready to listen to them again anytime they feel they would like to.

If it is a problem that will take some time to resolve, never be afraid to set parameters as to the times that may not be good for you due to your own personal life and family demands. As much as you would like to help, do not encourage dependency on you. It is essential that people are encouraged to resolve their own problems as far as they are emotionally able to do so.

Provide support but do not offer solutions

They will in all probability be your solutions, not theirs. It is essential that you do not lead them in arriving at their solution and that you do not problem solve for them.

This is not to say that you cannot discuss possible solutions with them, and offer road maps, but they have to initiate the journey. From your listening you can help them to identify the real problem. Sometimes the real problem is hidden by a number of small, often unrelated problems. Often the individual does not want the real problem to surface. Encourage them to allow this to happen, and then explore options with them. Help them to identify the most feasible options and explore strategies with them to implement these options.

These are just general guidelines. You may need to customize your approach depending on the individual. It is important to assess their strengths and abilities, as well as their limitations. It is necessary to assess their priorities and their perspective of the urgency of the matter. This will help you to assess their ability to take action themselves, and how far you need to go with them. Sometimes the only solution is to encourage the

See Listening, *page 10*

Communication plan for each exceptional student being considered

On April 19, PROSPECTS members Karen Galloro and Linda Viscardis made a presentation to the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) on behalf of the PROSPECTS membership. This presentation came about as a result of Shannon Murney's (she's the PROSPECTS Catholic Board SEAC representative) discussion at SEAC about communication among educators and parents. This discussion followed the October 1999 PROSPECTS Sharing Gathering whose topic was "Communication Strategies Help to Improve Relationships within the Educational Team."

The presentation made to SEAC, entitled "Communication Strategy for the Education Environment: A Parent Perspective," included discussions on the following: What is a Communication Strategy, Why Develop a Communication Strategy, When to Develop a Communication Strategy, What Might be Included in a Communication Strategy, Steps to Take to Develop a Communication Strategy, Implementing and Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Communication Strategy. Karen shared her experience with having had a successful communication plan put in place, and Linda closed the presentation with the following excerpt from the document that was distributed to all SEAC committee members:

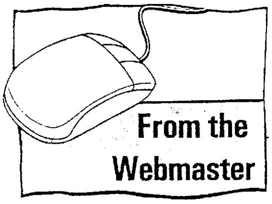
"PROSPECTS believes that all children with special needs will benefit from having a communication strategy in place. Parents do not necessarily know that the absence of a communication strategy may be contributing to their high level of anxiety and frustration. PROSPECTS hopes that education administrators see the value of principals taking the lead in establishing communication strategies with all parents whose children have special needs before communication becomes an issue or a crisis arises."

After a good discussion by all committee members about the presentation, the following recommended action was approved:

"SEAC recommends to the board of trustees their consideration of a comprehensive communication plan for each exceptional student for implementation in all schools within the PVNC board such as this Communication Strategy for the Education Environment: A Parent Perspective."

We have high hopes that our elected trustees will see the value in such a plan and that, before long, communication plans will be put in place that meet the needs of all PVNC parents, children, educators and other team members.

For more information about this presentation, please call Linda Viscardis at her home office at 705-768-1684.



Down syndrome website is a "must visit"

The website listed below, DownsNet, is absolutely packed with information for parents as well as professionals. I have not found a website more enlightening with respect to people with Down syndrome and their individual characteristics, learning styles and unlimited potential capabilities. Written in a language the layman can understand, it should bring hope to individual parents, family members and caretakers of people with DS. A MUST visit for ALL! [Find Lou Brown's article, it is so on target, or read though the six chapters of "Meeting the Educational Needs of Children with Down syndrome,"...] I know I will return often to this site, and am printing several segments to share with others. *Joyce*

Adrian's Closet: We Meet the Challenge

We'd like to introduce you to Adrian's Closet, a mail order firm whose goal is to boost the self esteem of differently-abled people by providing quick and fun-to-wear, moderately-priced clothes.

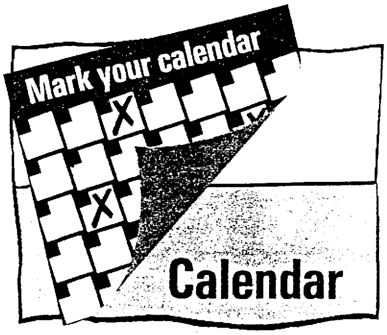
We make outerwear and loungewear for those without an agile upper and/or lower body. We do this with back openings, longer zippers, shoulder snaps, raglan sleeves, and soft, stretchy fabrics.

We don't assume that "disability" means loss of walking capability, with a perfectly functioning upper body. Instead of ignoring a disproportionate body part, we adapt to it. For instance, our pants are custom, because we hem them to the customer's inseam, whether both legs match, or the length is 18" or 35". We are the only "no charge" provider of this service.

Features that make our clothes easier to don are: Velcro front opening to the crotch seam, lower leg zippers, snap inseam where requested, or side seam zippers. We are growing because we are an avocation, begun for Adrian, aiming to be part of others' self-realization: it's contagious!

Call for a brochure! 800-831-2577 Fax: 949-364-4380 www.adrianscloset.com.

Calendar



PROSPECTS Sharing Gatherings

All gatherings, facilitated for and by parents, take place at Five Counties Children's Centre from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Gatherings are closed to family members only in order to encourage a safe and confidential environment where people can feel understood and supported. Anyone who has transportation or child care issues, who wishes to be accompanied to meetings, or wishes to receive pre-gathering reminder phone calls is invited to call the office to make arrangements (705) 876-0339.

Workshops

Topic: Special Services at Home Workshop

13-May-00
Saturday, 9:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m.

Topic: "The Effects of Yeast: How Yeast Can Affect Your Child's Mind and Body"

15-May-00
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Annual General Meeting

5-June-00
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Annual General Meeting - Open to the Public
Theme: Showing our Appreciation to our Community, plus a panel of members will share their experiences and thoughts on the topic of transitions.

Sharing Gatherings

29-May-00
7:00 p.m.

Transition from Pre-School into the School System: Surviving the Trauma

This gathering will be of interest to any parents whose children with special needs will soon be attending school. Transition times are often challenging. It can be especially interesting when a parent is leaving one environment, such as a day care situation, and entering another, such as the more institutionalized school setting. Plan to come and share your experiences if you have "survived" this transition, or share your concerns and ask questions so you are better prepared for the upcoming transition.

Starting in September, we intend to change the format of our gatherings a wee bit. We are changing to better meet the needs of our membership. Fall gatherings will have no formal pre-determined topic. Instead, we would like to invite our members to come out to simply share their experiences, issues and concerns on any topic. Of course, if a burning issue comes up, we will let our membership know ahead of time of the upcoming gathering's topic.

NO GATHERINGS IN JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST! HAVE A GREAT SUMMER! SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER.

Fall Gathering Dates

25-September-00
30-October-00
27-November-00
No December Gathering (Happy Holidays!)

Winter Gathering Dates

29-January-01
26-February-01

PROSPECTUS needs your financial support

People who currently receive the *Prospectus* will shortly receive an invitation to financially support the publication.

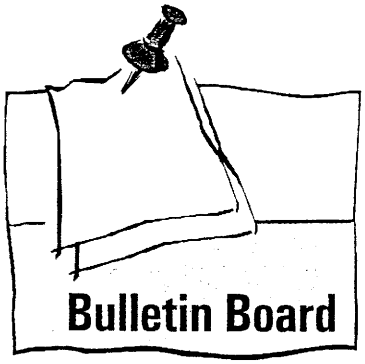
PROSPECTS continues to receive excellent feedback about the value of the *Prospectus*. Ideally, we would like to continue to increase the readership, getting information out to people who might not otherwise feel connected to a support system.

Currently, we depend on membership and subscription fees as well as donations to cover the costs of printing the *Prospectus*. However, we do not receive enough support from our readership to cover the costs. Please consider helping in whatever way you can so that we can continue to widely distribute our newsletter. Thank you for your anticipated support!

Acknowledgement of Donors

PROSPECTS would like to acknowledge **Laurie** and **Ed McAnany** who made a most generous donation in honour of "the hard work/services provided by the PROSPECTS organization." Thank you, Laurie and Ed! Your donation will help to ensure that our publications continue to get to our membership.

We would like to ackowledge **St. John's School**, Peterborough, for their donation following the presentation of our disability awareness session.



Special Roomate Wanted

Looking for a special person to share an apartment. Female and non-smoker please. I love cats, music and word games. I am very neat and tidy and would like to have an apartment downtown Peterborough. I would like to share the responsibilities with someone and have fun too!
Please call Karen @ 742-0806.

Collecting all Library Resources

As you know, PROSPECTS does not have a formal system for borrowing the organization's library resources. We mainly rely on members using the honour system. Recently, after receiving several requests to borrow, we took a look at the library shelves and noticed that there are many resources missing. We would like to ask anyone who has borrowed from our library to please make a point of returning what you borrowed as soon as it is convenient for you. If you intend to keep it a while longer, please call the office (876-0339) and let us know who you are and what you have borrowed. This way, we'll at least know where to go to get it back should someone else be looking for it. With your help, we can continue to use the honour system. Thanks.

Still Looking for *Prospectus* Feedback

In the last issue of *Prospectus*, we asked our readership to give us some feedback about our activities and our newsletter. The response was not what we had hoped - we got only two surveys back. However, we also know that, for the most part, no news is good news. We would, however, like to let you know about some changes we are making and invite you to comment by calling our office and leaving a message (876-0339 or 748-2337 ext. 391). We have made some subtle changes to this issue of *Prospectus* in an effort to improve the publication's readability. We'd like to know if you find it easier to read. We'd also like to know what you would like to see included in our newsletter, and how often you'd like to see it published (currently we publish four issues per year). Please help us to provide a resource that best meets our readership's needs by calling us (705-876-0339) or sending us an email message (prospects@sympatico.ca).

Wanted:

Volunteers for two PROSPECTS positions

In addition to the volunteers needed for the two positions (Volunteer Clerical Assistant and Volunteer Co-ordinator of Community Recognition) advertised in the Winter 99/00 issue of ***Prospectus*, we are looking for people to help with the following:**

1. Telephone Contacts

These candidates will be part of a strong network of parents who are available to make telephone calls from home for approximately two hours per week. Responsible for making telephone calls to PROSPECTS members. (We need many volunteers to help with connecting with other parents who have children with special needs.)

Duties include:

- making follow-up calls to new parents, parents who have just recently contacted PROSPECTS for the first time
- making calls to members to remind them of upcoming Sharing Gatherings and other events
- making calls to members who are experiencing unusual stresses, for example their child is going into hospital
- making calls to members to determine current concerns and issues which will help us in making decisions
- making calls to ask for assistance with PROSPECTS activities

2. Co-ordinator of Media Announcements

This candidate will be available to work from home for approximately two hours per month.

Duties include:

- developing and sending monthly announcements regarding upcoming gatherings and events to the local papers
- developing and sending media releases regarding PROSPECTS activities and achievements

For information about these volunteer positions, please call Linda at her home office at (705) 768-1684.

Features

Stage two will be implemented soon and a cirriculum package will be created

Continued from front

Access Centre, Four Counties Brain Injury Association, Peterborough and District Association for Community Living and PROSPECTS all attended. Over a two-year period, the group established a two-pronged approach to address the issues of negative stereotypes, prejudice and lack of knowledge concerning people with disabilities and implement a disability awareness project with the goal of integrating the information and resource development into the Ontario Schools curriculum.

To move this project from an idea to action PROSPECTS provided a disability awareness module, the School Board made a commitment as part of their equity and diversity strategy and the community organizations committed as part of their public education and outreach initiatives to implement a project. Funding has been provided by the Trillium Foundation, the City of Peterborough and Kawartha Participation Projects.

A project facilitator – Mary-Ann Meagher was hired this past November and is being assisted by Rebekah Kiraly a student in the Trent University Community Based Education Program.

Mary-Ann and Rebekah have given presentations in 12 grade 3 and 4 classes to date. The children and teachers involved have provided feedback and their suggestions have been incorporated. Stage two of the project will begin soon with the implementation of a team of teachers and resource people who will create a curriculum package that will be available to teachers for use in the classroom. In addition partner agencies are available for follow up sessions about specific disabilities.

If you are interested in having a presentation in you classroom/school or would like more information, please contact Mary-Ann Meagher at 295-4200 (home office), KPP 745-4122 to leave a message or email maryann@nexicom.net.

"Come on, Sarah. I'll read you a story. Once upon a time, long, long ago...."

Sarah came into our lives over twelve years ago, and Laura just loves her. Sarah has always been there for Laura. In her quiet way, Sarah has always unconditionally supported Laura. During some of Laura's most difficult times, she was comforted by the mere presence of Sarah.

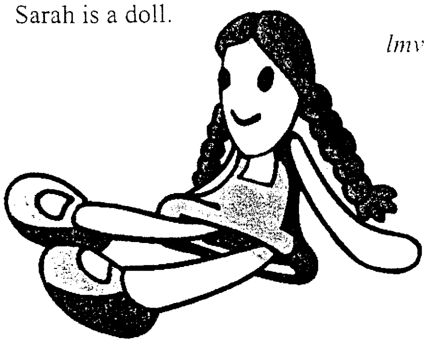
As the years passed, Sarah, staid and true, listened to Laura's secrets and never once jeopardized that trust. Laura repaid that trust by sharing her innermost feelings, never expecting anything in return. Sarah, never having spoken a single word, provided the support Laura needed to take on new challenges. Sarah accompanied Laura to new places, and, when she couldn't go along, was there waiting for Laura when she returned.

As time went on, we began to notice a change in Sarah. Her face began to change, taking on large, crimson coloured blotches that were impossible to ignore. Being non-verbal, Sarah could not tell us what was going on, and when questioned, Laura seemed indifferent. It really did not matter to her that Sarah was now disfigured. She was a true friend and that was all that mattered. "Come on, Sarah. Let's listen to some music."

Imagine our horror when recently we discovered that Sarah had lost a limb! We'd had years to get used to the crimson patches on her face, and now, whether due to our acceptance or Laura's example, we didn't even notice Sarah's disfigurement. But this! We had not been prepared! Without warning, we discovered that Sarah's leg had been removed! Again, when questioned, Laura seemed indifferent. It simply did not matter to her that there was less of Sarah now than there had been before. "Come on, Sarah. I'll read you a story." And off they went, best of buddies.

It occurred to me recently that there is a lesson for us in the unconditional acceptance that Laura has shown for Sarah. It has never occurred to Laura that Sarah should be seen as any less because of her inability to talk or walk. The blemishes on Sarah's face are just part of Sarah. And losing a leg did not change who Sarah is. Once again, I have learned a lesson from my daughter, the teacher. It does not matter that Sarah is a doll.

lmv



From the President's Couch

Please keep up your hard work and dedication - You do make the difference

By Lynn Zeppieri

As we move forward into our fourth and final year of our Trillium-funded project, it is difficult to believe how the time has just flown by. This past year has seen us becoming more focussed to enable us to better provide supports and resources. As parents, of course, our first priority is our own children. Given the complexities of dynamics within our families, we need to acknowledge that our volunteer members can get called away and sidetracked by their own personal situations.

