

DRAMA AND ITS ROLE IN THE INTEGRATION
OF MENTALLY CHALLENGED STUDENTS

- A CASE STUDY

by

JANE E. POWELL

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Department of Language Education

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to build up a picture of what was happening to two mildly mentally challenged students in an integrated Grade 9 Drama class.

A case-study design was employed and the students were observed over one semester. References were also made to related events in the second semester.

After analysing the files of the subjects, the teacher-researcher kept journals to track her thinking, planning, and responses to the events of the classroom. A videotape of two classes was made and a checklist was used to obtain feedback from an observer. A District Counsellor interviewed the subjects at the end of the first semester. The regular students in the subject class also wrote about the integration process and its effect on them.

Because the study was descriptive, the objective was not to make conclusive statements that would apply to other classrooms. However, the issues that emerged concerned teacher and regular student readiness for the integration of the mentally challenged, the need to respond to the mentally challenged as individuals, the necessity for flexibility in programming, and the possibilities that mainstreaming offers for the growth of all those involved in the process.

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INTRODUCTION

Fifteen years ago, while I was attending university, a professor showed a film about mentally challenged children. Because of the recent deaths of two of my children, I was overcome with sadness at what I saw as a waste of human potential. I left the room. It was not until seven years later, when a colleague invited my drama students to become involved in teaching life skills to mentally challenged students at Overlander Secondary School, that I chose to confront my feelings about the mentally challenged.

As I visited Overlander School with my students, I was learning along with them. I was devastated to learn that one boy had swallowed a bottle of Aspirin and that this action had left him severely challenged. As I started working with the students, I learned from their teachers how to respond to them and began to feel more at ease. I also discovered that the interaction provided by drama resulted in moments of magic between the two groups of students.

The cooperative ventures between drama students and Overlander School continued for two years. They started with the presentation of scenes to demonstrate appropriate dating behaviour. With their experience with the Overlander students, Norkam students then created and presented scenes to their peers designed to change the way regular students related to the

challenged. Later, Drama 10 students taught drama techniques, such as tableau, to the Overlander students.

During one visit to the special school, I remember one of the teachers rushing down the hall to thank me for bringing the drama students; he stressed how important it had been for his severely challenged students to see regular students. I remember thinking that he was the one who deserved the thanks, but in his manner, I read a yearning for a normal life for his students.

When I learned that Overlander School was closing and that students would be attending neighbourhood schools, I wondered how the students would survive outside the protection that the special school offered. Perhaps partly from concern, and certainly because of the moments of magic, I was anxious to become involved in integration at Norkam.

It so happened that the journey of School District #24 towards inclusive schools and my own journey were in step.

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Throughout the study, I shall return to the first person perspective where relevant, as dictated by the methodology and content.

CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Introduction

Over the last twenty years, we have seen a growing concern with the rights of the individual. This concern has been formalized by legislation and has had its impact on all areas of our lives. In North America, recent legislative actions have required that all children have a right to be educated in "the least restrictive environment" (Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. U.S.C.).

At one time, children with special needs were segregated in order to give them the opportunity to work in a smaller group with a specially trained teacher, but this policy has been called into question by those who believe that to separate children from their peers is to deny them important opportunities for growth. "The best language, social, dress, and behaviour models are in regular education classrooms" (Brown, Schwartz, Udvari-Solner, Frattura Kampschroer, Johnson, Jorgensen, & Grenwald, 1991).

While it is difficult to disagree with a policy that offers equal opportunity for all, the subject of mainstreaming does raise some important issues in its application. It appears that, for the moment, most of these questions are being asked at the

classroom level and, because the inclusive schools movement is in its infancy, many of the questions remain, as yet, unanswered.

Definition of Terms

Several terms used in this report have specific meanings in the context of classroom teaching. Definitions of these terms as used in this report are offered for the purpose of clarification.

Mainstreaming. Mainstreaming is the "temporal, instructional and social integration of exceptional children with normal peers" (Kaufman, Gotlieb, Agard, & Kukic, 1975, p. 40).

Mentally challenged. The term mentally challenged refers to those students who possess "significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning" (American Psychiatric Association, 1980, p. 360).

Drama. Drama is an activity characterized by the taking on of roles.

Dramatic playing. Dramatic playing is a role-drama strategy in which the participants spontaneously take part in a fictional social event without the intention of playing to an audience.

Performance mode. Performance mode is a drama strategy in which the participants are concerned with the effect of their actions upon an audience.

Role drama. Classroom strategies that include dramatic playing and performance mode activities.

Teacher in role. Teacher in role is a strategy in which the teacher assumes a role within the fictional, social context in order to extend the learning.

The Problem

For the two years prior to the initiation of the study, Kamloops School District had been preparing for the mainstreaming of special needs students into the regular classroom. Inclusion of mentally handicapped students into their neighbourhood school became a reality with the closure of Overlander Secondary School in June, 1990. Not only did this school provide special programs such as Life Skills for its special needs students, but it offered a somewhat protective environment.

The closure of Overlander Secondary School meant that between five and seven special needs students were attending Norkam Secondary School. Although these students were placed with a special education teacher for Language Arts and Math, they were able to attend regular classes in elective areas.

Several research studies have examined the attitudes of teachers and non-handicapped students to mentally challenged children in their schools; some research studies have attempted to evaluate the process of mainstreaming in specific cases; few, if any, studies have focused on the mentally challenged students

themselves. As my drama students have worked with Overlander students from time to time, of interest to this study was to explore how these mentally challenged students fared in regular classes.

Two integrated students have chosen Drama as an elective, so this study focused on them as they took part in a regular drama class.

Summary of Problem

While many researchers have focused on the attitudes of the host community, it seemed of interest to determine the effects of mainstreaming on those students who have the most to gain and the most to lose from the inclusive schools movement, the mentally challenged students themselves. Therefore, this study focused on two mentally challenged students who were integrated into a regular drama class.

CHAPTER TWO

The Mentally Challenged

Because so many professionals have been involved in providing services to the mentally challenged over the years, mental retardation has been described from many viewpoints and in many ways. Although definitions are still not fixed, the American Psychiatric Association suggests that any definition of mental retardation should include three factors:

1. significantly subaverage general intelligence functioning,
2. resulting in or associated with deficits or impairments in adaptive behaviour, and
3. with onset before the age of 18

(A.P.A., 1980, p.36).

If it has been difficult to reach a consensus on the definition of mental retardation, it has been doubly difficult for educators to arrive at an agreed response to this condition.

Most special education services prior to the 1960s were administered in self-contained classrooms that segregated the retarded child from non-retarded peers (Drew, Logan, Hardman, 1989, p.259). In 1954, in the case of *Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka*, a court decision came down in favor of the rights of the plaintiff to regular schooling, and it was stated that the doctrine of "separate but equal" had no place in the

education system (Drew et al., 1988). More recently, public laws in the United States, such as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) and the Vocational Rehabilitation Act (1973), have ensured full educational opportunities for the handicapped, and have laid out procedural safeguards such as the right to be fully informed and included in all decisions. In order to guarantee appropriate education for eligible handicapped children, the law requires that individualized education programs be developed if and when necessary (Drew et al., 1988). The clause stating the right of handicapped persons to an education in "the least restrictive environment" continues to be put to the test in the courts.

Integration is an affirmation of the importance of learning and performance opportunities provided by social interaction with peers (Drew et al., 1988). Research into cooperative learning suggests that having children working together ensures the use of higher reasoning strategies and critical thinking than those that are used in a more traditional classroom organization. Its proponents claim, also, that peer relationships are a critical element in the development and socialization of children and adolescents (Johnson, 1980).

However, given the complex nature of retardation, the integration of mentally challenged students is by no means a

simple process. Mainstreaming is described as "temporal, instructional, and social integration of eligible exceptional children with normal peers" (Drew et al., 1988). However, there is the misconception that just placing mentally handicapped students in a school constitutes integration. In fact, "it is necessary to provide a systematic program to increase social integration" (Lewis & Doorlag, 1987). One intervention that seems promising is the use of peer tutors. The number of positive group activities increased among even severely mentally handicapped students when peer tutoring was employed (Rose, 1979). Another intervention is the "Circle of Friends" program whereby a group of non-handicapped students gets together with the integrated child and a teacher to brainstorm solutions to problems that arise. There is evidence to suggest that these types of intervention provide positive feelings for the helpers, as well as providing support for the handicapped (Sasso & Rude, 1988).

Certain teaching methods have also been suggested to help the integration process. In a study of integrated pre-school children, spontaneous make-believe play was found to be an activity that promoted interaction between the two groups of students (Gardner, 1982). Cooperative learning groups that include the mentally challenged have also been suggested. Other activities that enable students to work at their own pace, such as

project work, use of learning centres, and individualized educational programs have been recommended (Bowd, 1986).

Teacher attitude towards mainstreaming is perhaps the most crucial variable in the measure of success of mainstreaming (Winzer & Rose, 1986). However, many teachers are not advocates of integration, and the regular classroom teacher feels "ill-prepared to meet the challenges" (Berra, 1989. p. 57). Teachers do not have the knowledge or the experience to cope well with integrated classrooms, nor do they have access to appropriate instructional techniques (Berra, 1989). Part of the problem appears to be that many teacher training programs stress academic content rather than methodology (Berra, 1989). Working with the handicapped requires the teacher to make a shift in focus; in the regular classroom, the system dictates the curriculum, whereas in special education, it is the child who dictates the curriculum (Lieberman, 1985). Dorothy Heathcote, a leading drama educator, sums up this different approach when she suggests that when working with special needs students "you have to rely more on what you are than on what you know" (Wagner & Heathcote, 1979, p. 210).

It appears that the attitude of the teacher to the student is fundamental to successful integration. Teachers who use a developmental approach may be more successful since they look at all children as individuals in terms of cognitive, social, moral,

sexual, physical and emotional functioning (Berra, 1989). In analysing Dorothy Heathcote's work with handicapped students, Wagner states that "Heathcote's approach is not different in kind from the way she works with any class" (Wagner & Heathcote, 1979, p. 210).

Research into the effects of mainstreaming points out the tendency toward rejection of the handicapped in regular school (Horne, 1985). Rose and O'Connor (1989) call into question the policy of mainstreaming when they state that the practice may have to be re-examined as teachers become more aware that handicapped students are experiencing "increased stigmatization and social rejection as a result of mainstreaming" (p. 279). Other research indicates that mentally challenged students experience lower self-concept in integrated schools (Gruen, Ottinger, & Ollendick, 1974).

Part of the difficulty of mainstreaming the mentally handicapped stems from the deficits in the students. In order to be accepted, students need an awareness of appropriate social behaviours, and the deficit in intellectual functioning often indicates a deficit in social behaviour (Kramer, Piersel, & Glover, 1984). Social awareness includes social sensitivity, social insight, and the ability to communicate (Greenspan, 1979). These components tend to be impaired in mentally challenged students. Social competence has been improved in some cases by

role-taking and sociodramatic activities conducted in segregated classrooms (Blacher-Dixon, & Simonsson, 1988) and the question arises whether even more success would have resulted from similar activities in an integrated setting.

Although it has been found that the mere presence of handicapped students does not disrupt the classroom (Bowd, 1986), several issues around mainstreaming remain problematic. Although peer programs seem to be a useful way of facilitating interaction (as are certain other specific classroom activities), it appears that the very deficits that separate the mildly mentally handicapped from the normal population are those that prevent them from being readily accepted by the normal population. Also, in order for interventions and activities to be put in place, leadership from teachers is essential. At present, many teachers are resistant to the idea of integration. Unless their attitudes change, it seems unlikely that teachers will acquire the skills and beliefs necessary to make the inclusive schools movement a success.

If certain activities are more likely to promote integration than others, one might assume that drama, which deals with social interaction, might yield interesting results. The following section deals with the question "What might drama offer as a way of facilitating the integration of the mentally challenged?"

Drama in Education

In the 1950's, Peter Slade (1954) proposed a child-centered approach to drama in education as a reaction to what he considered the imposition of adult forms of drama on young people - notably the scripted play. He drew up a list of the kinds of drama suitable for the developmental stages of children. His follower, Brian Way, saw drama as a way of developing the "individuality of individuals" (Way, 1967, p. 3) and suggested specific exercises to increase the sensory awareness of young people.

However, Dorothy Heathcote (1971) and Gavin Bolton (1984) raised questions about learning in drama. Bolton (1984) claims that the purpose of drama education is "to exercise mental powers" so that a 'common' understanding of life can be mastered (p. 150). More recently, in the Report of the Royal Commission on Education (1988), in British Columbia, the author states the need for "all members of a society to share a set of common understandings" (p. 92) about themselves and their world. In the same document, all subjects, including drama, are acknowledged as a "way of knowing" (p. 95) and the Fine Arts strand comprises one of the four main strands in the proposed Intermediate curriculum (p. 42).

Drama is characterized by the taking on of roles. Bolton (1989) has defined two modes of dramatic activity - dramatic playing and performance mode. In dramatic playing, he suggests

the participants have "the intention of managing a social event" (p. 128), and working spontaneously within it. To this activity, they bring the resources they use in everyday life.

Whereas dramatic playing is an existential experience, Bolton (1989) suggests that the performance or illustrating mode requires the participants to look with "an outside eye" (p. 130). They become involved in modelling behaviour, in communicating ideas and taking responsibility for "interpreting, manipulating, and directing the players" (p. 130). Like Slade (1954), Bolton suggests that different activities are appropriate for different developmental states - dramatic playing for younger children, and both dramatic playing and performance mode for fourteen years and above.

The content of drama has to do with human behaviour. O'Neill and Chambers (1982) say that students in drama learn about "human behaviour, themselves and the world they live in" (p. 13). Not only is the content of a social nature, but the way students learn is through interaction. Through drama, students create and interpret human meanings through imagined actions and language that simulates and corresponds to real-life actions and language (Neelands, 1984).

A Personal Perspective

Having examined the current thinking in the area of drama in education, I shall now use a more personal style to explain how these themes translate into my classroom practice.

In my experience, drama yields four learning areas. The first is the content. Drama has to be about something, and to teach drama without paying attention to the topic is to read A Tale of Two Cities (Dickens, 1988) and study only the parts of speech and the punctuation while ignoring the phenomenon of the class system or the notion of sacrifice. It would be like marking student essays for grammatical correctness while ignoring the sophistication, complexity, or development of ideas. The second learning area is social learning. Drama, unlike writing, is a social activity as it takes place when individuals interact. Working in drama offers many opportunities for students to learn how to relate to others. Third, drama gives students a chance to develop their ability to use language. By taking on roles, they can adopt different language registers. Finally, the students learn about the art form of drama. They learn to manipulate time and space to create an effect; they use tension, focus and other dramatic devices in their plays.

However, the learning that is available through the drama process will only occur if teachers are clear in their minds about

what they want the students to learn and if they allow them time to reflect on the experience of drama. It is possible for students to do drama, enjoy themselves immensely, and learn nothing, if reflection is omitted.

Let me share an example from my practice to explain how the four learning areas are brought into play. In Grade ten, I teach a unit on the soap opera. Students are already familiar with this dramatic form and they come to understand its attributes by brainstorming; then they work with the different elements by creating an episode of a "soap". While the students become involved in learning about the art form, developing social skills, and finding appropriate language in order to produce a scene, I am wondering how to lead them towards an understanding of the difference between power and love. This is the content; what the lesson is really about for me as the teacher.

I encourage students to reflect on the drama after each presentation, or at the end of the session. Students will either discuss or write about the drama experience and my role will be to ask questions that will focus their thinking. One day, in response to one of my questions, a low-achieving student volunteered:

"In soap operas, they use love as a tool to get what they want."

Thus, even when I am involved in performance mode, and some of my questions touch on other learning areas, my goal is also to increase students' awareness of the way human beings interact through focusing on the content of the drama.

Sometimes I find that the learning arises from student input and moves the class in a direction I had not envisioned. On Racial Awareness Day, I asked my Grade ten students to produce a scene about someone who was different. I broadened the topic in case they did not feel comfortable dealing with race in a multicultural class. One group presented a scene that was about a homosexual hairdresser and it was cleverly done, so we laughed a lot. After several students had commented on the scene, I told the class that I had found the scene very funny, but that my laughter at this topic made me feel uncomfortable. I then asked the same group to produce a scene that would build audience empathy for the homosexual, who must be played by the same boy who played the 'gay' hairdresser. Because I had put the challenge in performance language - i.e. "audience empathy" - I avoided a long and boring lecture on how life cannot be much fun when you find no acceptance in society, but I achieved my goal of having the students, both performing and as audience, look at the other side of the coin. The scene they produced stunned us all. It was about a teenage boy who was dating a girl and discovered that he

was not reacting the way he would be expected to. It showed the scorn that he was subjected to by his so-called friends. Many of us had tears in our eyes at the end of the performance and we arranged to share the scenes with the English class next door. We called the presentation "Two Sides of the Coin".

Although the learning objectives in this class were not planned, the class was characterized by a period of reflection and by focus on the content. By juxtaposing the two scenes, the students gained an understanding that drama can make us laugh and make us cry, and that drama can deal with topics in a superficial or a thoughtful way. Most important, however, it was demonstrated that we can look at issues, such as homosexuality, in different ways.

Even though I have separated these four learning areas for the purpose of explanation, drama is an integrated form and the reader will not necessarily be able to separate them, although she/he may be able to detect the four threads that are woven into the practice.

The Research Questions

In the context of the problem, and in the light of information about mainstreaming and drama in education, these are the questions that the study explored:

1. What is meant by the term "least restrictive environment"?
2. Are we offering equal opportunities if we fail to modify our teaching sufficiently for special needs students?
3. If we do modify the curriculum and change the methodology in order to accommodate special needs students, how will these changes affect the regular students in the class?
4. Do teachers require special training in order to adapt their teaching to accommodate special needs students in the regular classroom?
5. What effect does mainstreaming mentally challenged students have on the attitudes of the regular students and the teacher?
6. If we are teaching the student and not the subject, will mainstreaming change the nature of what happens in the classroom?