Trying to co-ordinate and keep PROSPECTS on track can be, and probably should be, a full time position. The reality is, we are volunteer parents sharing our knowledge and resources with each other and the community. We cannot be there at all times, but we do try our best to accommodate as much as we can. We are thrilled that we continue to be invited to participate in many and varied activities in our community and beyond.

Highlights of last year include our involvement in the following: Disability awareness sessions have been delivered to public schools and some Catholic school classrooms. Some of these sessions have been presented by our own volunteers and some by Mary-Ann Meagher and her volunteer with Kawartha Participation Projects. The Four-county Respite Initiative of the Ministry of Community and Social Services has seen PROSPECTS as part of the working committee to establish wide open county access to all respite beds/spaces available. Making Services Work for People - Service Delivery Model Task Force has been looking at access to developmental services for persons with developmental disabilities within the counties of Peterborough, Northumberland, Victoria and Haliburton. The Stripe Project, a television series whose purpose is to let people know about community resources for children and families and how to access them, saw our own Rosemary Smith in her acting debut. The development of an expanded and improved Information Exchange website now encompassing six counties and all resources available for special needs has been an exciting initiative.

The upcoming year promises to be a full year as well, with focus being placed on recruitment of more volunteers, completion of our volunteer manual, opportunities for public awareness and also a few fundraising events. The growth of PROSPECTS over the past few years has been remarkable. Our strength comes from our dedicated and committed parents who share in the belief that we can make a difference in our own lives as well as in the community. Our positive and pro-active influence can support changes in the delivery of services to better support all families.

We would like to take this opportunity to say Thank You. Thank You to all our parents. Thank You to all the community agencies and organizations who also support us and request that we be at the table for discussion. Thank You to both school boards for their continued support and open door policy. With all of us working together we can make a huge difference in the lives of our children and our families. The impact is like the pebble dropped in the pond, and the outward ripple effect keeps on going, sometimes in areas that we are not even aware of until much later.

Understand the message you are sending

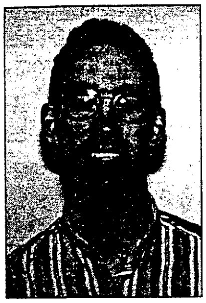
Continued from page 3

while everyone else receives their well-deserved moment in the spotlight, on the stage. What about the little sisters and brothers and cousins who will be there? Is this the first impression of people with disabilities we should be giving them. Or, would it be better to show them that these students have worked as hard, if not harder than their classmates and that they belong among and beside the other successful graduates from Kenner's class of 2000.

Maybe I'm just complaining and taking all of this too seriously. Maybe I'm not able to see the big picture the right way. Perhaps a ramp or a lift is asking too much. Or, maybe I'm thinking that something small can be done to make this world a better place for everyone - with or without a disability. It's something small, granted, but, you know, it would make a very big difference in the lives of the two students who will graduate, along with their family and friends who want to share with them their moment in the spotlight. Let's not forget that it will also benefit other current and future students at Kenner, which is, by the way, the only specially designated wheelchair accessible school in the city of Peterborough. Seems like a no-brainer to me.

[Youth Editor's note: The students in question, with the support of several staff and students at Kenner are approaching the board with the intention of ensuring that they will receive their diplomas on stage at their commencement. If seeing Erin Brokovich taught me anything, it is never to doubt the ability of a determined person to get what they want. I'm confident that, because of two incredible and determined young people, there will be a new ramp or lift at the school in the near future!]

Could you put a price on your child's accomplishments?



By Adam White, Youth Column Editor

One of the interesting contradictions that I have discovered, as I've been moving closer and closer to living in the "adult world" as a person with a disability, is that there is a fine line between advocating and complaining. I've been told before that "us guys" (people with disabilities) take comments made by others, or actions that affect us too seriously... too much to heart. This came from someone very close to me, someone whose opinions mean very much to me, so I feel that I shouldn't ignore the possibility that I might indeed take things too seriously.

The second last thing I want to become is a whiney, complaining, irritating person. Worse than that, though, would be to become passive and just accept the world as it is. If I have the ability to make a positive difference in the world, it is, I think, my responsibility to make that difference - is it not true for all of us? As young children, we are all taught the difference between what is right and what is wrong. Sometimes it is very difficult to stand up and do the right thing and correct a situation if someone does something wrong, no matter who you are. In this issue's column, I'm going to try and do my part to help right a wrong, while at the same time offering some insight to you from the perspective of a person who has a disability. It is, after all, my responsibility.

You will never hear me say that I think people with disabilities are, on the whole, poorly treated or generally discriminated against, that's just not true. In my experience, I've found that most are good people, willing to help if need be. People usually want to treat us equally (though, they don't always know how to do it). At the same time though, I would be lying if I said that there aren't times when we face open discrimination or are treated as "lower class" folk.

I've got a story to share with you which is, unfortunately, all too true. It illustrates some of the garbage that can become so very frustrating.

Recently, the public school board in Peterborough turned down a request to install a wheelchair ramp at Kenner Collegiate & Vocational Institute in their "pod", the auditorium where assemblies are held. The result of this is that at the 2000 commencement, two students, both of whom use wheelchairs, will not be able to receive their diplomas on stage as their fellow graduates will. They were told instead that their diplomas will be handed down to them from the stage.

The installation of the ramp would not be logical, as it would have to be too long to get an adequate steepness and it would cost too much money. (It's "funny" how economics play such a big role in all types of segregation and discrimination - but that's another topic for another newsletter.)

The big picture

The big picture is that the school board doesn't feel the measurements are right and they only have a certain amount of money to spend so they're choosing not to spend it on the ramp. To them, that's likely the end of the message - I'm sure that they don't even realize that they hurt feelings by making their decision, otherwise the ramp would be a no-brainer. The message goes much deeper than just a matter of feet, inches and dollar signs for us though.

Firstly, it is frustrating to know that the school board thinks it can put a price on the celebration of an outstanding accomplishment that a student and indeed their whole family, have worked toward for 14 years. You know those credit card commercials that say "some things are priceless"? They're right. Most of the people at the school board must be parents.

I would challenge them to put a price on their children's accomplishments - then again, they must not realize that the parents of the two students who won't be able to go on stage likely won't be able to see their children get their diplomas. This irks me a little.

Secondly, as was pointed out to me by one of the students about whom I'm writing, having a ramp is certainly much less of an inconvenience to the other students than having stairs is to them. In fact, my understanding is that the females who will be walking on stage with high heels would likely prefer a ramp as opposed to stairs. If a ramp absolutely will not fit into the "pod", than an electric lift at the front of the stage most certainly would. Lest anyone think that the cost of this would be too high, please refer back to my first point.

Thirdly, those at the school board are, quite unintentionally I'm sure, working to perpetuate age-old ideas of segregation. Don't get me wrong, I really don't think that any of them have anything against people with disabilities. I also don't think that they realize that a profound message will be sent to all those attending the ceremony by having diplomas passed down to two students from the stage,

See Understand, *page 4*

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Public Board adopts P.R.O.S.P.E.C.T.S. workshop

Partnerships in Action – Valuing our Differences

"I felt anxious", "I was embarrassed because the kids were laughing at me", "I felt frustrated". These are just some of the comments uttered by eight and nine year old children participating in a disability simulation exercise. The children go on to discuss play, friendships and how your ability to participate may be affected if you have a disability. Using the children's every day experiences, they come up with ways of reaching out to vulnerable people. Mary-Ann, Project Facilitator says, "The children are eager to learn about disabilities in an environment that allows them to ask questions and challenge their assumptions."

This project owes its beginnings to the men and women supported by Kawartha Participation Projects. KPP is a nonprofit organization providing support to people with physical disabilities. During a consultation in 1998, people supported by KPP identified prejudice and negative stereotypes as barriers facing them in their journey toward community participation and acceptance.

As a result, Carol Gordon, Executive Director, contacted the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board to request their support for a disability awareness program to be implemented in the schools. From this discussion a meeting of community organizations who support people with disabilities and the school board was held. The Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Canadian Hearing Society, Five Counties Children's Centre, Peterborough Community

See Stage, *page 5*

INTROSPECTIVE

We have so much to learn from our children

By Linda Viscardis

"You are listening to Ontario Morning....." The radio comes on and I drag myself to consciousness. It is 6:00 a.m. Time to start another day. Immediately, my thoughts turn to the many things that need to get done before 8:00 a.m. when the bus will arrive to take Laura to school. The mere thought tires me out, and I snuggle deeper into the covers, hoping for just a few more moments of sleep. Even as I feel myself drifting off, I realize that the longer I stay in bed, the more frantic will be the start to my morning.

Finally, I drag myself out of bed, down the hall and into Laura's bedroom. At this time of year, it is a joy to open the blind to let the morning sunlight spill into the room. I turn on the CD player to the voice of Celine Dion. A whispered "Time to get up" followed by a raspberry kiss begins Laura's transition to wakefulness.

When the transition goes smoothly, we know that the next hour's activity will be calm and orderly. When the transition goes a little less ideally, we know we're in for a chaotic hour.

"I'll be back in 15 minutes." I hold my breath - will the response be a combative "I'm not getting up!," or the much anticipated and preferred, "Ok, Mom." This morning, like most mornings, it's the more challenging of the two.

I make sure that the clothes are laid out and that all of the school paraphernalia are at hand - glasses, watch, pencil case, pen, binder. Check. I know that if we don't get it just right there will be a battle. Now I wait. Before long I'll be helping with dressing, being on hand to help only as necessary. Then it's down to get breakfast going, lunches packed, communication book

See Balancing, *page 10*

Mailbag

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Canada Post Publications
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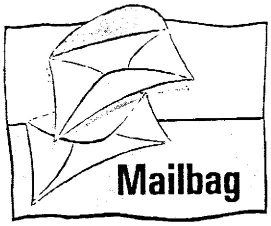
Grateful to PROSPECTS for presenting workshops to students

Dear PROSPECTS
Thank you for coming all the way out to Campbellford to speak to our grade two class. Your work here clearly indicates your deep concern for all children. We are grateful for your visit and hope that you may return to our school some time soon.
Sincerely, Sharon Servard



[Editor's note: A modified, interactive Making Sense with Sensitivity disability awareness session was presented to 22 great kids!]

Dear PROSPECTS
We send you our thanks and appreciation for the workshops you gave at St. John's. The students will benefit greatly from the information you shared with them. Good luck with your future endeavours.

Thank you,
Cathy Ashton,
staff and students

[Editor's note: Thank you for inviting PROSPECTS to present to six of your classes.]

Hello
Spring has sprung here – and my garden has green things poking through – this is so foreign to me. I'm going to Canada Blooms in Toronto on Saturday with a girlfriend – who knows, it might inspire me to start reading those gardening books people gave me.
I got two rooms painted in the house over the March break – Al took Derek to Peterborough, Toronto and Bolton. I am a lousy painter but had great fun. I have the paint and some ideas for another three rooms – I just need to ditch Derek for another couple of days.

I'm planning summer vacation – oh joy! I have registered Derek in a three-week camp for teens with disabilities. I think a lot of the kids from the Friday Friends teen group will be there. Derek is looking forward to it. I hope to get him in a horse camp of some sort. And I'll take a few weeks holidays and Al will take two weeks – and hopefully the summer will be covered. That's one thing that doesn't get easier as they get bigger.

Well, I should go. Al took Derek swimming and it's always a toss up – what to do when he's out. Something fun like write to you – or housework / invoicing SSAH / filing / getting meals ready – you know, the usual. Tonight, I'll have to split it in half. At least until 7:30 when I'm watching Entertainment Tonight. That's my treat when Derek is away – don't I need to get a life?

Wishing you well. Take care,
Karen Todd, Guelph

[Editor's note: It's so great to hear from our members who have moved away. Take care Karen, Al and Derek.]

Special needs, special relationship

RENÉ JOHNSTON/TORONTO STAR

WORKING TOGETHER: Alec Kennedy, who has Down Syndrome, and assistant Sandy Colyn discuss his school work at Maurice Cody Public School. A new system of granting funds could affect Alec's education.

'Special needs inventory' saps teachers and parents

Rigid rules guide funding for needy pupils

BY LOUISE BROWN
EDUCATION REPORTER

Some call it "Diagnosis for Dollars" — the mad scramble school boards have waged this year to try to prove their special needs students really do need special grants.

For six frantic weeks this spring, many Ontario schools say they were forced to stop helping their most needy students in order to free up board psychologists, speech therapists and social workers to fill in increasingly complex application forms for special education grants.

And while many educators support the new province-wide standards and tighter accountability for special education, many say the province gave schools too little time to do it right.

Now, as boards wait for Queen's Park to rule on these 33,000 requests for the prized $627 million in Intensive Support Allowance (ISA) grants for students with serious physical, behavioural and learning disabilities, some parents and educators are slamming the application process as stressful and insulting.

In particular, many parents object to having to provide a psychologist's assessment to prove their child needs special help, rather than the old system of relying on the school system's recommendation.

Moreover, school boards warn the new criteria for grants are so rigid, only half the students receiving intense levels of help may qualify for this funding in future.

Also, many boards resent

☛ Please see Kids , A11

Kids sidelined as forms filled out

☛ Continued from A1

the ministry's system of "auditing" roughly one-third of each board's applications to see what percentage of students meet the standards — and then using that as the percentage of applications it will allow for the entire board.

With rules this tight, schools say they feel pressured to stress children's weaknesses on report cards and assessments to justify the need for extra funds.

Some parents simply refused to go along with the requirements.

"We boycotted any IQ test of our son partly because it's a waste of scarce resources — but also because IQ test results can be so stigmatizing," said Toronto father Brian Mulroney, one of a number of parents of Down Syndrome children who refused this year to obtain such an assessment, although it was requested by the board.

The Down Syndrome Association of Ontario sent a 150-name petition to Education Minister Janet Ecker in April urging her to drop the need for Down Syndrome students to have a psychological assessment.

But ministry spokesperson Dave Ross said the assessments were introduced last year "so boards would have consistency across the province," rather than the variation in standards that used to exist from board to board.

Still, assessments offend some parents of disabled children.

"At one time, IQ tests were used to label children as either idiots, morons or imbeciles," said Mulroney, "and although those terms are gone, we don't think a number on a page will tell us any more about how to help our son learn than a conversation with the teacher will show."

For Susan Kennedy, whose son Alec has Down Syndrome, the tight new funding rules also mean her 10-year-old son "will never get positive feedback again on a report card.

"It's outrageous. His teacher had tears in her eyes when she told me she'll have to change how she writes his report card to show what he can't do, rather than what he can do, so he won't lose (funding for) his half-time aide," Kennedy said.

In fact, although boards apply for provincial money for hundreds and even thousands of individual high-needs students, the money they receive then can be pooled and spent on whichever special education students and services the board chooses, officials explained. So even if Alec Kennedy's particular application for special education funding was denied, the board might try to find the money to pay for his half-time assistant Sandra Colyn anyway from elsewhere in its special education pool.

> 'It's ridiculous and sad, but it seems to be the only way'

The ministry's Ross says teachers should not feel they need to avoid positive comments on report cards, and adds the specific new applications are meant to add clarity and accountability. B4-IEP!