In addition, this study attempted to answer more specific questions about two mentally challenged students and their ability to benefit from participation in the drama process (see checklist, Appendix D). Phrased in more general terms, some of these questions were:

1. What kinds of dramatic behaviours do these students exhibit during drama class?
2. To what extent are these students able to reflect on the drama?
3. What modifications to the content of the course and what changes in the methodology have to be made in order to accommodate the mentally challenged student?

CHAPTER THREE

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology of the study, the time limits, the setting, the data collection and analyses. The limitations of the study are outlined and, finally, a first person perspective is adopted in order to introduce the subjects.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Method

This case-study focuses on C.W. and Clayton, two mentally challenged students who took part in a Grade 9 drama class. As well as building up a picture of how the students were experiencing drama in a regular class, reference is made to the adaptations made by the other students and the teacher to the integrated students. The participant-observer role allows the researcher to become aware of changes in her/his perceptions, methods, and ability to reflect on her/his practice, and these observations form an integral part of the study. In this way, the research methodology, classroom practice, and inner dialogue of the teacher become woven together to create the study.

Time

The study took place between September, 1990 and February, 1991, the first semester of the school year, although reference is also made to incidents that occurred in the second semester.

Setting

The setting for the study was Room 100 at Norkam Secondary School, Kamloops. The school is located in North Kamloops, the older part of the city, where the population is multi-cultural. Norkam is a school which is proud of the ethnic diversity of its population and it is known for the friendliness of its students and staff.

The school is on the semester system, a fact appreciated by many of its Grade 12 students who are able to complete courses in half a year.

The classroom in which the study took place is a lecture theatre. It has a raked auditorium which seats ninety people. Lighting equipment is in evidence and boxes, chairs, blankets, and tables are available for the use of the students. Because it is a theatre, there are no windows and the walls and floor are painted black. In an attempt to relieve the sombre atmosphere, theatrical posters have been placed on the auditorium walls.

Three or four times a year, the room is used as a gathering

place for students attending a presentation. In this event, the drama students move to the library or another classroom.

Data Collection

Initial Student Profiles

Profiles of the two subjects were made before the beginning of the school year. These were drawn up from interviews with teachers, parents, and the students themselves, as well as from files. This initial data collection not only provided a basis for the research, but also helped the teacher to design suitable activities for the integrated class.

Observation

The teacher/observer noted student behaviour during the class and used a checklist (see Appendix D) to help focus on specific drama behaviours. The checklist was drawn up to enable an observer to ascertain what kind of understanding C.W. and Clayton may have of the drama process and to gauge their ability to assume roles. The checklist was designed before the beginning of the semester and remained in its original form. Two outside observers also attended the classes during the semester and used the same checklist to observe behaviour. Responses from the checklists were analysed and formed part of the data.

Recorded Observations

Videotape

A video camera was used in the classroom to record activities. It was positioned in the auditorium in order to capture the activity that occurred on the stage area and was used for two sessions of one hour and twenty minutes respectively.

Interviews

At the end of the first semester, the subjects were interviewed by a School District #24 counsellor, who has some responsibility for the integration of special needs students. She conducted semi-structured interviews with each student in order to shed light on the way he experienced the class. Information collected on a more informal basis from the special education teacher and aide was also incorporated.

Journals

The teacher kept a journal to record thoughts and feelings about the progress of the students in the class, the lesson plans, and the research itself. In this way, the teacher's thinking was tracked.

Toward the end of the semester, the teacher asked other students to write journals about the integration of the special needs students and those writings have also become part of the research. The students were urged to be honest about their experience of integration.

Analysis of Data

The data were collected from the beginning to the end of the semester. As it was examined, patterns emerged which enabled the researcher to categorize the information. No attempt was made to apply pre-specified codes or categories as this practice may tend to measure overt behaviour at the cost of ignoring intentions and other less explicit variables in the classroom. Instead, a more holistic approach was taken so that a picture of classroom life could be painted in order to "clarify relationships, pinpoint critical processes and identify common phenomena" (Delamont & Hamilton, 1976, p. 13).

Limitations of the Study

This study of two special needs students is limited by several factors. First, to study a classroom in all its complexity is beyond the ability of one person; in order to study and present the happenings in a readable form, the researcher has to make decisions about what to look for, what to record, and finally, what to report. These decisions were based to a large extent on knowledge, experience, and personality. Second, the very role of teacher-researcher assumes an involvement and emotional investment that would not be present in an outside observer, so researcher objectivity is not an objective. Third, this study is a case

study so it is restricted to the subjects; data on the students will not be able to be transferred to any other special needs students, since abilities, reactions and learning are individual matters. Therefore, the study will be descriptive rather than prescriptive.

The Subjects

Although the two subjects were participants in the various activities we had conducted between Overlander and Norkam prior to this study, my first real meeting with C.W. and Clayton was at Overlander School where they were performing in a play. They seemed friendly and very excited about dressing in costume and acting in front of an audience.

C.W.

I learned from C.W.'s file that he was born on August 4, 1974. His Grade Two teacher noticed his delayed development and, in her referral to Special Services in School District #34 (Abbotsford), she noted that he was unable to copy from the board, could not recognise letters of the alphabet, and his speech and sounds were at a pre-school level. She referred to his enthusiasm and said he was "an eager student".

Following the assessment, C.W. moved to a special class at Golden Ears Elementary. There followed a number of assessments,

and, in October, 1984, test scores were said to indicate "neurological problems" and placed him at the low average range of measured intelligence; he seemed to experience "significant problems with visual motor integration".

Subsequently, the family moved to Kamloops and then moved within the boundaries of School District #24 several times, so C.W. attended four different schools in the next four years. He was always placed in special attention classes. His teacher at Marion Schilling Elementary suggested: "He deserves much greater success than he achieves" and "he always enjoys doing kind things for other people". She noted that he had a difficult time with academic learning but that he always remained "cheerful and cooperative". There was a considerable problem with attendance at one time, and the principal even collected C.W. from home on one occasion, but this difficulty seems to have corrected itself.

C.W. spent two years at Overlander Secondary School. This school offered courses such as Life Skills and Crew Work as well as the more usual Language Arts, Math, Shop, and P.E. It catered to the needs of mentally handicapped students ranging from mildly mentally handicapped to severely and multiply handicapped.

It is likely that C.W. found himself to be one of the more able students at Overlander. His principal, Lorraine Kastelen, remarked that he was "borderline M.R." and suggested that he found

himself there partly because of his delayed social development. Certainly, C.W. was described by two teachers as one of their best students.

Apart from the occasional squabble with classmates, C.W. seems to have done well at Overlander, continually working hard to improve his skills. In his time there, he showed great improvement in P.E. At first, he was "unmotivated" but by the end of 1989, he was taking part in all classes and was an enthusiastic participant in the Special Olympics. His association with this organisation continues into the present.

C.W. was again referred to Special Services in 1990, this time to a speech pathologist. The report which came out in May of that year suggests that he had a frontal lisp which was not believed to be caused by any structural or coordination difficulties. He was able to correctly articulate the /s/sound in isolated exercises and in words during practice sessions. His prognosis for change was good, given his positive attitude and his abilities to correct errors.

When I interviewed C.W. at the beginning of the year, I learned that he had come to Norkam the previous September, but he had been so unhappy that he returned to Overlander. He felt that it was quite different this year "cos of my friends". C.W. told me that he'd been invited to "come back" to Special Olympics and

was anxious to show me pictures of his team and a brochure about one of the events.

When describing drama at Overlander, he said he had enjoyed participating in Charlie Brown's Christmas, but found it "embarrassing" to be captured as Linus in the yearbook, sucking his thumb. C.W. also listed the names of his nine brothers and sisters and said "there are eleven of us altogether". He was referring to his blended family.

Clayton

Clayton was born on November 5, 1975.

The most obvious challenge that Clayton faces is that he is 50% hearing impaired in each ear. The diagnosis was made when he was four years old, and he was prescribed binaural hearing aids. He was placed in the kindergarten for hearing impaired at John Tod School. His bus journey from Chase, where he was living at the time, took 45 minutes.

However, when he was six years old, his teacher was concerned that problems he was experiencing with fine motor control, eye-hand coordination, and counting might not be related to the hearing impairment alone. A formal assessment was not possible then, because Clayton was so uncooperative. It was even suggested that the main difficulty could be his avoidance tactics and weak

attention to task.

A subsequent report from Children's Hospital dealing with many aspects of his development confirmed that there was evidence of neurological involvement which was indicated by a tremor and ataxia, which would be cerebellar in origin. It was believed that his severe delay in language development stemmed from language processing difficulties as well as hearing impairment. Clayton was also found to have congenital ptosis, which would require surgery to correct. Clayton also experienced a mild balance problem and visual motor problems which were apparent in visual memory and pencil and paper activities.

Clayton spent two years in special classes in each of three Elementary schools in Kamloops. In 1988, he enrolled at Overlander Secondary School. Although reports from his Elementary schools indicate that he was uncooperative and used avoidance tactics, none of this behaviour was apparent by the time he reached Secondary school. Indeed, he was described by his shop teacher as "an excellent student" who was pleasant and cooperative. He received an "A" in Crew Work, and his Lifeskills teacher called him "a model student".

It is possible that Clayton, with all his challenges, was like his friend, C.W., one of the more able students at Overlander Secondary. Indeed, when I interviewed him, I was surprised by his

comment that he liked drama because of "dressing up in costume" and "trying to believe you're someone else". Not only did he like the process of drama, but he showed that he understood it. Clayton would not share feelings about his new school, but commented on the lights instead of bells and the fact that it was further for him to walk. He enjoyed other forms of exercise, however, naming volleyball, football, soccer, floor-hockey, and skateboarding as pastimes he enjoyed.

When it was time to leave, he asked about which door he should use and what time we'd be meeting; I sensed that he would be quite open about asking for help.

It's the first week of September and I tell the Learning Assistance teacher that I read her detailed notes on Clayton and C.W.. She says: "You know, coming to Norkam may be just the right thing for those two. They might just get the best of both worlds."

CHAPTER FOUR

It would be some time before I would be able to judge whether coming to Norkam was indeed "the best thing" for C.W. and Clayton. I shall now outline some of the planning for the integrated class and then I will describe the implementation.

The Planning.

Once I had some background knowledge of Clayton and C.W., I could plan for the first semester. The Drama 9 course at Norkam can be divided into two parts: the first part serves as an introduction to processes such as role-playing, brainstorming, improvisation, reading aloud, giving feedback, and review-writing. Once the students understand some of the ways that we can work in and respond to drama, we move on to specific units that apply these understandings. We examine Interview Technique, Medieval Theatre, Stage Terminology, Stage Lighting, and Mythology.

Perhaps it would be valuable to look at one unit in more detail in order to understand what challenges the special needs students might be facing. I have chosen the Medieval Theatre project as it is intellectually challenging. The curriculum guides suggest that students need to acquire a knowledge of the history of drama, so each year at Norkam students are introduced

to a different time period of Theatre history. In Grade nine, the students watch a videotape of a medieval play and we list the characteristics of that theatre form. In groups, they prepare improvisations which may be modern in content, but which incorporate some of the attributes of the Medieval theatre. We respond to the content and the dramatic elements of each scene. A library project follows which includes note-taking and drawing. The unit ends with a test, which asks the students to trace the evolution of Medieval theatre from its origins in the Church.

Looking at the Medieval theatre unit and at the other course components, I realised that the presence of the integrated students might cause me to modify some units, or create alternate projects for them. However, at this stage I was uncertain about what would have to be changed.

It is now seven weeks into the course and I have decided to do the Medieval theatre project. However, I have decided that Clayton and C.W. would be confused by its complexity and its demands in the area of comprehension. I assign the two drama helpers to help them create an improvisation on a topic of their choice. After about four days, the scene is ready to show. I am impressed by the students' ability to stay in character, their naturalness on

the stage, the fact that they are taking the main parts in the scene and by their use of dramatic devices. I persuade them to show the scene to the whole class and they, too, are impressed and break into spontaneous applause. [We do not applaud often in drama class, so a performance has to be outstanding for that to happen.] The scene is about a teenager who becomes pregnant. Clayton plays the boyfriend and C.W. plays a friend of the pregnant girl, who is portrayed by one of the helpers. I have a conversation with C.W. and Clayton after the scene:

J.P. "I thought that was very well done. What
 do you think was good about it?"

Clayton: "Participation."

J.P. "What do you mean, Clayton?"

Clayton: "We all participated."

J.P. "Yes, that's right. What else was good?"

C.W.: "The bathroom."

J.P. "What about the bathroom?"

C.W.: "Melissa talked into the mirror."

J.P. "Yes, Melissa used the frame for a mirror
 and Jay said her thoughts. Clayton, when
 you said: 'You would if you loved me',
 did you find that difficult to say?"

Clayton: "No. It's not real. It's only a play."

J.P. "So, in a play you can do things that
might be difficult to do really?"

Clayton nodded.

From this conversation, I gathered that the students had learned three things about Drama: participation was important, dramatic techniques like shadowing were effective, and that drama gave one permission to do things that might be difficult in real life. I have had regular students who would be hard-pressed to understand these aspects of drama.

The first decision I made was that C.W. and Clayton had to be in class on the first day of term, even though the idea of administrators at the time was to "ease them into" electives. In my classes, the first few days are important as I use games to get to know students' names and exercises that allow students to get to know their classmates. We establish the circle as a way of beginning the class because it allows everyone to make eye contact and it suggests democracy. We throw the ball to each other saying the person's name as we throw. Students might talk to someone they've not met before, learn three things about the person, and introduce him/her to the rest of us. In certain Drama manuals these exercises might be referred to as "trust exercises" and they

are considered a basis for all drama work. I hold a wider view and consider such exercises important before any group activity.

I believed that C.W. and Clayton should be in class for these important activities. Luckily, I was able to persuade the resource teacher and administrator of this necessity. It proved to be a sound decision, as students got to know names and I could explain quietly to Clayton and C.W. that everyone felt strange at the beginning of a drama course. Further proof of the rightness of the decision came in the form of a regular student incorrectly believing that a regular student was one of the integrated ones. This fact was revealed in a quiet interaction between teacher and two students. [As I worked with the integrated class, I came to rely more and more on quiet interactions with individual students as a way of feeling the pulse of the class and I have subsequently adopted this habit in other classes too.]

The second decision I made was to include drama helpers in the Drama 9 class. The Drama Helper Program allows a student in a higher grade who has some knowledge of drama to assist in the class by organizing games and activities, helping groups to plan scenes and by taking on parts whenever necessary; sometimes the helper takes part in planning class activities and I found that I relied on the helpers' ideas a lot in this class - partly because they were closer in age to the students and knew what was

happening from the inside. The helper receives an elective credit for his/her work. My decision to include drama helpers stemmed from the fact that the teacher aide could obviously not accompany each of the seven mentally challenged students to his/her elective class and, as I was to work with two of the more able students, I could not expect this type of support. On the other hand, I knew I would be wanting flexibility in the way I could organize the class: I envisioned times when the subjects would work in groups with the others, times when they might work together, times when they would be working on individual assignments, and times when the whole group would take part in a class dramatic-playing exercise. Also, if a problem arose, there would be more than myself to deal with it. To have the support of drama helpers proved to be invaluable for all of these reasons.

The choice of the drama helpers proved fairly easy. One Grade ten student found herself in the Grade nine class because of timetable difficulties. She was not an academic student and was working on building up her confidence. She was cooperative and enjoyed drama. She readily agreed to become a drama helper and was quite excited at the thought that she might help the students.

Another student found her way into the program as it solved her timetable puzzle and she was also a suitable candidate, having successfully completed Drama 9 the year before.

It is May, 1991. The resource teacher in the special needs class has decided to use drama as a way of looking at how relationships begin. After a preliminary discussion, the students move into two groups - one headed by Clayton, one by C.W.. The teacher aide wrote of C.W.:

"It was super to see him planning and directing. He had so much energy and enthusiasm that it spilled over to the others and students who would never get up and speak in front of the class became involved. They all had a lesson in drama terminology, too, as C.W. relished the director's role as well as being one of the lead characters. They had at least four scenes. Clayton's group presentation was much shorter - only one scene, but it was terrific to see the students taking chances and enjoying themselves at the same time."

The Implementation.

In drama, part of the learning is social learning. One of my objectives is to offer students the opportunity to work with students whom they have not worked with before. In this way, students who do not have close friends in the class feel part of the group. Strategies are successful when students move willingly to work with others and stay with their group, resisting the

temptation to wander over and talk to friends in another part of the room.

At the beginning of each class, students tend to sit with their friends until new groupings are formed. However, even at this stage, I encourage them to sit as one large group in the auditorium.

The subjects were no different from regular students in wishing to sit with their friends. The two subjects and their class-mate tended to arrive before the other students for every drama class, and they engaged in a ritual of clustering around my desk to talk with me, to inform me if one of them was away and give details of why they were away (in fact, if I did not steer the conversation away from it, it would be a time for gossip). As soon as the regular students started to arrive, they would disappear to the back of the auditorium and sit together.

C.W.'s favorite seat was at the back of the auditorium in the corner by the lighting booth. He always chose to sit there. After many promptings for the integrated students to move forward into the main group, they finally chose the fourth row seats-behind all the other students in the class - of their own accord. C.W. would return to his favorite seat to do writing.

The games we play at the beginning of the class are an important way of building cohesion. At the beginning of the year,

they help students to get to know each other, and allow me to establish appropriate ways of behaving in the class. Typically, I utter such comments as "gum, please", "stand on two feet", and "let's listen when someone is talking".