But Bev Bruce, Alec's teacher at Toronto's Maurice Cody Public School, agrees that the new system does steer teachers "away from focusing on strengths in order to show the student as needy as possible. It's ridiculous and it's sad, but it seems to be the only way to meet these very rigid criteria."

Susan Kennedy calls it "very distressing that other children's report cards can focus on the positive, but because of the pressure to qualify for grants, Alec's won't show this. And Alec knows the difference between an A and a C or D."

This is the third year boards have had to apply to the province for special education grants under Ontario's centralized new school funding formula.

Under the old system, boards set their own special education programs and they paid for them largely through local taxes.

But last year, Ontario slapped strict new rules on exactly who qualifies for these ISA grants, which range from $12,000 to $27,000 per student, and stipulated that an assessment must be submitted, "usually by a psychologist."

Moreover, the criteria are so specific that to earn funding for a behavioural disability, for example, the assessment should state the child needs "constant supervision to avert life-threatening behaviour."

To qualify for funding for a moderate to severe learning disability, the child must have been diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Disorder — something the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario says "is not scientifically sound. You can have a severe learning disability without having Attention Deficit Disorder," said executive director Carol Yaworski.

With only seven weeks between the unveiling of the new guidelines March 9 by Queen's Park and the deadline for applications April 28 — which included the March Break school shutdown — teachers and consultants say they had no choice but to work night, day and weekends, including Easter, to fill out the forms.

In many schools, this left children without their regular learning clinics, counselling help — and even special classes.

"The whole process is too negative, too paper-intensive and far too time-consuming — and it took our staff away from serving students for nearly two months," says Frank Meagher, superintendent of special programs for the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

It seemed just as unrealistic to psychologist Howard Marcowitch, central co-ordinator of support services for the Toronto District School Board.

"They would never have asked for a complete inventory of the board's furniture in six weeks — yet they asked for an inventory of our children with special needs.

The time-frame was grossly unfair — and it meant we stopped serving the very children for whom we were seeking grants."

But the education ministry always releases its special education grant guidelines in March, said ministry spokesperson Ross, who added that the province has been flexible about boards sending in the applications late.

"For the concept of accountability, the government gets an A plus," said Marcowitch, "but to give boards six weeks to do what amounts to a complete inventory of the needs of all students was an insane, monstrous task."

Was killing disabled daughter an act of love or murder?

Supreme Court to decide if Latimer deserves hard time

BY VALERIE LAWTON
OTTAWA BUREAU

OTTAWA — His little girl was in terrible pain and faced a future of further agony.

So, on Oct. 24, 1993, Robert Latimer decided to end her suffering.

He placed his disabled daughter, Tracy, in the cab of his Chevy pickup, piped in deadly carbon monoxide fumes and waited for several minutes until she stopped breathing.

That act sparked a gut-wrenching debate across the country about mercy killing and the rights of the disabled.

This week, the Supreme Court of Canada will hear both sides.

Is a life sentence, with no eligibility for parole for 10 years, the appropriate punishment for a man who killed his daughter, no matter what his reasons were?

Or is this a special case where the mandatory punishment for second-degree murder amounts to a travesty of justice?

Latimer has always said he acted out of love for 12-year-old Tracy.

"It was no crime," he says simply. "The alternative of leaving a person to suffer is a greater wrong."

By all accounts, he was a devoted father who committed long hours to the difficult task of feeding Tracy, spoonful by tiny spoonful, rocking her and bathing her.

The Latimers, who have three other children, won't be in Ottawa for the hearing. In fact, the 47-year-old Saskatchewan farmer doesn't even plan to watch the proceedings on television.

His decision to end his daughter's life came in the days after a doctor recommended removing her thigh bone to ease her pain.

Tracy had already endured operations on her back, hips and legs, and her parents were horrified by the idea of yet another surgery that would leave her leg hanging loosely from her body.

MERCY KILLING PENALTY: Disabled groups say Robert Latimer should serve a life sentence for killing his severely disabled daughter, Tracy, in 1993. Latimer says that his act "was no crime." The Supreme Court hears both sides of the case this week.

Tracy had one of the most severe forms of cerebral palsy. She functioned at the level of a 3-month-old and couldn't walk, talk or feed herself.

Advocates for the disabled say a description that stops there dehumanizes Tracy because she was also a person who found pleasure in music, the Jacuzzi, swinging in a hammock, and family bonfires.

> Many of the jurors who convicted Latimer were stunned when they learned their verdict meant a life sentence

Organizations for the disabled will appear before the Supreme Court to warn that showing mercy for Latimer would mean "open season" on people with disabilities.

"Stripped to its bare essentials, (Latimer's) position is that a parent has the right to kill a disabled child if that parent decides the child's quality of life no longer warrants its continuation," the Council of Canadians With Disabilities and other groups argue in their impassioned legal brief.

Besides disabled and religious organizations, the federal and Ontario governments are arguing the life sentence should stand.

Justice Minister Anne McLellan had said in 1997 she'd consider lowering the mandatory minimum jail time for murder. However, a brief written by her department defends the required sentence, arguing there's no room for case-by-case exemptions.

The jurors who convicted Latimer thought there should be.

Many were clearly stunned — gasping, even crying — when they learned their verdict meant a life sentence and no parole for 10 years. They ignored the judge's instructions to recommend parole eligibility of between 10 and 25 years, calling instead for parole after just a year.

The trial judge agreed Latimer should receive a rare constitutional exemption, sentencing him to two years less a day — one year in jail, the other confined to his farm.

A year later, Saskatchewan's appeal court reversed his decision, ruling he must serve at least 10 years in prison.

Arthur Schafer, director of the University of Manitoba's Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics, said the law needs to be changed.

"The law is sometimes a very blunt and crude instrument for dealing with complex, messy human tragedies," said Schafer. "It's ludicrous and it brings the law into disrepute, I think, to charge Robert Latimer with the same crime as Karla Homolka."

The Supreme Court has three options before it:

- It could decide the life sentence, with no parole eligibility for 10 years, was appropriate, immediately sending Latimer back to jail.
- It could order a new trial.
- It could reinstate the shorter sentence — either because the judges decide the minimum punishment for second-degree murder is unconstitutional, or because they determine that imposing it would constitute cruel and unusual punishment.

Journals for K.P.P Placement

By: Rebekah Kiraly

May 11, 2000

Today Mary-Ann and I met to discuss the details of the training sessions that we're giving next week. First of all we decided to condense it into two sessions to make it less labor intensive for everyone. We don't want to overwhelm our volunteers. We also agreed that a lot of the learning will actually take place when they come to observe a class session with Mary-Ann and I. I remember reading the model and being somewhat confused and overwhelmed. It's hard to describe in words how to do a session like we do because each one varies and has it's own flow. Once a saw a few and tried it out a couple of times, I got a hang of it. You learn the general idea and the main points that we want to express. The rest depends on the class. Each class has different questions, challenges, personal stories that we draw on, etc. You can't really teach that. We talked about this and therefore, decided to just go over some of our main points, the general outline that we follow and any questions anyone has. We decided to generally follow the outline that I provided earlier in these journals but to do it in two days and in less detail than initially intended. We also divided up roles. My role is to do the introductions, go over the myths and stereotypes that people with disabilities face and add to the sections on commonly asked questions, key messages and values etc. based on my experiences this year. It turns out that only two people can come, unfortunately. In the fall, we expect a large group since many people are away right now. I'm curious how it will go. We also laughed about how our idea to have overheads, a written package, etc. is probably useless considering one of the two volunteers is blind. We put together a package anyway though that included some of the material from our research on appropriate answers to children's questions about disabilities, an outline of the model, some material on myths and stereotypes etc. I will include a copy of this in this journal entry. We figured that the blind man probably has a scanner and a computer system that can read the material to him or a support person who can assist him if he would like to read it. Also, the other man has a physical, not a reading or visual impairment, and thus, would probably benefit from notes provided to him so that he does not have to take notes.

May 16, 2000

Today we went and did a few more presentations at a school in Bowemanville. Today's classes went well. One of the kids at one point asked Mary-Ann why she got into the field she's in. It was interesting to hear her response because she talked about how she used to be afraid and uncomfortable around a mentally challenged neighbor of hers when she was a kid and wanted to understand more and learn to get over it. She talked about how most of us are afraid of the unknown, but that once we learn and experience it a bit the fear fades and so does our distance (physical and psychological). I found this quite interesting.

The kids in this school were much more overwhelmed than usual. Most of the kids didn't even attempt to do the activity. They all quit before trying. Even the girl who had her arms tied didn't try. This was interesting because we've never had that before. With just a little bit of improvising most of the kids should be able (and have demonstrated to us that they can) do the activity. The one's who usually have trouble are the ones with the "learning disability" (with the card with the scrambled instructions) and the one's who can't see the card due to the darkened glasses. This class also had a lot of trouble identifying their feelings. It was someone like pulling teeth in this class. They just didn't seem to get it. "Confused" was the best descriptive word we could get out of them. They were also quite challenged by our questions. When we asked if someone in a wheelchair could play soccer, they all said no! We really had to try and spell things out for them. I don't know why that would be. The teacher seemed to really enjoy it and was very enthusiastic and thankful at the end. I guess she realized that her class really needed something like this.

curious.

As something new, we started going over how it might feel to go and ask your classmates if you could play with them if you knew that they would have to change the rules and/or adapt the game in order for you to be able to participate. This was a good addition, I think, because it's an important point that is worth making. I would be really intimidating.

✓

The second class had a girl with a hearing impairment in it. We had to use and FM which makes it harder for Mary-Ann and I to go back and forth in dialogue like we usually try to do. Mary-Ann thus, did most of the presentation for this class while I observed. I was interesting for me because I got to sit back and think about how I usually feel and respond to the class and Mary-Ann during our sessions. Mary-Ann tries to lead the group most often and gives me the more mundane activities to do (instead of the questions). I usually interject anyway and so I don't mind usually, however I have noticed the last few times that I feel I bit like the token "disabled" person for her presentation. I spoke with her afterwards and we agreed that we need to be careful about this because it would be bad for us to reinforce the negative stereotype that a disabled person is a follower and less capable than a non-disabled person. We agreed that it is important for us to present ourselves as equals and co-leaders. Of course, in the situation with the FM use, it's a different circumstance.

Key point

This class was a bit more responsive than the one before. They seemed to understand that 'inclusion' is possible if you're a little creative and were better overall at identifying feelings. I sometimes get the sense that the kids are just guessing at appropriate feelings rather than expressing true empathy. It's hard to know. Perhaps understanding situationally appropriate responses are the first step to becoming more empathetic. Although we try and always discuss things from a concrete to abstract level, perhaps empathy works both ways. By this I mean that perhaps you need to be able to abstractly understand what someone might hypothetically experience before you can related it to yourself in addition to needing to be able to understand yourself before applying in to other situations.

[illegible] ?
e.g.

Another interesting thing that happened was that Krista, the girl with the difficulty hearing, answered some questions that we asked her so that the class could hear her opinion. There seemed to be some disagreement in the class about whether it was ok to ask a person about their disability so Mary-Ann asked Krista if it was ok that she ask her if it's ok to ask. Krista said that it was fine to ask and good if it means that someone will learn to look at her when their talking to her or not think she's mean if she doesn't answer (it's just that she didn't hear). Mary-Ann also asked me what I thought. I explained to the class that sometimes I don't like to advertise the fact that I'm different but if someone wants to understand, can help me and asks nicely out of curiosity, I'm happy to explain it to them. I think this was good for the kids.

✓

It was also kind of funny at the end when we asked what have you learned today because Krista put up her hand and responded that she "learned I have a disability". Although we don't want her to feel labeled or bad in any way, it is important the she and her classmates and friends learned that "people with disabilities" are not this mysterious group of outsiders-they are people just like the rest of us and are amongst us, more than most people know (because it's something that people don't talk about and share).

May 17, 2000

Today was the first day of volunteer training. It started off with going to meet John, the blind man with the seeing-eye dog. It was quite interesting for me. Although I'm supposed to know about these things and be more comfortable with it, I was quite nervous. I felt like I didn't know what to do. Is it ok to J-walk with a blind man? Do I touch him? Do I go to shake his hand? Am I supposed to ignore the dog? Do I physically lead John across the road or just tell him? In retrospect it all seems quite silly. What is there to know what to do? He's a person. I said hi, introduced myself and then simply asked him what he felt most comfortable with. Do you want to walk to the corner or should we just cross here? He told me to just walk ahead and tell Jake, the dog to follow me. If I were him I'd be scared. Taking a bus to a totally new and unknown area, to meet someone you don't know, to cross a busy street, be pulled (I never realized how much the dogs pull you and don't really know where they're going) etc. and to not

Good questions

Interesting parallel to point Mary-Anne made earlier re/ her neighbour

be able to see at thing! I would definitely be scared. I was nervous just to meet him –ha! It was a really good experience for me though because I learned to get over my fear and discomfort and to be able to see him as the person he is. As the afternoon went on I learned that John has been blind since birth but is quite independent. He's a musician and likes to do public speaking when possible. He has often gone into schools to talk about seeing eye dogs and blindness. He talked about some of his experiences as a blind man. Things that people do out of ignorance that bug him include shouting at him as if he was deaf too, assuming he has a perfect memory just because he can't see, being scared of dog, coming up and grabbing him and not just saying hi, and being upset/insulted if he refused (and god forbid, wasn't extremely grateful) for other peoples pity ✓ and/or "help". It was interesting talking to him about these things. I've never had the opportunity to talk with a blind person about what it's like. He explained that he doesn't appreciate pity ("how hard it must be for you…") because the way he lives is all he has ever known. He is not afraid and sad. He is, however, angered and hurt by people's ignorance and bad treatment of blind people as well as perturbed by blind people who do not try to be independent. He feels that it would be much worse (more frightening) to have lost your sight as opposed to never having it. He had lots of astounding stories of discrimination (ie. being refused to come into restaurants because of his dog etc.). He believes that Peterborough is a good and accepting community though and is happy to live here. He feels that there are a lot of services and supports for people with disabilities and their families in this city and a pretty open minded and accepting community. I would agree.

Terry was the other volunteer. He's a Trent student who wants to become a teacher. He used to work at GM for many years but injured his right arm. He can't work anymore, so he came to school. He can't write well or for long so even being a student is quite a challenge. He is interested in being a part of this because he wants to help support educating the public about people with disabilities. He believes that people just are not aware of what it's like to have part ✓ of your body just not work for you the way you want it to and the wide effects that that has (mentally, emotionally, physically, socially etc) on your life. His disability was due to an accident and it not noticable (it's an 'invisible' disability). Although he can still do many things "normally" still, he's had to give up many of his favorite activities (fishing, golf), his job, has to find ways of getting around not being able to write in school (ie. he has to try and listen and remember lectures because he can't take notes) etc.. All this causes stress in your relationships and effects your self-esteem because it feels like no one understands how frustrating it can be, how much you want to be independent and not have to struggle or think twice about doing simple, basic everyday living tasks. It's good that are two volunteers are from such different experiences and perspectives.