At first, I was anxious that students might not throw the ball to the integrated students, but my fears were unfounded. One awkward moment did occur, however, when Clayton made a mistake when calling out a name. One student, who was late joining the class, laughed. Twenty-eight were silent. I had to make a quick decision: would I say something now or talk quietly to the late-comer afterwards? I decided to talk to her at the end of class, as I decided that my body language and the silence of the others had probably given her the message.

The integrated students had no problem joining the large circle but I noticed a gap between these students and the regular students, which would be filled by the drama helpers or myself, or result in my asking the students to move. (This gap is similar to the one I notice between boys and girls at the Grade eight level and signals discomfort, perhaps).

Because the class was large, I sometimes organized games in several smaller circles simultaneously and sensed that the integrated students were more comfortable in the smaller groupings. I noticed them participating more fully and smiling

more often when the circle was smaller. The smaller game circle also afforded other advantages. One day Clayton turned to me in the small circle and said he could not hear the numbers as they were being called out, so we decided that if we looked at him while we said the number the problem would be solved; as it was only a group of eight, it was easy to explain the new procedure without embarrassing Clayton. My proximity to Clayton also helped the situation.

Once I started forming groups for performance work, the students soon realised the importance of participation. Most regular students stayed with their groups, but I noticed an exception two weeks into the course. On this day, Clayton was not listening well to his group's discussion. This was unusual as he had to pay close attention in order to lip-read. Suddenly, a regular student in another group walked over to Clayton, gave him a special handshake, and then returned to his own group. The action produced a visible brightening in Clayton. As I had suspected, the other student knew Clayton from his short time on the football team and had noticed his sadness. As a teacher watching this interaction, I was excited that a student would break from his group in order to show empathy towards another student. After this incident, I began the habit of telling the student afterwards how much I appreciated the action.

Not only did I find myself reinforcing student behaviours, but in order to facilitate the smooth transition from friendship groupings to class groupings, I found I had to intervene more than in previous classes. One day, seeing C.W. and another mentally challenged class-mate sitting away from the group, I started to approach them, and very quickly they picked up the cue and moved into the group mouthing the words, " Mrs. Powell", and grinning sheepishly. In this, they showed an understanding of the rules and an ability to pick up on the visual cue of my approach. As a teacher, one has to weigh the situation and decide whether intervention is appropriate. On another occasion, I slipped down to the office, having put my students in performance groups with the drama helpers. When I returned, I saw C.W. sitting in a fetal position in his favorite seat and noted that his group was rehearsing a short distance away. I approached him and asked, as lightly as I could, what was going on. He glanced up at me as if I were crazy and told me that he was playing the part of "the uncle who had died". Obviously, my own anxiety that the integration process should flow smoothly had coloured my view of what was happening.

Another way that I intervened was to speak to individual students. In September, after the second class, I spoke to the subjects and explained that everyone felt uncomfortable at the

beginning of the year, but that I wanted them to work with students they did not know and, if possible, to initiate the groupings for the work. I also spoke surreptitiously to one or two regular students and asked them to make sure that C.W., Clayton, or their class-mate felt included. This strategy produced results because others started taking responsibility for the integrated students. After the last class of the day, two regular students stayed behind to talk to me. They suggested that sometimes the integrated students needed to work with each other and not be split up. I appreciated their interest and determined to follow up on their suggestion. In asking these students to "look out for" the integrated ones, I had invited them to become a part of the process and they were indicating their willingness to become full participants.

Not only did class grouping reflect the relationships among the students, but also between the integrated students and the teacher. As I have explained, the students clustered around me on first entering the classroom and would often approach me to ask for extra explanations. For my part, I found myself sitting close to one or all of them when presentations were made in order to congratulate them on a job well done, to encourage them after a fluffed line or missed cue, or to ask a quiet question that might reveal their attitude or test their understanding.

To an observer, the proximity of the teacher to the integrated students would surely reveal their alliance with and their reliance on the teacher. Two incidents outside class brought this aspect home to me. One day, I went home after the students had observed me accidentally fall in the courtyard. That evening C.W.'s mother phoned me to ask about the Theatre matinees. She told me that C.W. "said hi" and was asking if I was feeling better. It is unusual for a male teenager to express concern for me in this way, but C.W. does not feel the restraints that many teenage boys experience. The second incident occurred when I was driving to school and witnessed an accident involving Clayton. As a car turned at the intersection, it caught the back of Clayton's bicycle and he was thrown off. I stopped my car and found Clayton cursing as he looked at his bicycle. He seemed to have no idea what to do and so I stepped in and took phone numbers and names. Luckily for Clayton, the driver admitted it was his fault and offered to pay the repair bills. Had an adult not come by at that moment, Clayton might have lost his bicycle and remained unaware of his rights in terms of compensation.

Thus, facilitating the flow from friendship groupings to working groups in this integrated class involved clear establishment of rules and intervention at several levels. It also involved me in an elaborate dance as I tried to support the

mentally challenged students in the integrated setting, and at the same time steer them towards some form of independence. While this dance is surely the dance of all teachers, I have to believe that the steps were more intricate and required more flexibility because of the particular needs of the integrated students.

It is June 1991, and the school is empty of students.

I meet C.W. in the entrance to the school.

J.P. "Hi, C.W. How are you?

C.W. "Oh, I'm fine."

J.P. "You look great. You got your hair cut."

C.W. "Yes, 'cos I'm working now. I'm gonna
be working at 7-11 all summer. I'm
gonna buy shoes too."

J.P. "Well, it's been great working with you.
And you won't be doing Drama next year?"

C.W. "No, Mr. Watson says I can go into Work
Experience."

J.P. "That's great, C.W.. Have a good summer."

C.W. "And you, Mrs. Powell."

I'm reminded that being mentally handicapped means coping with the normal challenges that life throws your way in addition to those peculiar to the mentally handicapped.

One of the questions I've been considering is whether role playing or performance-type activities work better as a way of integrating students. I have used both, but started the year with a lot of role-playing. I thought that this strategy would build shared experiences for both groups of students within the class. Also, I thought that Clayton and C.W. might feel more comfortable with teacher-directed activities to begin with. It so happened that I had just returned from a six-week course with Gavin Bolton at U.B.C. and was inspired by some of his work in role-playing, so I decided to modify a class of his based on the story of the Pied Piper (Browning, 1970).

The Grade nine students sat in a circle on chairs and boxes on the stage area. I told them:

"Today we'll be doing the kind of drama where you have to believe that what happens is real. It's not really acting but thinking like another person. Do you think you can manage that?"

I suggested that we try to do this in a simple way and we would practise this kind of drama in an exercise. I then said "I saw a rat this morning" and requested them to ask questions that would help us all to believe in the rat. They asked questions such as:

"Were you afraid?"

"What colour was it?"

"How big was the rat?"

"Where did you see it?"

I answered each question seriously and simply. Clayton and C.W. asked no questions but were obviously listening.

Once the class got the idea of believing in that situation, I put the phrase 'A thousand reubles take twenty-thousand' on the board and told them we'd be looking at what would happen to make someone say that. Then I narrated the story of the plague of rats in Hamelin and how they were affecting the townsfolk.

I put the students in groups of five or six and told them:

"You are the townspeople of Hamelin. Everywhere you turn there are rats - in the bathtubs, the pantry, trying to get into the baby's crib. See if you can come up with some ways that you can protect yourselves."

As I circulated through the room eavesdropping on the various groups, I noticed that all groups were on task.

As I passed C.W.'s group, I heard him suggest jars to store food. Others in the group were listening attentively. Clayton, who was also in the group was silent but carefully watching the speaker to hear what she/he was saying.

After five minutes or so, I stopped the activity and asked them to prepare a report which they would have a spokesperson make to the other citizens.

We set up Room 100 with chairs, boxes, and tables to represent a chamber at the Town Hall and I assumed the role of chairperson:

"Now, we have got together to share some ideas on how

to cope with the rats. Who'd like to speak first?"

One group presented their ideas and then C.W. got up to speak for his group. I was surprised to see him volunteer. He suggested several ideas, but his speaking was hesitant and he fluffed several lines. However, he communicated the ideas effectively enough and so we moved through the groups.

The next stage of the drama was to introduce the Town Council or Burghers. Half the class chose to be the council, and they assumed positions on chairs which were placed in a row upstage. I asked the others to sculpt them in suitable positions to make a still picture. I shared with the sculptors in a hoarse whisper that the burghers were snobbish and arrogant - and we clarified the meaning of those words.

The sculptors chose a student to transform, but they had to tell them what to do - they could not touch them, as I wasn't sure how well the class might cope with physical contact so early in the semester. It so happened that C.W. was a burgher and Clayton a sculptor, but they were in different areas so they did not work together. All the students seemed to enjoy the exercise immensely

and once the picture was created, the sculptors commented on their work and we then sat in the auditorium as ourselves. I quietly asked Clayton if he liked the exercise and he said "Yes, 'cos they had to do what you said". Perhaps, within the drama form, Clayton was experiencing a sense of power that his life did not readily give him.

The last phase of the sequence would take us into dramatic playing, so I prepared the class in this way:

"Now I'd like the burgers to assume their positions.

I assume that you, Eddie, are the Mayor, as you're sitting in the centre. The towns-folk will be asking you some difficult questions about the rat problem, so I want you all to have some convincing answers ready."

I gave the rest of the class time to formulate some stories and questions and told them:

"I shall be in this part, too, and we are going to act it as if it's really happening. Any questions?"

The townsfolk entered and started to question the burghers and I began a narration:

"Just as the burghers were wondering how to answer that question, a clerk entered and said:"

I entered as clerk and said:

"Your Worship, there's a man outside. He looks strange. He's wearing red on one side and yellow on the other and he claims he can get rid of them rats. I think you should see him. Shall I show him in?"

Then I entered, springing lightly on my feet, as the Pied Piper and I explained how I had magic that would rid the city of the rats, but it would cost them a thousand reubles. The mayor jumped in at the just the right moment with the phrase: "A thousand reubles. Take twenty-thousand!" The drama ended.

I then asked students to write in role about the events and Clayton came up to ask me how to spell "arrogant". I asked him if he had enjoyed the drama and he said that "the best part was when you were the man". He said that it had surprised him that I was the teacher, but I'd been the man in the drama.

When the students completed their journals, we discussed the experience of the drama and the end of the story, and they did group scenes which demonstrated what they thought happened to the children of Hamelin.

In evaluating my decision to use role-drama, it seems that I did achieve the purposes I had set out. All the students were introduced early on to a broad range of drama techniques, they moved in and out of dramatic playing and performance mode, and they had opportunities to relate to each other in role and out of

role. Performance mode involved preparing a group presentation where the content was valued more than the performance. Because the students made lots of choices, there were opportunities to be passive as well as to take more active roles.

Indeed a student was later to remark on the integration process:

"It was awkward at first but with the activities we do in class it makes it easier to get along with them".

In retrospect, however, perhaps one of the most important consequences of this decision was that it enabled me to postpone the formal marking of work. In role-drama, I do not find it appropriate to allocate marks, so the integrated students were given some freedom to make mistakes. Perhaps, even more important than this benefit, was the fact that the regular students did not see themselves as losing marks because of the mistakes of the newcomers.

In performance, where the teacher is evaluating the work, any mistake by an individual does have an impact on the group that is performing. Later, when working on projects that were evaluated, I started making an allowance for the special needs students. If they made mistakes, I would not deduct marks, but I'd visualize the scene without the mistakes. It is to the credit of the regular students that not one of them ever asked me whether it

would jeopardize their mark to be working with the integrated students. Looking at the students in the class, I judge that it was not because they didn't care about marks.

In their journals, many students addressed the issue of the different skill level of the integrated students:

"Sometimes it's frustrating because they seem to forget their lines".

"I can't help but get frustrated sometimes but I try not to let it show 'cause I know if I was them it would hurt my feelings."

"I know that I go out of my way not to get mad or irritated if they forget their lines or mess up because I know they are trying."

"The only problem I've found working with these kids is that sometimes they slow you down because you have to take more time to make it clear what they have to do."

Often, I saw evidence of the extra coaching that the regular students had to do to prepare the integrated students for performance. It was always done thoroughly and kindly as far as I could see.

It is several weeks into the course and the students are working in performance mode. Downstage, a group with two integrated students is working. One regular student is

demonstrating how one of them should move in the scene, explaining everything as he does it. Now, a boy is lying down on the bench and reaches a hand over his head to Clayton, who is sitting on the floor as a street person wrapped in a blanket. They shake hands. Clayton smiles. The handshake is not part of the scene but a gesture of encouragement.

Often, the integrated students would ask for clarification or indicate that they understood. Only on one occasion did I see a regular student become frustrated by what she saw as the unhelpful attitude of one of the integrated students, a girl who had by then joined the class. The regular student approached me declaring:

"She won't do anything!"

I explained that maybe she didn't feel comfortable and the girl might try asking her what she would like to do. The girl returned to the group and asked the question. It worked and the group's objective of producing a thoughtful scene was achieved. Although it seems to be a positive sign that only one student became so frustrated that she asked me to help, I wonder to what extent shielding students from our feelings is valuable. Perhaps if regular students are merely protective, they have not yet reached a stage of "family" or real inclusion?

Not only did the regular students coach C.W. and Clayton, but they became role models for them. One Grade nine student referred to this aspect of integration when she wrote:

"It's like we are role-models for them in a way that what we do they watch and do, too."

It is one week into the course and the students are sitting in a semi-circle on the stage area. I am in role as a police officer asking questions that will help us find a local boy who has gone missing. Some students volunteer information about where they last saw Peter - in the pool hall, on the way home from soccer, and so on. The students seem to be involved even if they are not offering any information. C.W. says nothing but looks towards each speaker as she/he talks. Clayton seems to be enjoying the drama and has half a smile on his face. He keeps taking furtive glances at one of the Grade nine students, hoping to catch his eye and smile. The boy keeps staring at the speaker, even though Clayton's attempts to communicate must be obvious to him. Clayton finally gives up. He has learned that in role drama we have to concentrate on what is happening and stay within the drama. It's true - students really do learn from each other.

Just as the regular students became role models for the integrated students, so the regular students must have looked to me for leadership in the integration process. It is a difficult balancing act because I didn't want to give C.W. and Clayton more attention than I gave the rest of the class, but I wanted them to have extra support if they needed it.

It is September 10, 1990, and the students are presenting their group's ideas on how to rebuild a school. Two students and I are board members who ask questions of the presenters, but the rest of the class can also question the spokespeople. The board sits on the stage area and the rest of the students are sitting in the auditorium. The first presenter approaches. After the report, she is grilled well by the board members who seem to be taking their responsibility very seriously and don't intend that taxpayers' money should be wasted. C.W. steps forward to present the ideas for his group. We can hear them all and he stumbles only a little, but when it's question time, silence ensues. Obviously, the other board members are reluctant to put him on the spot, so I jump in with two or three questions of clarification. He answers them and the awkward moment passes. Here is an example of how powerful

teacher-in-role can be as a way of modelling behaviour. Clearly, the student board members had the sensitivity to know that he could not handle incisive questions, but they lacked the skills to find an alternative way of responding to his ideas.

Certainly, it was awkward at times when C.W. attempted to read or say lines that he could not manage well. He would often write down the lines on a scrap of paper, but sometimes he would fluff the reading. Usually, I'd be sitting near to him in the auditorium so I could say "It's no problem. Everyone makes mistakes sometimes". I hoped I was not sounding patronizing when I said this, as he does have the ability to talk positively and philosophically about such incidents. The regular students appeared uncomfortable at times like this and would not move a muscle until he had finished. One student wrote:

"I do not like seeing them do things they cannot seem to do. I felt awkward seeing him struggle".

It was painful moments like this with C.W. that made me wonder about the integration process. Were we just setting him up for failure? Wouldn't it be easier to segregate the students and protect them from failures like this?

In an attempt to receive feedback from the regular students, I arranged for the resource teacher to keep the integrated students after lunch one day. Apparently, he started by trying to disguise the reason, but C.W. said:

"Oh, they want to talk about us. Okay, no problem."

I reminded the regular students of the study and told them that their comments could be anonymous. I strongly emphasized that their comments would only help me if they were honest about the process of integration. I explained that I wanted to know how they thought and felt about the challenge of integration and whether they felt they had learned anything from it.

In reading their journals, I found that the regular students had felt as protective as I had done:

"Integration is very trying on the person being integrated."

"Integration is a good thing if the person who is mentally challenged agrees to it."

No doubt the students saw incidents in the hallways that I was not aware of that caused them to remark:

"I don't mind integration. I'm all for it, but I hate seeing them get bugged by the 'cool' kids and the skaters."

"Some people make fun of them, or tell jokes about them. They get upset and it seems to have a bad effect on them."

These comments would seem to support the research by Gruen, Ottinger, and Ollendick (1974) which suggests that the self concept of the mentally handicapped goes down in integrated settings.

Two students of East Indian heritage also took this attitude. Both of them have written and have done drama about racism, so I'm sure they could relate to the abuse the mentally challenged students faced. One wrote:

"If I was in one of their situations, I would probably just like to stay at Overlander."

The other said:

"I feel in a way they shouldn't be here because of the way other people treat them."

I was surprised to read one student's comment about placing the integrated students in "a friendly school". I thought that Norkam was a friendly school.

Certainly, we have students of minority racial backgrounds who want to get into the school, having suffered abuse in other schools. She wrote:

"If they were put in a friendly school that doesn't have many people in it, that would be nice."

However, the regular students were able to see some of the benefits of integration for the mentally challenged. Some students must have projected their own feelings:

"It makes them feel better when they're around people and it also makes them feel that they're wanted."

"It gives them a chance to do what regular students do."

Other students based their opinion on experience:

"My younger brother is mentally challenged and since he moved to a normal class he is enjoying it more in school. He has a lot more friends and now he knows what it's like to be a normal kid."

"At my other school, people would bug this mentally handicapped kid about this girl he liked. But to him it was attention and he learned to cope very well."