As I started to explain what it is we are trying to accomplish with the project, I read a quote from Michael J. Fox, who has Parkinson's disease, that I found in a Biography magazine: "I can see the effect Parkinson's has had on my children. It helps me raise my children in a way that I couldn't have before. It teaches them things like empathy. I was talking to my son the other day. It was late and I hadn't taken any medication, so my hand started to tremble. He just reached out and put his right hand on my hand. And we just kept talking. I could never teach him that." (March 2000, p51).

a strong quotation

This quote captures the essence of what we are trying to achieve. We are trying to increase empathy and awareness. To teach kids about the things that are the same, not different, about kids with disabilities. We feel that difference is important to recognize and respect, but so is similarity. If we could influence someone to see someone with a disability, as a person first (a person who has some similarities and some differences), then we have done a good job. I then went on to discuss the issues in the "myths and stereotypes" list form the outline for the training session. It was reconfirming to see both Terry and John nod in agreement and add their own personal stories. Mary-Ann then continued to describe the model more thoroughly. We went over our outline and then just had a conversation about some of the issues we brought up. It was interesting to talk with them about the fine line that exists between encouraging empathy and understanding for someone's fear or frustration etc. and reinforcing stereotypes such as people with disabilities are to be pitied because they "have it so hard", are sad, frustrated, lonely etc.

I enjoyed my afternoon.

<u>May 18, 2000</u>

Today I picked up John at his house and drove him to the K.P.P office. It's weird to not know how to act. I wanted to respect his right to independence so I just told him that if he needs help, just tell me what to do and then let him do it himself. It's hard not to do it for him – to "help", because it makes you nervous just watching. He's had more years on this earth doing what he's doing than I even have though, so what right do I have to assume he needs and/or wants my "help"? I therefore didn't do anything I wouldn't have done to anyone else I would pick up. I knocked on his door, walked back to the car with him and got in the drivers seat, asked him to if Jake could go in the back and waited until he was ready to go. He thanked me for this afterwards which I appreciated because I wasn't sure if I was being rude. He assured me that I did the right thing by simply asking and not doing.

Once again we discussed the presentations. We talked about what makes an effective presentation, effective presenter, what the kids typically ask and what to know etc. (see the outline). We stressed that it is very important to keep it simple and to not get stuck on one issue because there are many that we try to cover in just one hour. We had a bit of a discussion about the kinds of things kids ask, what parts of the model Terry and John would be comfortable doing and agreed to be in touch next week about when to have the observation day. All and all I think it went well. It's too bad there were not more volunteers. I imagine there will be more in the fall when people start to reorganize their lives as a new school year starts.

I'm still trying to decide whether I will continue this into next year. I may volunteer my time if I can find the time. We will see. It's been such a good experience for me though. I can see myself doing something like this as a job one day. It's helped me be more resourceful and confident. I've just recently found myself a good volunteer job with the speech and language department (which is what I think I may want to go into grad school for) with Five Counties Children's Center for next school year. I tried last year but I was too passive about it. This year I knew who to talk to and had good experience and connections (Mary-Ann is known for her work in this area) which really helped. I'm really happy for this experience. I've learned and gained much more from this experience than I do from most of my classes. Community based education is an excellent thing to offer students.

great!

✓

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<u>May 24, 2000</u>

Today I talked with you, Jim, about what it's like for me to have experienced both learning and a physical disability. Although both are very challenging and have their unique related struggles and issues, one thing that really stands out for me is how much learning disabilities are not understood by the general public. With a physical disability people can somewhat relate. They can usual relate to an experience where they've felt pain or been immobile due to an injury or illness and have at least had a tiny dose of what it must be like to be like that chronically. People are generally quite happy to help you and be sympathetic although, they may not know how. With a learning disability, people just don't understand (or so it seems). You feel stupid, discouraged and frustrated often and there is very little sympathy or even recognition of your efforts and struggles (mentally and emotionally). Most people do not understand that IQ and mental/intellectual ability has nothing to do with reading and writing disabilities. They are often related, but not the same thing. For this reason, its very hard not to internalize the false and discouraging message that you are stupid, can't do it, and somehow less than. I know that ate away at my self-esteem for years. It's also hard to be thought of as a "stress case" because you have to work so much harder (so much more time) at your school work than your peers to do well and feel good about yourself (to avoid that feeling of drowning in the overwhelming confusion of not being able to make sense of the print or write a simple word correctly that you know, you know). People just don't understand. If you explain that you have a disability, but also have good grades people often label you as crying victim and/or abusing the system. You can't be smarter and more successful than me and have a learning disabled at the same time! That, unfortunately, is what far too many people believe. If you are, you're labeled as a workaholic (that's the only reason you do so well). It's an interesting experience for me. I've gotten quite good at coping and working around my difficulties in school, however I get challenged easily in "real world" situation where I'm expected to read a contract quickly and sign, or read street signs in a hurry etc. In these situations I often stumble and may silly errors or get so overwhelmed that I give up. I feel like everyone thinks I'm dumb. Those who know I'm a good student chalk it up to my just not trying or paying attention. This is insulting and degrading. They think I'm overreacting if I break into tears on their accusations that I'm lazy and absent minded. They just don't understand.

I can see
how most
people would have
no understanding
of this situation

This program has been really a powerful experience for me because it has helped be advocate for people with learning disabilities. I feel like not only am I doing something meaningful for others but also, I'm mending old wounds and sore spots in my self from my past judgement and misunderstanding. I wonder how I would be different if I had been "identified " earlier. It was not known that I had dyslexic type problems until I was 17. I don't know if it would have helped of hindered me to have been labeled earlier. I would have gotten support that I needed and would have at least would not have to carry around the secret of feeling really stupid (that I had to study so hard to try and fool everyone). On the other hand, I would have learned that I was "dis"abled and all the stigma that that carries. I think it probably would have been best for me to know, but it all worked out ok in the end anyway.

May 25, 2000

Today we went to Courtice North Public School outside of Bowmanville and did three presentations to grade three classes. It was a very interesting day. Things were very disorganized at first. The principal and teachers had not prepared for us. They hadn't planned which classes we should be going to at which times, the teachers had totally forgot about our coming and had not done any preparatory work with the class (or even name tags like we ask), and they interrupted us several times in order to change teachers, tell us where to go next etc. I was amazed at the disrespect modeled by the vice-principal as she interrupted Mary-Ann in mid-sentence (in the middle of an activity we were doing) to come and discuss scheduling. It completely disrupted the flow and focus of things. I tried to take over for her, but by then the attention of the kids had already been lost, not to mention the fact that a powerful figure in the school just modeled a disrespectful attitude to the class. It was quite rude and astonishing. Half way through the first class another teacher came in and started chatting with the other about how it's nice to have "guest speakers" when you're tired and could use a break. This was a little insulting. The other classes went better. The teachers of the last two classes were more attentive even though they had not done any pre-discussion or nametags. I have come to realize however, that this lack of preparation is standard.

- ironic and disturbing

The kids in all the classes had pretty common responses. A few things stood out though. Cory, a boy in the first class, decided to make a "funny" suggestion when we asked "could someone who uses a wheelchair to get around play soccer with you guys at recess?". With a big smile and a giggle, he confidently replied "sure, they could be the post". This provoked an interesting discussion. The teacher started to get angry with him, but I interjected with a few questions for him directly. "Maybe they might want to be the post, but what do you think? Would you want to be a post?....How would you feel if you wanted to play and someone offered for you to be the post?....Would you feel good about yourself?...Would you feel like your classmates liked you and would like to play with you?.....etc.. His face went red, his eyes dropped...."No, I wouldn't want to be the post"..."That would make me feel bad...left out...angry...hurt"...."I would feel like everyone was just making fun of me". I think this was good for the class to hear him say. We then moved on to brainstorming how else they may be able to participate in soccer. At another point in this class we asked whether anyone knows and plays with someone with a disability at recess. Most of the class agreed they knew a boy named Joey who sometimes spends time in their class. What was interesting was that no one knew what his disability is. When we asked them to try and describe it all we could get was "he talks and moves funny". Why is the word "funny" used as a synonym for "differently"? We then started

a strong example of the value of your program to talk about how they could find out more about Joey. To ask him would be very rude, they thought. To ask a teacher is not allowed asserted the teacher. It seems odd that in the very class that the teacher praised as being so "integrated" no one every talks or is even allowed to talk about disabilities. "Isn't our use of the word 'disability' politically incorrect?" asked the teacher at the end. Our view is that for acceptance and true integration and inclusion to occur, people have to be comfortable with difference and being able to talk about it openly and honestly. Privacy is important and sensitivity with language is too, however, it's all too easy to use those things as an excuse not to deal directly with the issues. Most people with disabilities (form our research and personal experiences) not only don't mind if they are asked about their disability, but in fact want to have the chance to explain why they act they way the do, what their needs are, how certain behaviors from others can really help decrease the difficulties they have to over come etc. Most people want to explain why they may seem so different – that they had an accident, got sick or were born with something wrong and thus, know how to do things differently than most in order to accommodate these needs. The teacher was quite uncomfortable with our suggesting that it's ok to talk about disabilities. The teacher thought that we should be using the word "exceptionality" or "special", however I don't think she has thought very much about how stigmatized these words are. She suggested our language was insensitive in the same breath as referring to some kids in her school as the "wheelchairs" and "special-eders". I don't think she's aware of her own hypocrasy and ignorance. The term 'disability' is the medical and categorical word for physical, learning, developmental, behavioral etc. abnormalities. Language around the issue of disabilities is a very political topic of debate. What Mary-Ann and I have decided is that it's more important that we be understood ~~and~~ than to be overly worried about language. Perfectly politically correct language can be very evasive- you can be so sensitive that in the end no one really has any idea what exactly you are saying or describing. The term "reading or learning disability", for example, is far more descriptive and accurate a term than "exceptional or special learner". Of course, time, place, audience and topic of discussion are all-important factors to consider when speaking of such sensitive and political issues. We are talking to 8-9 year old kids and our goal is for kids to understand and be able to relate to what we are discussing. It's important that they can conceptionalize what we are talking about. It's also important that we convey the message to them that we are not embarrassed or scared to talk about such issues. To us, disabilities are just a matter of fact reality of life (like sex and STD's and pregnancy, for instance) that needs to be talked about comfortably and openly. We also always make a point of putting the child before the disability. People are not 'disabled'- they have disabilities. They are a person first. The problem is something that they have-not who they are. I don't think this

key point ✓

[illegible] reminder for [illegible] of language [illegible] pervasive attitudes around disability issues

good

teacher really understood this. To her, it was more important that we say the... 'special ones'- as if that is not laden with derogative and unclear meaning.

It was also interesting that no one named Marianne, a girl in the class who was deaf (and used and FM, sign language etc) when we asked if they know anyone with a disability. It was good to have her in the class because we were able to ask her if she agreed with us that it is ok to ask about your disability as long as its done in a considerate and truly curious way. She reiterated exactly what we were saying by saying "I want people to know that I need you to look at me when talking and if I don't respond it's because I didn't hear- not because I'm weird and ignoring you". She also added, "I know may sound funny, but I still have the same good things to say as everyone else". Thus, although this class had its challenges, it went really well. The kids said they learned that "it's not wrong to ask about someone's disability", "someone who uses a wheelchair might like to turn the skipping rope or play basketball with us, but might be too scared to ask us, so we could ask them", "it's worse to pretend you didn't see them, than to stare at someone who looks really different", "it's not funny if you have a disability", and "it's wrong to tease someone if it makes them feel bad inside".

[illegible]

✓

The second and third classes went pretty well also. The usual misunderstandings were challenged. In general, kids of this age seem to believe it's wrong to look at someone with a disability, it's wrong/rude to ask about it, you should pretend you don't notice, if you stick up for someone who is being teased it means you become their best friend, if you have a disability you can't play games and sports etc.. They are able to brainstorm with us and come to understand that these ideas may not be right. The kids seem to learn a lot from the activity. They get frustrated, overwhelmed, embarrassed, nervous etc. Although they experience these feeling for only a very brief time in a simulated experience, we hope that they remember and may develop some empathy for how hard it is for some people to do things that most would find relatively simple- in other words, how able these people really are. Coping methods that may make you look different is a natural response to not being able to doing something 'normally'. For instance the kids with their legs tied all shuffle or hop, the kids with their arms tied reach around and twist and turn in order to read the card and do the high five, the kids with the darkened glasses move their heads around trying to see out of the corner, walk carefully while feeling and listening for cues, the kids with the learning disability instruction card get overwhelmed, get parts of it but usually give up or get frustrated ("but I can't read this...no, fair!).

good

I had a lot of questions about me and my disability today. They wanted to know how did I get it? Did I feel left out and frustrated? Did I get teased? How do I do my homework? Did I ever feel sad?

One girl was very insightful. She said, "I think most people in this school don't realize that people with disabilities have the same heart as we do inside and want friends and to play just as much as us". At the end she told me, her brother has down syndrome.

New Model and Questions (that Mary-Ann and I have developed):

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

   -I've now started introducing myself as a person with a university student with a disability that feels that most people don't understand much. I get the kids to try and guess what kind of disability I have. They have no clue. They guess I'm blind or deaf usually. I then go on to describe my learning disability. I explain that I was so frustrated and sad as a kid their age because I didn't feel like everyone else. I talk about how I have to work harder to read and write and for a long time I struggled with feeling stupid or less than some how. I describe how I use highlighters, re-read things a lot and have to spent a lot of extra time on my homework than most people. I then ask if they think I do well in school and could I be a doctor or lawyer or anything I want to be even though I have a learning disability. Most say no. They are shocked to hear I have A's in school (that in fact, "I'm one of the best students in my class").

2. SAME/DIFFERENT ACTIVITY:

   -two volunteers are selected and we brainstorm with the class what is different about them followed by "are differences bad? No! Are differences wrong? No! Are differences funny? No!". We then brainstorm the similarities and try to emphasize that both kids are classmates, kids, have feelings, goals, friends, dreams etc. We ask "is the fact that one child has dark hair or is taller etc. make him/her better or worse than the other?". We wrap it up with the same questions as before – "Are differences bad? Wrong? Funny?". "No!" they reply with enthusiasm.
3. FEELINGS BRAINSTORM:

   -we brainstorm different kinds of feelings and write a list on the board for them to refer to during our talk. We facilitate their brainstorm and encourage them to come up with complex feelings such as "frustrated, excited, left out/lonely, embarrassed, confused, love, comfort, nervous, shy etc.". This is usually done by describing scenarios for them (ie. "if I was trying my best over and over but I just couldn't seem to be able to do it what might I be feeling?" etc.).

4. ACTIVITY:

   -eight volunteers are selected to do the activity. Two are given darkened glasses, two are given "learning disability instruction cards", one has his/her legs tied, one has his/her arms tied behind his/her back, and two have to do up the buttons on men's dress shirts with ski mitts on. We then discuss with each of them what it felt like for them while they did the activity, if they wanted to do a good job, if the felt they did do a good job, what it would feel like if they were like that all the time and in other contexts. The kids share their feelings with their classmates.

5. QUESTION PERIOD:

   INCLUSION:

   -What do you like to do at recess?

   -If my legs didn't work properly and I used a wheelchair could I play soccer (or an example from the games they told us they play) with you?