One of the Drama helpers, who had reservations about the abuse the integrated students experienced, nonetheless commented:

"Sometimes I feel happy because they are working hard and getting a sense of accomplishment."

Even though students could see both bad and good effects of integration, many still believed that it was a question of human rights:

"People should be people whether they are handicapped or not."

"I think they deserve to live a good life as much as anyone else."

"I feel that the integration of mentally challenged people is the right thing to do."

One boy, who found their presence in Drama to be "a hindrance" at times, could see the need for inclusive schools:

"I think integration is appropriate because it helps handicapped people get ready for the real world, thus eventually helping them to become productive citizens."

I had asked students to comment on their own growth in this area, and many students wrote about integration as a growing experience for themselves. Some wrote with a commendable degree of honesty:

"Some of my friends joke about them and call them 'tards'. I admit that I have done it but I didn't even know a mentally handicapped person at the time. I really regret what I said."

"In the past, I made jokes to go with handicaps,
but I find that now I don't even think that way."

One student saw integration as a way of letting us know about how
others cope:

"This system does work in one way. It informs us
of the problems they have, how to deal with them
and what friends and relatives go through. It's
a growing experience for us all."

Some students suggested that they grew because of the inner work
they had to do:

"I grew a lot because of integration. I learnt more
about how to accept them and I seem to always put
myself in their position and I imagine how I would
react to how people treat them and act around them."

"This program is good for anyone because you get to
know your true feelings towards the mentally
challenged and maybe if they aren't what you think
they should be you can work on your own feelings
until you're satisfied."

I thought that this last comment showed wisdom in that
the student realised that the integrated students may not
change very much so the people around would have to do the
adjusting.

As well as appreciating the opportunities for growth, some
students grew to appreciate the students themselves, just as I
did.

"I think our class was lucky to have students who tried and when they couldn't do something they tried again. We were all lucky to work together."

One of the drama helpers wrote:

"The first day of Drama when I found out what I would be doing, I felt unsure of myself, but after getting to know them, I had a warm feeling inside, like I was doing something special for them, but most of all for myself. I can say that I've learnt a lot from the very special students."

Three of the regular students were already relating to mentally handicapped people outside school, so they did not learn as much as others:

"I guess I might be more used to working with mentally challenged people because I work with fifty of them every Friday at my church."

"I don't think I learned a lot because of my brother being mentally challenged. I kind of know what to expect and how to treat them so they'll like me."

"I don't think that I've grown any because of integration because we have two mentally disabled people living in my house."

The fact that these students have contact with the mentally challenged reminds me that what's happening in the schools is generally a reflection of what's happening in society as a whole. Their comments reminded me of the big picture once again. I note

that the schools are not lagging far behind the rest of society on this issue - perhaps because lawsuits have set precedents.

Integrating the two subjects into the Drama 9 class seems to have set us all on a roller-coaster of emotions ranging from dismay when C.W. had difficulties, to pride when the students succeeded. The experience has obviously raised many questions in the students' minds.

Is integration fair to the integrated students?

Does the process impede the progress of regular students?

Do the benefits outweigh the disadvantages?

These questions are no different from the questions raised by researchers, teachers, and parents.

Apart from these more general questions, we lived with the constant question of how to respond to this new situation or that new situation.

The class has just returned to Room 100 after a talk by Norman Kunz, a man who has his Ph.D. and is a successful counsellor and speaker despite the debilitating condition of Cerebral Palsy. We discuss the talk. I ask students to prepare group scenes that sum up what he said. I circulate among the groups and, to my dismay, I discover that one

group has chosen to do a scene about a mentally handicapped person. None of the integrated students are in the group.

I decide that I cannot handle feedback on the scene effectively, because of my inexperience. I tell them:

"It's a great idea, but I'm going to ask you to find another topic because we have mentally handicapped people here in our class, and I don't think I could handle this one. I hope you understand." The group accepts my words and changes the topic. My heartbeat slows down to near normal. I suspect that they appreciate the dilemma I am in and they are happy to help out.

The difficulties are not surprising considering that we are embarking on an experiment in living. However, it is my experience that if we can face new situations with principles and values in place, then we will have guidelines to follow. It seems that my students were guided by the belief that all human beings have certain rights. They did not need to read the law to know that because many of them carry that law in their hearts. In turn, I was guided by the fact that by relating to integrated students in my classroom, I could demonstrate how I believe we should live in the world. With these principles in place, perhaps integration is not such a challenge after all.

To quote one of my Grade nine students:

"When you said it was a challenge, I disagree.
The only extra thing we do now is take a
little time explaining. We all have problems
- just like I need your help with something,
they need our help and if we help each other
what problems are left?"

When assessing the subjects' ability to take part in drama activities, I reviewed the checklist that I had designed before the beginning of the year, and noted the observers' responses. In some categories, there was a change over the course of the semester; in others little headway was made.

The first item on the checklist seeks to determine whether "the student is able to follow instructions" (see Appendix D). On September 19, 1990, an outside observer found that C.W. scored a five, and so was able to follow instructions "most of the time", whereas, she found Clayton scored four. Certainly, it was no surprise to me that the integrated students experienced some difficulty following instructions. Often, they would rely on their group or the drama helper to clarify the assignment for them. Clayton, especially, would come down the steps to ask me to explain again. However, this aspect of the class seems to have been frustrating for him because he said in his final interview:

"She just says sentences and everybody gets
ideas, but we don't."

He also said of me:

"She mumbles when she talks."

This last comment suggests to me that Clayton's hearing deficit may have contributed to this difficulty. He agreed, however, that he felt comfortable coming to ask for further explanation. C.W. seems to have had less trouble in this area, although he must have been lost at times. I suspect there were occasions when Clayton and C.W. just listened and did what they were told and they may not have understood very much of what was happening beyond their own role.

In retrospect, I might have simplified some of the instructions more than I did, but I like to challenge my regular students by introducing new vocabulary to them and some of the drama processes are complex to begin with. Certainly, having the drama helpers there to do follow-up was useful.

With reference to item two on the checklist (see Appendix D), "the student is comfortable in non-verbal contexts", no response was made because the students were rarely in a non-verbal context.

C.W. and Clayton chose not to speak very often when planning a presentation, however, the students did find themselves in verbal contexts, and the item "the student was comfortable in verbal contexts" (see Appendix D), drew a response of five for C.W. on September 19, 1990, indicating that "most of the time" he

seemed comfortable. Clayton received a score of three on the same day, and the observer added that "he needed encouragement from his group".

Clayton would always concentrate hard on what was being said - partly, no doubt, because he relied on lip-reading. C.W. would make a few suggestions and once expressed to me his disappointment that his ideas were not adopted by the group. However, as usual, he was fairly philosophical about the incident. In the second semester, he became quite vocal in one group and refused to do a scene about the Care Bears. I gathered that he found the topic childish. [Of course, he failed to see beyond the idea of a children's story and thought that the scene itself would be childish.] Faced with his resistance, his group changed the idea.

C.W. challenged himself to become comfortable in verbal contexts, and would often offer to present his group's ideas. He would take great care to have the ideas written down and he would practise saying them to himself. It seems that he was more at ease when the emphasis was on the content rather than the performance. I noticed that he would agree to say little in a scene and he and the group would have to find lines that he could manage easily. He would again write down the words and practise them thoroughly. When working with his class alone, he found it easier to speak out than when working in Drama nine. He would

have a larger part and use language to direct the scene as well as taking part. Obviously, it was easier to apply what he had learned in Drama when he had the edge.

By the end of the year, C.W. had made a marked improvement in this area and when asked in what way he felt he had improved in Drama, he acknowledged "the speaking part."

Once C.W. began to feel more comfortable in verbal contexts, he seemed more willing to become involved in the organization of the drama. Item four of the checklist suggests "the student initiates activity" (see Appendix D). However, his willingness to initiate activity in the integrated class drew a response of between two in September, and five in December, whereas, had the teacher aide completed a checklist, rather than writing a journal in the special class in April, 1990, he would surely have scored a seven.

Clayton rarely spoke in scenes, but again did much better when working with his own class. His best work was when he assumed the role of teacher in a scene devised by his class. His lines were clear and well projected, although the part was not long. It seemed to me that in assuming the role of a teacher, he also assumed an authoritative tone that I rarely heard him use.

His willingness to initiate activity within the integrated class remained at levels one or two on the checklist (see Appendix

D), and did not soar in the special needs class as C.W.'s did.

Perhaps, the alternate assignments, when the subjects would work with each other and the helpers, were very useful because they gave them an opportunity to take on larger roles, to rehearse more extensively and, as they were only in front of a few people, they had the confidence to carry them off. Certainly, the students felt good about these projects and Clayton, when asked what was the best part of the class, responded:

"The best part was when me, C.W., and Cindy, and two other students out of that class did a play by ourselves .. and acted it out."

It is ironic that, in an integrated class, the time when they were not integrated was the high point for the student. This suggests that flexibility in classroom organization is helpful, because I suspect they would not have had so many skills to use had they not learned from the example of the regular students. However, they needed the opportunity to succeed and feel good about their work and perhaps they could only achieve this when they were among people of their own skill level.