   -For those who say no, why not?

   -Who says yes? How could I play? We discuss this at length to keep all options open. The kids often suggest things like being the referee or the person who throws in the penalty shots. We encourage them to brainstorm ways in which someone could be included into the whole game.

   -Do you think I want to play? How would you know if I did want to? How would you know whether I wanted to be the referee or a field player? You could ask me or maybe my education assistant.

   -Is it ok to change the rules so I could be included? Yes.

   -Would I have as much fun as you do even if I couldn't do it as well or the same as you? Yes. We usually elaborate on this and discuss what it was like for them to be little and learn to swim. Were you as good as you are now at swimming? No. Did you need help sometimes? Yes. Did you need a life jacket or water wings or something to help you a bit? Yes. Did you have fun? Yes!

   -Would it be ok if I played with you? Yes. How would I know that? They often suggest that I come and ask them if I could join in. Do you think it might be hard for me to come up to all of you and ask you to change the rules of your game so that I could play too? Yes. How could you make it easier for me? We could go ask you if you'd like to join us and tell you that it's ok, we'll adapt the rules so you can.

-If I'm standing by the doors or stay inside during recess does that mean I don't like to play and don't want to? We try to get them to think about this one. Maybe. I might not want to play, but I might want to and just be scared or feel like I can't. How would that feel to stay inside for recess every day because you had no one to play with or help you? How would you know if I would really like to join you? Ask me.

FRIENDS:

-What is a friend? Generally we get the responses that a friend is someone who is fun, you can talk to, will stick up for you, you can play with, will help you if you need it etc.

-How did you make a friend of yours? Here the kids get a chance to tell their story about how they became friends with each other. It helps get them all excited and engaged with us because they all want to tell their story. They generally say that they went up to the person and asked them if they wanted to play, that they sat beside each other in class, that they were new to the school and someone helped them etc.

-If I couldn't hear or see would it be harder for me to make a friend? They say no at first. We encourage them to think about how it might be hard to just go up to someone as ask to play if you couldn't see (find) them or couldn't hear (and maybe talk differently). You could just use sign language, they say. Do you guys know how to sign? They often say yes! How much can you sign? Do you think it would be kind of hard to have a conversation with someone who could only say "I love you" for example (which is what most of them know how to sign). Yes.

-How could you help? Do up to them and help. Ask a teacher to give you an activity together or to sit beside each other etc.

TEASING:

-Who here has ever been teased? How does that feel? Bad, sad and mad are the usual responses.

-Who has ever teased someone. They don't put up their hand at first but on prompting and through our example (our hands as well as the teacher's are up) they generally come to admit it.

-Is teasing sometimes ok? Yes. When? When it makes you feel good inside because it's a joke with someone you love. What's the difference between good teasing and bad teasing? Bad teasing makes you feel bad inside.

-Do you sometimes smile when someone is teasing you even though you feel kind of bad inside? Yes. Why? Because you want them to like you and it's hard to tell your friends and classmates that they are making you angry or hurting you. I usually add the story about he boy who stuttered (refer to previous journal entries) at this point and stress that just because someone smiles along with it doesn't mean they feel good inside and it's ok teasing.

-What can you do if someone is being teased? Tell them to stop, go help the person, tell a teacher, get a bigger kid to help you, tell an adult etc. Is telling teacher tattling? No.

-Mary-Ann usually adds the story about Laura and the kids who teased her for years at recess by making her go kiss the wall. What do you think the kids did when she kissed the wall? Called her stupid and laughed. Why do you think she did it? Because she wanted them to like her. Do you think other kids in the schoolyard knew that was happening? No, they usually say. Do you guys sometimes know things that are going on in the yard that you are not involved in? Yes. So do you think some kids knew that Laura was being teased? Yes. Why do you think no one did anything? Because they were scared that they would be beat up is the usual response. Is being beaten up the only thing they were scared of, do you think? They were scared that they would be teased. How could you get help then to avoid this? Tell a teacher privately. After Sarah helped Laura by getting a teacher to put a stop to it, do you think they became best friends? Yes, they usually say. We explain that no, in fact, Sarah did not become Laura's best friend and play with her all the time and have sleep overs and birthday parties with her. Was Sarah an important person to Laura though? Yes. Do you have to become best friends with everyone you're ever nice to? No.

-I tell them about my friend Maggie who screams, bits, drools, can't eat by herself, pushes amongst other good things. Does the fact that I play with her make me not cool? No they say (I've got automatic status because I'm older. Ha!

It's quite funny). Do you think I have fun with Maggie? No they usually say. I explain that in fact I do have lots of fun with Maggie now that I know how to talk with her and know what things we both like to do (ie. swimming, walking, singing etc).

GENERAL INFORMATION:

-What is a disability? We explain the different types of disabilities (speech and language, learning, physical, developmental/mental etc.) and generally describe disabilities as some part of your body not working exactly right.

-How do you get a disability? You are born with it or you have an accident or illness.

-Can you catch a disability? No.

-If you want to know more about a disability how could you find out? Library, Internet, ask parents, teachers or the person with the disability.

-Is it ok to ask someone about his or her disability? No, they say. Why is that wrong? Because it's rude, they say. We explain that part of the reason we are talking to them that day is because many people with disabilities have told us that they feel ignored and would like people to ask them about why they need to use a wheel chair, how it works etc. Do you think someone with a disability knows they have it and that they are different? No, they usually say. Well, we explain, they do know that they look or behave differently usually and they don't mind explaining to you why they have to do things differently and how they do things. Is it ok to go up to someone and say "what's wrong with you?" No! So how could you ask someone? Hi. I was wondering if you would mind telling me how your dog knows where to go or what it's like to use a wheel chair? Etc. What might they say in response? They may tell you or they may say that they don't really want to share that information. Is it ok for them to say that? Yes. Are they being mean to say that? No. Why? Because it might make them upset. Does it make everyone with a disability upset? No. Is it ok to ask then? Yes.

-we demonstrate kinds of staring. One way is to look at someone and then smile when they notice. They other way is to look at someone and then look away and pretend you didn't see them when they turn and look your way. Which way feels bad? The second way. Why? Because it makes you feel left out and like people don't like you. Which way do you think people with disabilities get more often?

The second way. Is it bad or wrong to stare/look with interest at someone? We try and get them to realize the difference between rude staring and looking with interest. What can you do next time someone who looks really different notices you looking at them? Smile.

QUESTIONS AND STORIES ANYONE?
-there is always more than we can handle. The questions are usually very basic interest questions like how does someone who is blind get dressed in the morning? How does someone in a wheel chair go to bed or live in a house? How does someone who can't use his or her arms eat dinner? It's quite amazing how curious they are and how little they really do know!

May 31, 2000

Today Mary-Ann and I went to a couple of classes at South Monagahn School in Balieghboro. The first class was a grade 5/6 split. Because they were a bit older we were able to really get into the questions and they were quite good at empathizing and labeling feelings. The teacher in this class sat at the back with the students and listened attentively. This was great. All in all it was a good class. The presentation went smoothly. The other class was a grade 3 class. Joan from the Trillium foundation (the main funder for this program) came to observe. Unfortunately this class was not so good. The teacher only gave us 40minutes to do our hour-long presentation and several of the kids were quite wild. We had very little time to do the discussion period and to challenge the rowdy kids on their ideas. One thing that was interesting though was that there were a few kids with learning disabilities who were quite eager to ask me questions. They wanted to know how I felt, if I even felt frustrated and sad or angry, if I did eventually learn how to get better at reading etc. I explained that yes, I felt sad and frustrated a lot as a kid and do have to work really hard compared to my friends sometimes, but that I also have gotten better at reading and writing because I have learned tricks and tools that help me. As a result of this and my hard work I am now an A student. One little girl came up to me afterwards and wanted to tell me that she had a learning disability and wants to know if she will ever be able to do well in school if she tries. I told her that although it is really hard for her sometimes, if she works really hard at it and gets the help she needs she would be able to do her best. She asked me with wide eyes "do you really get A's? You mean, I might be able to go to university one day?". To be a motivating role model for this little girl made me feel so wonderful about what we are doing. It's just so important to not label someone as a failure because they have difficulty with something.

That's great! Another key example of the value of this program

To provide a role model and something to inspire and motive kids who are struggling with feeling discouraged and "different" is so, so important and beneficial I believe. That little girl made my whole year. I could see me in her eyes and what that would have given me when I was her age. These kids are told way to often that it's just their cross to bear that they are different and less than and always will be. I was able to show her that I am different like her, but I'm am definitely not less than. Joan seemed to like the presentation even though Mary-Ann and I were disappointed with it. It seems that way though. We know it so well that we have high expectations. Other's don't seem to know what they're missing when something doesn't go as planned. It's all so important and good that even if we miss stuff, it's still a good and useful experience for the kids.

✓

I didn't have time this class but it reminded me to include in my journals the quote I often read to the kids written by a 13 year old girl with a learning disability:

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO HAVE A DISABILITY:

"Tears come down, frustration comes out.

Yelling, screaming, wondering if I'll ever get through school asking myself if I'll pass another year or will my friends go on without me. To me, a learning disability means needing a lot of help no matter what anyone else says, you always feel bad about your work, you never raise your hand just in case your answer is wrong and everyone looks at you. You think they are thinking you are stupid. That's not the case but who knows. You should always keep in mind you're not. The emotional distress that this disability causes will be carried with me through every grade. You learn to deal with bad reports and you learn to deal with all the questions that are asked by parents, friends, classmates and teachers. My learning disability will never go away but I will learn tricks to avoid problems in the future."

powerful.

Teresa Whyte 13 years old.

We found this quote on the Internet and have been reading it to the classes when we talk about learning disabilities (time permitting).

June 6, 2000

Today we did a couple more classes. They went pretty well with the usual questions, answers et al. The teachers were not prepared, but this has become expected. I was asked about my disability. They wanted to know how I got it and how do I read and write then. When I wrote the feelings list on the board one child said to me "but you can write!". It's surprising how little they understand about learning disabilities. To them having a disability means being unable. I explained to them that I have learned how to cope with my disability and have worked very hard all through school and as a result I am able to do a lot of things now that I used to really struggle with. I still make errors and take more time than most, but I have good coping skills now and also the confidence that helps me be able to do it. I also have years of practice writing simple words like the one's I was writing on the board. I even made several spelling errors but they can't spell any better so they don't notice.

June 12, 2000

Today we went to North Hope to do a few more classes. On the way there Mary-Ann was telling me about how she did a presentation with a man with MS in Campbellford last week. He uses an electric wheelchair and had a portable ramp to make it possible for him to get into the school. The school was so impressed with the presentation that they said they would like to purchase a portable ramp for their school. This man is a father of a student in the school. One thing this made me realize was that the importance of "access" rites need to extend beyond just those of students with disabilities. Many people with disabilities have more able-bodied children. If some students parent uses a wheel chair, for instance, how is he/she going to come to parent teacher interviews, school plays and performances, be part of the PTA and have the freedom and choice to be involved in his/her child's education and school experience. With this in mind the whole argument for segregated schools and only a few "accessible" schools makes no sense. It's not just the students that have to be considered because part of their success (mental, emotional, etc) depends on family involvement. How would it feel to be a parent and not be able to go see you child perform in the school play they've been practicing for and are so excited about? How would it feel to be that child and know that you were one of the only kids who's mom or dad was not there to see you because they couldn't get into the school? Some people with disabilities have portable devices like this man did, however, these things are expensive and hard for individual families to afford (amongst the other costs they have due to their special needs) just to have access to a public place. Apparently the kids were very interested in what Wayne did, how he got around at home, how he could cook dinner, go to work etc. The kids' questions are very basic. They really don't understand that people with disabilities eat, sleep, love, laugh and live like most of us do. If they can't do things the way most of us do they have adaptive devices and different ways of doing things. Independence and ability is not what people think of as possible for people with disabilities. Once again I am reminded that for many, the idea that a disability is truly and ultimately a "dis"ability is firmly entrenched. To get caught up in political correct language causes problems, however I really don't like this word because I really don't like it. It's

good point

like calling black people "non-whites". A word that emphasizes difference or problem rather than ability (or lack there of) would be a more fitting term.

The classes that we went to went really well. The first class was good, but nothing that unusual. The kids were not very able to identify their feelings and abstract so we had to keep it simple. The nature of each presentation is so different each time. A reminder that context is everything. We've done the same presentation to the same age groups so many times I could recite it backwards in my sleep and yet, each time a different point gets emphasized or something gets added depending on the group and their responses and questions. The kids in the first class were pretty wild. There were a few kids that just couldn't sit still. They were bouncing off their seats and babbling to themselves and fidgeting constantly. I didn't really like how the teacher seemed to handle her class because she was very harsh and authoritarian. She didn't seem to have and control and yet yelled at them a lot. However, I did empathize with her in that I was thinking throughout the presentation how hard it would be to be a teacher for a class of hyperactive kids. It's hard to imagine how it will be for teachers when they get a few special needs kids integrated into the already too large classes.

The second class was great. I found the experience really powerful. The teacher was fully engaged, asking questions and providing stories that related what we were saying to things that had gone on in the class throughout the year. Apparently there is a girl named Stephanie who has multiple disabilities in their class who was absent that day. He was saying how there has been a lot of teasing and segregation and that she often doesn't come to school because of social tensions for her. We ended up spending half the class just problem solving and discussing this issue. What we were able to uncover was that not only do the kids find it "uncool" to hang out with her but also they find her not very nice to be around. She's angry and mean to them the kids insisted. We tried to talk to them about why might she be angry and why might she behave such a way that the kids get the impression that she doesn't care or even want to be their friend. It was great to hear the kids' figure out that maybe she's mean and angry because she's afraid they won't be her friend even if she's nice. It was a real eye opener for them to have Mary-Ann and I reiterate the messages their teacher has been trying to give them. I think they especially looked up to me as the "student" (token "cool" university girl). The young girls seemed to look up to me and it was good for them to hear me talk about how I hang out with Maggie who bites, screams and drools and is not the "nicest and most pleasant person to be around sometimes". Do you guys think I have friends? Yes. Am I not cool? No, you're not uncool, they responded. Do you think I enjoy hanging out with Mags? They weren't sure. I explained to them that Maggie is my friend. I have a lot of fun with her and she teaches me a lot of things (like how to do something if

I couldn't use my hands or talk, how to enjoy simple pleasures, how to be tough and always be honest. I also explain that sometimes it's hard and frustrating for me. I don't like it when she bites me or pushes me or is just plane angry and grumpy with me. I explain to them tough that I understand that Maggie has no other way of telling me "no, I don't want to do that" or "I don't feel well today", "there's rocks in my shoes" etc. It's like how a baby cries when they're hungry or hurting. They are not trying to be mean or unfair and they most definitely do want and need love and kindness anyway. It's not Maggie's fault and it's up to me to get over my frustration and challenges (which are so minimal compared to hers) and find a way to make her more comfortable so that we can be happy and friendly together. This is what respect is. Do I have to enjoy it went she's mean to me? No. But, should I use my head and heart and realize that something's bugging her and that she needs my help (and I'm lucky enough to be able to). I believe it's our responsibility to rise above our own selfish wants sometimes and realize that a crying baby or angry Maggie wants to be happy and peaceful and have fun just as much as I do and I have the freedom to understand and facilitate that. I of course explained this in kid language as best I could to them. With that some of them started sharing stories of how they've helped and been nice to Stephanie or others. This was good. I made the not so "cool" kids shine for a while while the "cool" ones scrambled to think of stories of acts of kindness and inclusion of their own. I found this class really interesting and an inspiration. I was so nice to see a teacher that reestablished my faith in teachers today.

June 13, 2000

Today we went to Confederation Public School in Peterborough. John (the blind man who did the volunteer training with us) came to observe. The classes went well. The kids were young (2-3 split class) so they had a lot of trouble with knowing and articulating their feelings though. Sometimes it feels like pulling teeth with kids these young. One thing that happened that was interesting was that when we asked "can people with learning disabilities go to school like you guys and then go to university or college to become a doctor, lawyer, businessman etc.?", one child said "no". When I asked to explain she said they go to special separate schools. I explained to her that there were people in her school and maybe even her class that have learning disabilities. I told her how people with learning disabilities do not go to segregated schools and you probably wouldn't know who they are in your school. They may get extra help or go to the learning center in their school sometimes, but otherwise they go through school just like everyone else. I reminded her that I have a learning disability and that I went to a "normal" school and now am in university and doing well. She seemed to learn something. People with disabilities are not so mysterious and different than you may think.

The kids had a lot of questions for John. They wanted to know how he did things like cook dinner and get places. They were very curious about his dog. They thought that Jake (the dog) knows where everything is. John had to explain to them that it was him who told Jake where to go and what to do, no the other way around. Also interesting was that they were scared of Jake. They believed that a seeing eye dog would bite you if you approach them. Jake explained that this makes him very sad because Jake is a very nice dog and would never bite anyone. The reason there is a sign on his harness that says; "please don't pat the dog" is that to Jake the harness means he's at work. When his harness is off he wanders, plays, loves pats and licks etc. If you pat him when he's at work it may confuse him and make him think he doesn't have to work anymore. Also, he may follow you for more pats (like dogs do) and not pay enough attention to John and stay by him. It was good for the kids to see John enter and leave the class by himself and with comfort. It was interesting though because at first the kids kept asking Mary-Ann and I how John does something etc. even though John was right beside us. We had to keep telling them to ask John himself. Another confirmation of the importance of what we do. People with disabilities are not invisible! Afterwards John was said that he enjoyed doing the presentations but realized he needs to give more thought to how to answer and explain things in ways that kids so young can understand and relate to. I think he's going to enjoy volunteering next year. He's a wonderful addition to our team.

<u>June 13, 2000</u>

Today there were some interesting articles in the newspaper that I thought I should include in my journal. I've included copies of the articles. One discussed the changes to the system these days that are causing problems in the delivery of fair and good teaching to kids with special needs in the public education system. One point that I found disturbing was that now teachers are pressured into emphasizing weaknesses rather than strengths for the kids with disabilities so as to increase their chances of receiving funding. This makes no sense if you know the special education works on a system of Individual Education Plans. How can someone get a C on an individualized education plan? It's the plan that's failing them, not the student's ability if they are not doing well. How is jeopardizing kids self-esteem worth it? Isn't it obvious that a child with down syndrome is not going to live up to the same educational goals as "normal students"? How can you compare grades when each child with special needs has different special needs and goals? I spoke with Maggie's teacher and she laughed and said it's ludicrous to give her C's and D's. On what? She's not doing well enough at patty cake (interactional/social skills) and not biting her shirt when she's frustrated? She is learning in school but she's not learning math and verbal skills that can be graded. She's learning how not to bite people, how to feed herself and be able to sit calmly in a chair for a while. Mostly she's learning how to interact with people and to take care of some of her own attention needs (by facilitating her learning and playing with things she expresses interest in). The article mentions that the pool of money for special education is going to decline and that now there is a competition for who is worse and less able. How does that make sense? They all have unique needs and the right to advance their abilities as much as possible. Are the ones that do better than the others and thus, are denied funding (assistance) expected to just do it all on their own? I fear that these kids are going to suffer and so too, are the teachers who may spread themselves too thin trying to fill the gaps and holes created by reduced support (funding). It really frustrates and saddens me.

Yeah!

I heard from a special ed. teacher friend of mine that Mike Harris is trying to implement a system that insists kids move up the grades according to chronological age. This is a controversial issue, however it's beyond me how you can expect someone who is developmentally only 2 years old to benefit from being put in a grade 10 class just because they are 15 years old. Maggie is going to high school next year, which everyone is nervous about. Maggie has the developmental abilities of a child 6 months to 1 year. She does not adapt to change very easily and really needs someone who knows her to encourage positive behavior in her. Maggie, so far, has had the same educational assistant for 10 years and been with the same kids for her whole life. As of next fall she is going to a new school with new classmates and will have a new E.A. It's hard to know what to expect. I seriously doubt Maggie is going to be very happy. It's a lot of change for someone who doesn't understand. Her whole world is going to change and change dramatically. I can only hope it works out ok. A major problem with this is that Maggie gets upset and "difficult" to handle when there's too much change and chaos in her life. If the new E.A. doesn't know how to handle it Maggie may be kicked out of school. This will be very hard on Maggie (as she will lose most of her social contacts) and on her family.

The other article is about the trial for Robert Latimer who killed his daughter with cerebral palsy allegedly out of love and mercy. This too me is outrageous. Did Tracy (his daughter) have a chance to protest or decide? It seems odd to me that suicide is considered illegal in this country and yet, deciding that someone else's life is not worth living is actually up for debate. I can see why people may think it's merciful, but I doubt that anyone who holds this view knows or loves anyone with a sever disability. Just because you couldn't handle not being able to talk or walk etc. doesn't mean someone else can't. Being with Maggie has been one of the best experiences for me as it has really clarified this "quality of life" issue. She's the happiest and most loving soul I've ever met! She can't talk, can't feed herself, wears diapers, has physical impairments, often has seizures and doesn't feel well, is in pain often due to medical complications etc. and yet she is always eager to smile and enjoy simple pleasures like the swimming or a run down a hill. I agree that he did not commit the same crime as Homolka, however, he willfully decided to take someone else's life. I would question how much it was in fact for his own mercy – was watching what his daughter had to go through just too painful and difficult for him? Did Tracy say, kill me dad? Although it's terrible that she was in so much pain, were all forms of pain killing medications and therapies fully explored? It's a very complicated issue because her life was clearly very difficult for her and something no one would wish upon someone, however, does that give someone else the right to decide what life is worth to someone else? I understand that it must have broken his heart to watch his daughter deal with all the challenges she was faced with, however, is that not his issue to deal with? Though not the same situation, it makes me think of a conversation I had with John. He was telling me how much it frustrates him when people pity him and say things like "what a shame", "your life must be so difficult and tragic", "how sad, how terrible. Poor you". He can't believe it. His response is, "I've been blind my whole life. I don't know any different. I feel sorry for you that you're so afraid of losing your own sight that you think my life is so tragic. I can't see that's true. But I can laugh, love, dream and enjoy life what it is for me". This whole issue has a lot to do with largely held misconception that people with disabilities are somehow so different that we just can't relate. It's a tragedy to have a child that's so disabled, I agree. It's a super difficult road for the person and the family without question. But does that give someone the right to murder them. It that truly fair when the person is unable to consent. If sex without consent and murder with consent (euthanasia or suicide) are considered crimes, how can taking someone else's life (willfully and planned) without consent permissible? How much does this really have to do with our discomfort with disabilities? People live through all sorts of pain, suffering and challenge. Should we just kill them all? I think not.

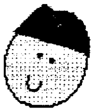
great quote

Another article I've provided is in the PROSPECTUS. The project Mary-Ann and I have been working on all year is described. There are also some other great articles written parents of and people with disabilities in this paper. Mostly they are about what we have to learn. We have to learn to be aware and to see the greater picture. They are interesting to read.

Well, this course has come to an end. I'm sad for this as I have truly enjoyed my work on this project and have learned a lot. I've learned a lot about myself and what my beliefs are around the issues that people with disabilities face. I've learned that things are never simple. It's

I think this is the question

important to look at the greater effect of your actions and biases and to see how much damage ignorance can really do. Ablism is a big prejudice in own society today. So much so, that it's not even questioned by most. I wonder why it scares us so much to be empathetic. Is it that we are so afraid of our own vulnerability? Anyone can be born with or have an accent or illness that results in a disability. All of us are then vulnerable. Why is it so hard then to see that all of us are the same as all of "them"? People are people; why is that so difficult to understand and remember? The best thing we've gotten out of this program is to hear the kids respond to our questions by saying, "we can figure out the answers because they are the same as for us". I was honored to get a regular reminder that despite all our differences, frustrations and challenges we must remember that we all have feeling, hopes, needs and dreams. Compassion and empathy are truly respectable and valuable abilities. This experience for me has been incredibly influential as I have not only gained mental and emotionally form it, but have also be pointed in a direction that I'm honored to pursue; I now know that I really want to work in this field. I never realized how challenging and holistic it is. It's interesting, scientific, political, emotional, social, practical, philosophical, and very meaningful. I can't thank Trent's community based education program and those who support it enough. I've appreciated it in full.



Positive Attitudes

Your Path: Circle of Inclusion Home Page → Circle of Inclusion Guidelines → Facilitating Full Participation → Positive Attitudes

Strategy	**Sample Activity**
• Make sure that architecture, room arrangement, and materials can be used by all children.	• Build a sand box up on legs so a child in a wheelchair can use it.
• Suggest to children with and without disabilities ways they can interact with and learn from each other.	• Help all children to learn sign language and encourage them to use it throughout the day.
• Use pictures, books, and dolls to increase knowledge about disabilities.	• Make sure books about people with various disabilities are available to the children. Choose books that don't focus solely on the disability, but rather show people with disabilities doing many different things.
• Assist children in becoming familiar with equipment and devices used by persons with disabilities.	• Include items such as canes, walkers, or eyeglass frames in the Housekeeping or Dress-Up area for children to try out. (It is best to use surplus equipment and devices rather than using a child's personal equipment.)
• Provide experiences that enable children to learn about what different degrees of hearing, vision, and mobility are like.	• Play a "feelie box" game where children use only their hands to tell what an object is. Encourage a blind child to play, too, and to offer helpful hints about how to identify objects that aren't easily guessed by others.
• Correct misconceptions and	• Listen for the children's ideas

stereotypes about disabilities.	about what persons with disabilities can and can't do, and find examples to disprove or support their ideas. "We know persons who use wheelchairs can go grocery shopping because . . ."

Wesley, P. (1992). *Mainstreaming young children: A training series for child care providers.* Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina.

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Facilitating Communication

Your Path: Circle of Inclusion Home Page → Circle of Inclusion Guidelines → Facilitating Full Participation → Facilitating Communication

Answer Children's Questions

- Answer honestly and straightforwardly
- Contribute to understanding about the child with a disability
- Answer in a manner a young child would understand
- Convey respect for the child with a disability

Add Meaningful Content on Behalf of the Child

- Address ongoing conversation or activity
- Emphasize the similarities among the children
- Relate information as well as experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the child

Teach Children to Interact Directly with Their Classmate with a Disability

- Teach children to recognize and interpert the nonverbal response of their classmate
- Teach children to direct their comments and questions directly to their classmate

Allow Spontaneous Interactions Among the Children to Occur

- Provide assistance without directly participating in the children's interactions
- Step back and fade physically from the children's interactions

Invite and Encourage Participation

- Use warm and accepting manner
- Encourage frequent brief interactions when initially introducing a child
- Invite another child to become involved in an ongoing activity
- Suggest child select new activity to include a child with a disability
- Prompt meaningful participation in a natural manner

Thompson, B., Wickham, D., Wegner, J., Ault, M. M., Shanks, P., & Reinertson, B. *A circle of inclusion: Facilitating the inclusion of young children with severe disabilities in mainstream early childhood education programs.* Manual to the video. (1993). Lawrence, KS: Learner Managed Design.

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KIDS TOGETHER, Inc.

Perspectives

A Parent's Perspective of the needs for a child with a disability

A child who happens to have a disability is *not* "broken," they are first and foremost a child, who needs to belong, be cherished, embraced and welcomed into our communities. Having a sense of belonging, being accepted and included, provides self-esteem, motivation, and happiness and therefore are prerequisites for learning and for a "quality of life."

A child who happens to have a disability does *not* need to be "fixed" before they are allowed by others to have their needs met in the places where they can be with every other child. A "quality of life" is not directly related to the number of skills a child can achieve, or the number of therapies they are provided but more importantly the way they feel about themselves, the way others interrelate with them and their interdependence in the community. The disability is part of who the child is, and should not be thought of as something that should be, or necessarily needs to be, attempted to be eradicated. Therapies can help a child gain functional skills, but should be kept in perspective with acceptance of the child as they are, and not giving them or others any message that says they are inferior, but maintaining the message that they are a whole person who is valuable and worthy as they are.

When both the child's needs for "personal growth and development" as well as their need to "belong and be accepted" are met together, instead of one or the other, or one at a time, the child will be provided a greater "quality of life."

Whether or not a child walks with a normal gait, or even walks at all; talks or uses sign language; needs assistance with self-care or can do things themselves, has little significance if they have no place to go, no friends to go with, or a community that does not know or care about them.

Written by Colleen F. Tomko

Watch here for new information, updates and links to other sites!

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and your child.

If you have any questions, write to our staff, we will either help you find the answer or guide you to a resource to help. Please write with your comments, suggestions or information you would like to share with others on our website.

See also
Developing a Vision
Building a Life Long Vision: Where do Professionals Fit in?
Thoughts on Therapy
What is Inclusion?
Inclusion, it's not for everyone?
What right does your kid have to regular ed?
Browse through the rest of our site for infomation on many related issues.

Don't Miss our section on "Inclusive IEP planning!"

Recommended
For input and information on Early Intervention Services
Join your local I.C.C. (Intercoordinating Council), for children birth to age 5 (or age of beginner).

For input and information on educational services
Join your local Right to Education Task Force for children ages 3 to 21.
Call your local (I.U.) Intermediate Unit to ask for meeting times. Check the blue pages in your phone book.

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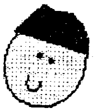

I. Invite and Encourage Participation

Your Path: Circle of Inclusion Home Page → Circle of Inclusion Guidelines → Facilitating Full Participation → Participation

If the child has never worked with Cedric, or seems uncomfortable with him, I might say, "I bet that Cedric would like to do that one," even though I suspect Cedric may be more interested in another activity. Or when I am working with Cedric, I might say to the other child, "What do you want to do first today?" and give him the choice of Cedric's two favorite materials. Later, I'll give Cedric the opportunity to choose some other work.

Matt and I were sitting and watching a child hold the bowl and work at bubble beating (beating soap suds with a

Young children are usually aware of the presence of a child with a disability, but may not feel comfortable approaching the child or know how to initiate interactions with a child who does not speak or move independently. Five important strategies for encouraging participation follow:

- **Use a warm and accepting manner with children**
  When a child with a severe disability initially enters an inclusive program, he or she typically receives considerable adult support. In fact, it is not uncommon for someone to act in the role of an "integration facilitator." At least initially, peers' perceptions of the child are influenced by the manner in which adults interact with the child with a disability as well as how an adult interacts with the typically developing peers who approach the child or are in near proximity. Obviously, a warm and accepting manner conveys the desirability of the child as a potential communication partner and makes both the adult and child more approachable.

- **Encourage frequent brief interactions when initially introducing a child to his or her peers**
  Since the child with a severe disability is often unable to initiate interactions in a traditional manner, an adult or peer partner must offer the initial invitation. One way to begin developing interaction patterns between children is to encourage brief interactions that match the interactions of other children in a setting. For example, when an adult is carrying the child across the room, he or she may stop by another child's table and say, "Jacob wanted to say hi!" One might also invite children to briefly stop to see an accomplishment of their classmate. For example, Jacob's teacher or facilitator might comment, "Jacob would like you to see the tower he just helped to build."

- **Invite a child to become involved in an ongoing activity with their classmate**
  Offer children in the classroom opportunities to participate in

whisk). When another child began his turn I said, "I'll bet Matt would like to hold the bowl for you, he can be your helper." The child said he didn't need help, but I suggested that Matt was his friend, and friends help each other. Well, I didn't know if that sunk in or not. But then a month later when I was doing a matching activity with Matt, one of the little girls who had been watching came over and said Matt could be her helper.

Samantha was crying and a little boy asked me why. I said, "Well, why do you cry? I think she's like you, she probably cries because she gets mad. But she can't tell why like you can."

an ongoing activity along with their classmate. This allows children to become familiar with their peer who experiences a disability while focusing on the activity rather than the interaction. This manner of involving a child also allows him or her to comfortably decline the offer. For example, Maria, Jacob's teacher, might comment, "Jacob is matching the sound cylinders by nodding 'yes' when the two cylinders sound the same. Would you like to take turns listening to the cylinders with Jacob and help him by shaking them when it is his turn?"

- **Suggest that a child select an activity that will include their classmate**
  The onset of an activity period or when children are between activities are natural times to suggest that a typically developing child select an activity for mutual participation. Allowing the typically developing child to express his or her preferences for an activity may enhance their sense of involvement and enjoyment of the time spent with a new friend. It may be helpful to make several suggestions for appropriate activities and ask the child to select from those options. (Of course, typically developing children must also learn that their friends with disabilities have preferences and should have opportunities to make choices too!)

- **Facilitate meaningful participation in a natural and helpful manner**
  While the typically developing child can learn to act as an effective helper and peer tutor for a child with a severe disability, this should not be their only role. Ensuring that both children have an active and necessary part in an activity that both perceive as fun and/or valuable is critical. The role of an adult facilitator is to teach young children ways to assist their friend while also identifying meaningful roles for both (or all) children in the activity. It is critical to initially support sustained interactions between children. This can be accomplished by providing information about the child with a disability and interpreting his or her nonverbal communication so that a typically developing child begins to recognize the behavior of his or her new friend as communicative. This requires that the adult be a careful and responsive observer during all child interactions.

Thompson, B., Wickham, D., Wegner, J., Ault, M. M., Shanks, P., & Reinertson, B. *The process of communication: Facilitating interactions with young children with severe disabilities in mainstream early childhood education programs.* (1993). Lawrence, KS: Learner Managed Designs.

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What To Say

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Children May Say...	Caregivers' Response	Keep in Mind(Adaptations)
Why does he go with that lady? Why is that lady here?	Explain: He is learning to talk (walk, draw) better. He's working on his walking (talking, etc.).	If someone from the child's early intervention team comes to work with the child, it's a good idea to have them do so in the room during a routinely scheduled activity. This way other children can see what happens when "that lady comes." Greet (along with the children) the visitor when he/she arrives. The guest will not be such a mystery. If the child is receiving early intervention services that must be provided outside the room, ask the visiting therapist, educator, etc., beforehand if the child with a disability can choose a friend to go with him.

Children May Say...	Caregivers' Response	Keep in Mind(Adaptations)
How come she doesn't say anything when I talk to her?	Encourage the child to try again. "Susan, do you want to play with me?" If Susan smiles, indicate to the child that that means yes. Explain that Susan doesn't talk with words but that she talks with her eyes or her smile.	Teach children to get eye contact before they speak to each other. If the child with a disability does not talk, share the signs that the child with a disability uses to say "yes" or "no."

Children May Say...	Caregivers' Response	Keep in Mind(Adaptations)
He's messy when he eats.	Explain that the child has a difficult time eating, but he's trying very hard to do the best he can.	Be as matter of fact as possible. Try to pair the child who made the comment with the messy eater during an activity in which the messy eater does well.

Children	Caregivers' Response	Keep in Mind(Adaptations)

May Say...		
He talks funny.	Respond with a reflective listening statement, e.g., "You're having trouble understanding him?" Model to the child what you do when you can't understand him, e.g., "You want the truck?" Tell the child, "Say it again."	It is important to teach children how to respond. Modeling appropriate responses will teach children how to respond to each other. Teach children to get eye contact before they speak to each other. If the child with a disability does not talk, share the signs that the child with a disability uses to say "yes" or "no."

Children May Say...	Caregivers' Response	Keep in Mind(Adaptations)
She's too slow; does she have to go with us?	A matter-of-fact response will answer the child's question, followed by an explanation of "some of us move fast, some of us move slowly."	When going on walks or field trips, try to pace the activity so the child with a disability can keep up, e.g., riding in a wagon.

Children May Say...	Caregivers' Response	Keep in Mind(Adaptations)
I don't want him over here; he knocks my blocks over.	Encourage child to talk to the "block destroyer." You may need to model what and how to say it.	Have an adult near areas that the "destroyer" has trouble in. The adult's job is to encourage play and make playing fun. She/he should be sure to catch the child being good. When a child who typically knocks over the blocks is playing nicely, be sure to say so.

Adapted from: Lewis, L. (1989). *We're in this together.* Des Moines, IA: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education.

Your Path: Circle of Inclusion Home Page → Circle of Inclusion Guidelines → Facilitating Full Participation → What To Say

Please send your comments and questions to deannl@circleofinclusion.org

Tips for Answering Children's Questions About Disabilities

Your Path: Circle of Inclusion Home Page → Circle of Inclusion Guidelines → Facilitating Full Participation → Answering Children's Questions

Tips for Answering Children's Questions About Disabilities

- Your attitude may be what the children will imitate. Convey an open and positive attitude when you answer questions about disabilities.
- Answer what the children ask, but be brief.
- Listen for the feelings behind a child's question and talk about them. Let a child know it is okay to express fears or any other feeling.
- Use simple words and examples the child can understand.
- Look for opportunities to show how children with and without disabilities are different and how they are the same.
- Do not criticize the child's comments or questions.
- Give the child your undivided attention and notice his or her response to your answer. Listen to see if there are follow-up questions.
- Whenever appropriate, encourage other children to ask their questions directly to the child with disabilities.

Ways to Help a Child Answer Questions From Others

There are specific steps care providers can take to provide support and skills to children who have disabilities who are answering questions of others:

- Talk with the family to find out how they have explained the disability to the child and others.

- Find out what the child wants to tell others.

- Help children find the words they are most comfortable using and offer opportunities to practice privately what they will say to others.

- Teach children that they have the right to choose to answer, to say they don't want to answer, or to say they would rather the person ask the teacher or the family.

- Let children know that you are available to help them if they are feeling sad, angry, or just tired of answering questions.

Wesley, P. (1992). *Mainstreaming young children: A training series for child care providers.* Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina.

Your Path: Circle of Inclusion Home Page → Circle of Inclusion Guidelines → Facilitating Full Participation → Answering Children's Questions

Policy ISSUE BRIEF Research
Practice

Consortium on Inclusive Schooling Practices Issue Brief 2(1) - March 1997
CISP Publications and Resources

Assistive Technology and Inclusion

Caren Sax, Ian Pumpian, Doug Fisher
Interwork Institute/San Diego State University

Meet Joey: Identified as having cerebral palsy and also being "deaf-blind with cognitive disabilities," Joey spent the first four years of his school career in a special day class, where he spent a great deal of time lying in a beanbag chair. He had no consistent method of communication other than screaming and crying, which he used when staff attempted to engage him in an activity. Even the peer helpers from general education classes avoided contact with Joey. The majority of interactions that students or staff had with Joey were to provide personal care services, such as feeding and changing his diaper. About the time that Joey turned eight, his life changed significantly as assistive technology was introduced into his range of supports and services.

Special educators, who support students such as Joey in inclusive settings, are becoming more proficient at adapting core curriculum, infusing basic skills into daily activities, and scheduling staff, students and other resources to best meet students' needs. Although many educators are utilizing a range of "supplementary aids and services" necessary to educate students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers, many are not sufficiently familiar with assistive technology to use it effectively. Using Joey's story as a backdrop, we will illustrate the importance of utilizing the full spectrum of supports and services, including the use of assistive technology, for implementing effective inclusive education practices for students with significant disabilities. A number of assistive technology resources will also be identified at the end of this article. Many professionals have limited experience with the use of assistive technology. Those who attempt to acquire it for their students rarely consider applications of technology beyond computers, wheelchairs or commercially available communication devices. Fortunately, Joey's teachers and advocates became familiar with the wide range of assistive devices that could increase Joey's access to his world. They quickly learned that using the right combination of adaptations could impact his education and his interactions with his peers. The following story details the changes that occurred in Joey's life as he began to use both customized adaptations and commercially available products to support his full-time membership in general education.

Four years ago when he was eight years old and still attending a special day class, Joey began to learn about cause and effect through the use of a set of adapted switches connected to a Bart Simpson toy. The standard remote control switch for the toy featured one button to move Bart forward, a second to move him backward. The remote control was rewired so that Joey could hit either a large plate switch for forward motion or a large pillow switch to reverse the movement. Due to Joey's limited vision, the toy was placed on a table so that, at the very least, he could feel the vibration of the toy moving across the table's surface. As soon as Joey became engaged in the activity, exciting things happened. First, he clearly began to follow the movement of Bart's bright yellow head as it moved across his field of vision. Second, peers in the room saw this activity as a way to interact with Joey. Finally, as his peers helped him to press the switches, Joey began to associate the operation of the switch with the movement of the toy. As a result, his peers began to consider many more activities in which Joey could participate. The classroom teacher set up a variety of appliances that could be switch-controlled so that Joey could practice throughout the day. It became obvious that Joey could perform these same activities in general education classes.

Over the next couple of years, Joey began spending more time in general education classes where he participated in activities instead of simply observing them. He became more proficient at switch use and was able to operate a number of individualized devices. One device was used for climate control. Because the school operated on a year-round schedule, the children had to acclimate to warm classrooms. Some teachers permitted students to take turns "misting" the classroom. Joey participated by using a switch-operated spray bottle which was modified from a sports bottle. While a classmate pointed the sprayer in different directions, Joey operated the water flow. Other adaptations included a plexiglass display board that was used for communication, and a variety of appliances that he controlled with his switches.

By the time Joey entered fifth grade, he made the transition from being a "visitor from Room #5" to being a fulltime member of the class. New situations required new adaptations. Joey's classmates had been responsible for raising Joey's hand to summon the teacher, but they felt that Joey needed his own method. A "low-tech" light switch was mounted on Joey's laptray so that he could attract the teacher's attention. His ability to use a switch increased so that he could use several of them coded with Picture Communication Symbols to operate a Speakeasy communication device with messages recorded by a student whom hechose. He used another switch to turn on a tape recorder to play the same book on tape that the other students were reading during "silent reading" time. Consistent use of switches helped to increase his motivation and dexterity for accessing the computer through the Ke:nx program. These abilities would be essential for participating at his neighborhood middle school.

Joey's seating and positioning needs were adjusted, including time scheduled to be out of his wheelchair, sitting at a desk. His therapy needs were met during the regular physical education periods, as coordinated by his teacher, with consultative support from the school district's physical therapist and adaptive physical education specialist. The special education teacher worked closely with the fifth grade teacher to adapt the curriculum and make accommodations as necessary. Joey's classmates were an invaluable source of creativity who thought of innovative strategies to increase Joey's participation. As they became more familiar with Joey and the way in which he responded, they were key players in identifying new goals based on their keen insights and perceptions of Joey's needs and desires. The entire range of services and supports that were listed on his IEP were designed and implemented through effective collaboration of all of the professionals involved. People learned to perform their roles in new settings and under different circumstances. By the end of the school year, everyone agreed that Joey had surpassed all earlier expectations. Eventually it was determined that Joey no longer required services from the vision and hearing specialists, as he was obviously using both of these sensory modes adequately in all of his daily activities. His transition plan for moving to the middle school included a discussion of scheduling him into classes where he would remain with a number of his fifth grade classmates. The possibilities for Joey are endless, and as luck would have it, his new school is a technology magnet, a perfect place for him to continue to build his skills in using all kinds of technology.

As Joey's story illustrates, it is essential to consider technology from a number of perspectives. There is a wealth of material on accessing assistive technology resources. However, these resources are often underutilized and will remain so until teachers and other school professionals learn the basics. There are a number of issues that need attention when considering the use of assistive technology.

1. **Involve the student with the disability in the process.**
   Studies show that one of the main reasons individuals do not use assistive technology devices, even when they would be helpful, is because they were not involved in the selection of the equipment (Scherer, 1993)*. We all have priorities of color, style, and durability. Some students enjoy the attention that accompanies using a device with lots of bells and whistles; others have a difficult time with being the center of attention. Family members as well as peers are often helpful in determining such details. By involving families in the process, the likelihood of technology use at home is greater. By involving peers in the process, on-the-spot problem solving occurs on a regular basis. Such critical thinking skills can be incorporated into science and social studies lessons as students are introduced to the use of assistive technology. As an experiential component, they may then require the students to invent an item that could be used by an individual with a disability.

2. **Target a specific activity.**
   It is extremely difficult to buy or design an adaptation if the end goal is not clear. Often professionals look for devices that are available and then try to "fit" them to the students. This is problematic because if the student's priorities are not considered, it is unlikely that the device will be utilized. A more productive approach is to identify the activity in which the student needs or wishes to participate so that the initial research into existing adaptations takes on a direction. For example, if a student wants to join a game of foursquare with her fourth grade classmates, and has enough volitional movement to operate a switch but not to throw a ball, research could begin with a search through a database, such as HyperAbledata , to determine if there is a commercial device that would allow for the student's participation. There are also numerous catalogs which list recreational equipment, some of which might be adapted or some that have the potential to be modified to fit a student's needs. Searches should not be limited to "adaptive catalogs" as many useful devices can be found in novelty catalogs and hardware stores.

3. **Look for people with "technical expertise" beyond the educational realm.**
   Teachers rarely consider identifying people who have specific skills in carpentry, electronics, mechanical engineering, computers, and general "fix-it" skills to help with the design and construction of adaptations. There are a number of programs across the country that use volunteers to help develop customized adaptations for individuals. Once activities and technology needs have been identified, tapping into service organizations (Kiwanis, Lions, Optimists, etc.) for additional expertise and funding can bring remarkable results. Coordinating efforts with technical classes in high schools, community colleges anduniversities which require specific projects (e.g., senior projects required in mechanical engineering courses) can provide mutual benefits. Brainstorming takes on a new dimension when engineers share ideas

with third graders and jointly design a project. These strategies tend to be very cost-effective. While many people assume that assistive technology is expensive, low-tech adaptations can be effective and affordable.

SUMMARY

Joey and his teachers discovered that there was more to assistive technology than wheelchairs and that it was essential to include family, friends and professionals with expertise in appropriate disciplines when considering new possibilities. As his teachers observed and explored Joey's use of customized and commercial products, they realized the need for ongoing evaluation to ensure that Joey's needs continued to be met. His needs, likes, and skills will change as he moves to new challenges and environments. The demands and opportunities of these settings will provide new challenges to support his active involvement in academic coursework and social interactions. As he attends middle school and beyond, Joey will be likely to outgrow equipment or prefer a different color for a device. More importantly, he will also build more confidence and take on new responsibilities as he increases his skills. As Joey's experience with assistive technology continues, his opportunities to be a valued member of his school and community are limitless.

The world of assistive technology is changing rapidly as attempts are made to improve the quality of life for everyone. As overwhelming as it may seem to try to remain current with technological advancements, it is becoming much easier to access information and resources through newsletters, "how-to" videos, and on-line services. While only a handful are included here, each of the resources includes its own set of additional references. Many companies that sell assistive technology devices or equipment have promotional videos available at no cost.

The listings included here are current as of November 1995. For more information on local resources, contact your state's Assistive Technology Project. For up-to-date details, check out one of the World Wide Web sites for Assistive Technology, listed under Disability Resources,

http://www.icdi.wvu.edu/others.htm#g10

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KIDS TOGETHER, Inc.

Parents

Our site is designed to help parents have dreams for their children, and to help make those dreams come true. We want to provide you with the information and resources to enhance your child's quality of life.

Where do you begin? We suggest that parents start by building a vision for their child's future, so that you and your child determine their future, not the system. The vision will allow you and your child to decide where you want and don't want her or him to live and work as an adult. It also lets you plan for the types of relationships and friendships you desire for your child. Picture your child participating in society and then decide what types of skills and/or supports are needed to achieve that vision. Don't miss our section on "Vision Building" along with our tutorial to help guide you in creating a vision for yourself or your child.

It is important to have an understanding of what inclusion is and isn't and we want to help you gain that knowledge. It is not just a fad, or a method of education, but it's a way of life. There is not one solution to create inclusion. The more you learn the clearer you will be able to state your vision to others. A clear vision helps lead to the outcomes that you and your child desire. To learn more about inclusion and issues on disabilities browse through our site, follow the links to other websites, and access local and national resources. In Pennsylvania you can utilize the Instructional Support Centers for information.

Once you have the life long vision, short term goals can be created that move toward that vision. Think about how the educational system and other community programs can help your child reach their goals. Decide what places your child can learn the skills needed to reach their vision, and learn to interact with others and others to relate to them.

Understanding the law can help you support your vision. Our site gives an overview of various federal laws and information on Pennsylvania state law as well as links to other sites. This will help you learn what your child is entitled to, what your rights are and how you can resolve conflicts. You may also consider getting active in letting your government officials know your needs and how their decisions will affect you and your child.

Your child may benefit greatly from assistive technology. We provide you with information on what it is and how to obtain it. This may enrich your child's life and provide accessibility to many opportunities.

We plan on providing information about groups and activities that determine system changes. That way you'll know where you can get involved if you want to have input on things that affect your child. In addition we will be providing information on networking and suggestions on how to keep in contact with your community. Networking with others is a great way to learn new ideas and to gain support for your efforts. Keeping in touch with your natural supports, your family, friends, and neighbors can provide you with strength and a greater sense of being a part of the community for you to their needs. This is more likely to occur when children with and without disabilities grow up together, knowing and caring about each other. With today's technology, those things that make daily routines easier for people with disabilities, are quickly being embraced by others as ways to make their lives easier, faster and more convenient.

A quality life is achieved through a balance in meeting physical, social, mental and spiritual needs in an integrated way. Fulfillment in each area effects functioning in every other area of life. When people feel healthy they can function better then if they are sick, hungry or tired. Having a sense of belonging gives more motivation then feeling alienated, isolated or alone. Being involved, stimulated and challenged gives greater focus then doing simple tedious tasks. Doing something that has meaning and purpose is more desirable then doing something that appears to be useless or a waste of time.

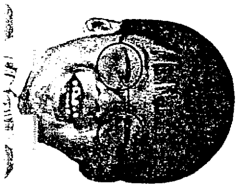
Can life skills be taught in "any" environment while maintaining an overall quality of life? Physically, children could have good health, safety and shelter in a variety of environments. Socially, they can not maintain an identity and sense of belonging with children in their community unless they remain in the same environments with them. Mentally, separate environments can be challenging and stimulating, however, they can not duplicate the entire atmosphere of the real world. Spiritually, teaching life skills in places where they are not typically encountered, and at times when they aren't necessarily needed does not provide purpose and meaning.

If a child has the potential to learn certain skills, the learning can be enhanced by meeting all of his or her basic needs, and by teaching when and where the skills are naturally needed. It makes sense to teach making a bed in the morning when a child needs to have his or her own bed made. Cutting paper should be taught when a child has a need and desire to cut the paper, toileting skills when there is a need to use the bathroom, and so on. My child did not learn to string beads by repetitious practice, but by a similar motion of plugging the cord on his Sega game, which was of great meaning and purpose to him. At the age of eight, he has not yet mastered a shape sorter, but by letting him use his abilities, he operates a computer and accesses the internet. He drinks out of a regular cup because we gave him a cup to drink out of, not because we thought he was "ready". He has friends in his community, not because he mastered any particular skill, but because he is in the regular class and shares experiences with other children who have learned to know him and understand his needs. He learned to place his order at McDonald's not from practice, but because he goes there with friends and family, and when using his communication device to ask for a cheeseburger he gets one.

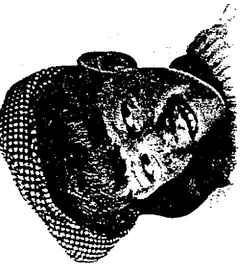
Spending a lot of money and/or performing a ton of life skills will not give a person the same happiness as when they have a sense of belonging, friendships and relationships with others, good health, and are doing things that are desirable, meaningful and purposeful to the individual. Through adaptations, supports and interdependency quality of life does not need to be sacrificed when a child is not able to master certain life skills. It is more important to help a child learn to use his or her abilities, then attempt to eradicate the disability. Success needs to be measured in quality of life, not quantity of skills. Before any child's life can be enhanced with life skills, they need to first have a life.

Written by Colleen F. Tomko




Valuing Our Differences

A Disability Awareness Session

Sponsored by: Kawartha Participation Projects

Project Co-ordinator:
Mary-Ann Meagher



1/26/2000

Purpose

To raise the awareness of elementary school students (grades 3 & 4) about disability and its implications in the school environment.

The session can be adapted for other grades and will be provided upon request with in the human resources available.

Expected Outcomes

Participants will:

1. Become aware of how the body can be affected by disabilities.
2. Observe how disabilities can affect a person's ability to participate in an activity.
3. Brainstorm ideas about how to interact with people with disabilities in the classroom, yard, community.

Methods

Before the session:

1. Teachers and students will do in-class preparation

During the session:

1. Facilitator/s will present to single classes with Teacher and support staff in attendance.
2. Students will participate in an activity.
3. Facilitator will lead the students in a discussion.

After the session:

1. Teacher will lead the students in a follow-up discussion and a written exercise.

Teachers

Teachers will be expected to do the following in the classroom in preparation for the session.

1. Introduce the topic of disability awareness (see appendix B)
2. Explain who will be facilitating the session
3. Explain the purpose of the session
4. Explain the expected outcomes
5. Explain the format of the session
6. Describe expectations regarding student participation
7. Note any questions the students may have that cannot be answered by the Teacher and send to session facilitator so they may be incorporated into the presentation.
8. Determine how at least six student participants will be chosen for the session activity and inform session facilitator.
9. Have students prepare name tags (first name only) to be worn during session.

Post Session Follow-Up

Discussion

Teachers will be expected to have at least one discussion about the training session. The discussion will serve two purposes;

1. It will help the Teacher to determine if the session had an impact
2. It will be the basis of an evaluation and determination of follow-up desired or requested.

Discussion questions and optional written assignment are attached as APPENDIX C

Evaluation

A Post-Evaluation (appendix D) will be completed by the Teacher and will be returned to the Facilitator. The Teacher will be asked to answer the following questions:

1. Do you feel this disability awareness session was worthwhile? Please comment
2. Did your students benefit from the session? Please comment.
3. Please provide any suggestions for improvement of this presentation.

Students

The students will be responsible for:

1. Having a pen/pencil and paper for any notes they wish to take
2. Preparing name tags and wearing them during the session.

Appendix A

Agenda –'Valuing Our Differences'

1. Welcome, introduction of Facilitators
2. Introduce session
    - Purpose of session
    - Anticipated outcomes
    - Format of session
3. Discussion about the differences between typical students
4. The Activity
    - Explain props and format of activity
    - Identify students nominated to become disabled
    - Give students a 'disability'
    - Explain to audience their role as observers
    - Give instruction cards to students with 'disability'
    - Help students to carry out activity
    - Discussion: challenges faced by students with 'disabilities', strategies to help students with 'disabilities'
5. Discussion to generalize lessons learned.
    - In classroom
    - In playground
    - In community
6. Summary and address students' questions

Appendix B

Pre- Session Discussion Guide (In class)

1. What is a disability? What are some disabilities?
2. Do you know any one who has a disability? Tell us five words that describe him/her.
3. Do you ever see people being mistreated because they are different? Tell us what happens.
4. Why might people be mean to others?
5. What are some of the things we admire about people?
    - Beauty
    - Intelligence
    - Physical ability
    - Amount of money
    - Dramatic ability
    - Number of possessions
    - Having a job
    - Having a friend
    - having a spouse or partner
6. What happens to people who do not have these qualities?
7. Can we change attitudes? How?

Appendix C

Post Session Discussion Guide :

1. What disabilities did the students have?
2. How did they affect the student's ability to participate?
3. What were some of the suggestions that would help the student?
4. Reflect on your experience. What did you find out that you never knew before?
5. How can we use what we learned in our classroom, in the yard, in the community?
6. What have you learned from the session? Has the presentation changed you at all: How?
7. Write a summary or draw a picture of what you learned from the activity and discussion.

Appendix D

Post Session Evaluation (completed by Teacher)

Grade____________________ Teacher____________________

School____________________ # of students_______________

Date of Session____

1. Did you feel this disability awareness session was worthwhile? Please comment.

2. Did your students benefit from the session? Please comment.

3. Please provide any suggestions for improvement of this presentation.

4. Is there any follow-up that you require?

- did you feel adequatly prepared to do the pre + post sessions?
  what would help.
  → materials provide, suggestions, ect.

5.1

2/24/2000

Summary of Evaluations of Field Test Sessions

10 evaluations were received in total. (evaluations from teachers and one from the co-chair of a parent council who observed.)

Presentations by grade:
Grade 3 – 4
Grade 3/4 – 1
Grade 4 – 2
Grade 4/5 – 1
Communications Class – 1

Summary of comments by question:

1. 10 of 10 evaluations stated the session was worthwhile

   - minimum of preparation appreciated
   - children need exposure to understand
   - even though we have many disabilities in our school and classroom the children still need help and education in order to be empathetic to all others
   - students were given a very thorough experience – good hands on experiences
   - reminds students to be aware of others in a respectful way
   - activities and discussion drew them in to the realities of having a disability that hampers your interaction with others and your environment in some way
   - more children with a variety of disabilities and diversities are now integrated within the regular classroom settings. Awareness, education and acceptance should become part of the regular curriculum.

2. Did the students benefit from the session. Please comment.
   10 of 10 evaluations said yes.

   - Preparation and input is essential otherwise students will misunderstand term/conditions/vocabulary
   - Students feedback was very positive. Students seem to be more aware of various forms of disability
   - Students were able to ask their questions and had an opportunity to experience a temporary disability
   - Children need exposure to gain understanding
   - They experienced for a few minutes how a disable person feels much of the time
   - A good hands on experience

5·1

- They thought about living with a disability
- Yes especially since they themselves have felt centered out or at a disadvantage in some way
- They enjoyed learning about disabilities (both visible and not) and how we treat every-one with respect and understanding
- Students were eager to participate
- Many were able to relate personal experiences to session. Putting students in role of disabled person sparked much thought

3. Please provide any suggestions for improvement of this presentation.

- Good info about similarities/differences
  - ✓ Have incorporated into presentation
- During activity a lot going on at once
  - ✓ Within the limitations of classroom set ups we have tried to create more space and have clear transition points in the presentation
- Keep reinforcing points
  - ✓ Questions have been structured for a more developmental flow within the presentation
- Perhaps vocabulary visible on cards
  - ✓ We will have vocabulary cards and pictures of well-known personalities available for use. We will use them depending on the responses of the children
- If possible involve more than 6 students in active part of presentation
  - ✓ Have incorporated a total of nine students – this is the limit for the type and length of presentation
- Hold session in gym so all students can participate in experiencing a disability
  - ✓ The activity while a integral part of the presentation is a starting point. We are offering an opportunity for discussion and questions to deepen the understanding of children. We feel this is best done is a familiar and structured setting.
- Hard for kids to sit for an hour even though they are interested
  - ✓ Transitions within the presentation allow for small breaks, where the situation is warranted a stretch break can be incorporated
- Perhaps provide pictures or more discussion about different disabilities. I'm not sure my students understood what the term physical disability meant.
  - ✓ We will have vocabulary cards and pictures of well-known personalities available for use. We will use them depending on the responses of the children
- A sharing session about disabilities in their own (student) families and how the kids feel when people stare, laugh etc. at a member of their family ~~an awful lot of talking~~
  - ✓ We have incorporated this question into the presentation

- Some students who are kind hearted and wish to help others sometimes hesitate because their own self-esteem is weak and they feel guilt by association. I appreciated having this discussion and suggestions for how to proactively deal with this and would like to see this become part of the permanent package.
  - ✓ We have incorporated this into the presentation and it has provoked thoughtful responses from the children
- Some students had difficulty naming emotions – perhaps providing a list of emotions to choose from or to include a discussion on emotions in the teacher's prep would facilitate this.
  - ✓ This has been incorporated into the presentation for the past 5 presentations and is an effective strategy to increase overall participation of students in our discussions
- When one of the facilitators has an invisible disability perhaps the students could try to guess what her disability is.
  - ✓ Not sure this suggestion would deepen understanding

5.1

Summary of Changes to the presentation

1. Introduction – we are not parents
2. Emotions brainstorm
3. Simplified the instruction activity card
4. Added an activity – one child puts on a shirt with mittens and tries to do it up.
5. Structured the questions to a more developmental format. One concept which leads to another. We have simplified the friendship question and added a question - if you are nervous about approaching a child for fear of being teased what strategies could you use?
6. Have some picture and vocabulary resources, which can be used if needed.