Item six on the checklist (see Appendix D) seeks to determine whether C.W. and Clayton could distinguish whether I was in role, or out-of-role. At first, Clayton was surprised by Teacher-in-Role, but he soon got used to the technique, and followed the

example of the other students in the class. As early as September 19, 1990, C.W. scored six in this category, and Clayton five.

C.W. and Clayton not only understood the idea of taking a role before they joined the class, but soon came to see the difference between being in role and out of role. These switches are sometimes difficult for regular students to grasp, but, with practice, the subjects came to understand. At first, C.W., when rehearsing a performance, did not realise that he didn't have to sustain his role as "the dead uncle" throughout the rehearsal, but I suspect a member of his group told him. Clayton grasped the importance of staying in character during dramatic playing, thanks to his buddy who refused to make eye contact with him. After that, he went along with what others were doing, even if he was unsure of what was happening.

Item number seven of the checklist, "the student is able to sustain a role for five minutes" (see Appendix D), was not checked during observations, although some role-dramas did require them to be in role for that length of time. That neither student had difficulty sustaining a role for five minutes could be attributed to the fact that they were both high-functioning mentally challenged students, they wanted acceptance by their peers and the teacher, and they enjoyed drama.

Item number eight of the checklist, "the student is able to

read dramatic signals" (see Appendix D), was not checked during observations, but both integrated students were able to "read" simple social contexts both in life and in drama.

Item number nine of the checklist (see Appendix D) seeks to determine whether the student has representational ability with "the student is able to use an object to represent something else". Neither student was observed using an object this way. This is due in part to the fact that I discourage students from using objects, and encourage them to use mime whenever possible.

Perhaps the area of least progress for the integrated students was the area of responding to drama. Items ten to thirteen of the checklist (see Appendix D) deal with the area of reflecting on the drama.

10. The student is able to recall the drama experience.
11. The student is able to identify the emotion she/he feels.
12. The student is able to describe the dramatic experience.
13. The student is able to write about the drama.

I suspect that their deficiencies in thinking and language use had a profound effect. Had I had more time in the class, I might have spent longer in discussion with them, rather than just exchanging comments once in a while. Certainly, their interest in the drama could have become a starting point for language

development and thinking activities, as it is with regular students. Clayton usually spoke in two or three word phrases, but, when asked to explain at the end of semester one what his play was about, he responded:

"Boyfriend - I was the boyfriend and then ..
the girl .. she got pregnant .. and there's
and C.W. and Cindy play the friends .. Then,
after awhile I been a different person. I
play a friend and then she goes to the
bathroom and there's the mirror and stuff."

"The mirror and stuff" refers to the girl standing in front of the mirror looking at herself while another actress says her lines from offstage. While Clayton felt it was important enough to mention, he failed to remember the term "shadowing".

C.W. and Clayton were at a disadvantage because they found it difficult to see beyond the literal meaning of a play. One day, when doing scenes on a Christmas theme, one group presented a play about racism. Santa Claus was an East Indian and a small boy reacted in a racist manner to this discovery. We were all shocked at the open cruelty of the scene and agreed that it had not only been effective but had shown a lot of courage on the part of the performers. When I asked C.W. and Clayton what they thought, C.W. said it was "stupid" and "people shouldn't behave that way".

Clayton said it was "okay". Again, with more time, we could have led into a discussion at their level about the purpose of drama in society.

The final item on the checklist (see Appendix D) was whether "the student appears to gain pleasure from the drama". Observers rated them both at six on the scale in this category. There is no question in my mind that both C.W. and Clayton found drama enjoyable. They had good experiences with drama at Overlander School and the process continued to excite them at Norkam. Clayton summed up drama as "fun" and when asked if it made him feel good, he responded "Yeah". I believe one of the reasons Clayton responded to drama so positively was because it empowered him. When I first met him at Norkam, he said he liked being someone else. He enjoyed the role-drama where the others "had to do what you said", and in later scenes he assumed the authority of the characters he played. C.W. also summed up drama as "fun" and later in the interview as "awesome". His attendance, participation, and persistence in all his work suggests that succeeding in drama was important to him.

In addition to enjoying the process of drama, both students seem to have formed ideas about its benefits. In answer to the question, "Do you think Drama is good for kids?" C.W. responded,

"It helps them when they're shy, they're scared."

Clayton admitted that drama had benefits for him:

"It helps me, like now, I can stand out in the middle of a million people."

Clayton felt that the point of taking drama was to learn "how to act better and get along". Although his statement is simple, I couldn't help but think how much better the world would be if we could all learn this lesson. C.W. saw drama from a wider perspective:

"Sometimes, like drama - all it is it shows what could really happen in life out there and they just want to warn people to take it easy, be careful, whatever."

When reading this, I was reminded of the definition of drama "as a way of knowing" in the Report of the B.C. Royal Commission on Education (1988). Certainly, C.W.'s version is much simpler, but I was delighted to see such an advanced idea spring forth from him.

One of the benefits of drama is that it employs those resources that we use in everyday life. While music teaches us to play an instrument, drama gives us the chance to practise using interaction skills such as body-language, facial expression, and

voice. Clearly, Clayton and C.W. reaped the benefits of the drama process and improved their ability to use these resources. This much was evident in their improved performance at the end of the year.

People who have had a brush with death say that the moments of their life flash before them. If drama creates moments that are life-like, as I believe it does, it does not surprise me to realise that at the end of a semester, when I look back on drama classes, it's the moments I remember.

When I think of my students' progress, I may recall a game show format that was effectively used to remind us of what we'd learned about Shakespeare. It might be an improvisation where two male students who do not normally shine in Drama showed how a short-sighted character lost his glasses and felt around the floor for them. Just as he reached for them, his alter-ego pushed them away.

Sometimes personal moments of discovery are shared through journals; a student may tell of the difficulty of abusing an East Indian friend in a scene about racism and the efforts she went to to reassure her. In the friend's journal, I might read how the scene helped her to realise that she could react to abuse without anger.

Just as there are shining moments for the regular students,

so the integrated students had their moments, too. They did not happen immediately; some did not occur until the second semester. However, they were moments that stood out all the more because of the difficulties C.W. and Clayton faced.

One day in Semester Two, I face an unmotivated Drama 9 class and choose to do a project from Improvisation (Booth, & Lundy, 1985, p.149-151), in which family stories form the basis for the drama. I ask the students to share in twos any stories from their families that are funny or touching. After five minutes, we come together in a circle and I ask for volunteers to share in the larger circle. The first student shares her story and we laugh. To my surprise, Clayton raises his hand. I am not sure whether he will succeed so I feel a little edgy.

He tells us the story of how he went horseback riding with his dad. Wanting to go "to the bathroom", Clayton dismounted and headed into the bush. "When I came back, my horse was gone", he concludes. We all laugh and Clayton chuckles, too. We ask him what happened then and he tells us that he had to walk three miles to get home and found his horse already there. Remembering Clayton's remarks about having to walk further to Norkam than to Overlander, I can

well imagine how he felt about that.

Clayton tells the story in a clear voice that we can all hear, he uses lots of facial expression to emphasize his dismay, and some gesture. The class erupts into laughter, and I want the sound of it to go on and on, prolonging his moment of acceptance and recognition. He is the centre of attention having created the fun for all of us.

However, the story behind the story is about a drama student who when working with him made him feel confident enough to share his story with the class.

It is May 23 and C.W. is in a drama scene about a kidnapped child. His performance is remarkable because he fits in so well with the other students. He looks comfortable on stage, even when he has to circle around the others to go and fetch kindling for the fire. When talking to his wife, he says the lines "Don't worry. Be positive. She'll be back." in a convincing and audible way. The scene receives a mark of 8.5/10 and I do not have to turn a blind eye to mistakes made by C.W., because he makes none - not one fluffed line or one awkward move in the whole scene. I feel so proud of him!

CHAPTER FIVE

If teacher attitude is an important variable in the success of integration (Winzer and Rose, 1989), it might be worthwhile to examine my attitude towards integration and the factors that contributed to it.

I think of Hamlet's words "the readiness is all" (Shakespeare, 1963, p. 167) when considering my journey towards working in an inclusive classroom. Because of my involvement with students at Overlander Secondary, I was indeed ready to work with integrated students. Sometimes, schools have been accused of lagging behind societal trends, but the schools in British Columbia appear to be at the leading edge of the movement towards an inclusive society. This proactive approach may be due, in part, to the influence of lawsuits, but it points to the need for pre-service and inservice training for teachers who are thus expected to be leaders in this movement. As Berra (1989) suggests, teacher training programs can no longer ignore such needs. Sometimes, it is assumed that teachers will be ready for all kinds of innovations, worthwhile though they may be, without expecting that they will have to work through a highly individual process. It certainly does not suffice to tell teachers that they must work in inclusive classrooms without involving them in activities that will engage their hearts as well as their minds.

If a teacher is to work in an integrated classroom, I maintain that she/he must carry a strong belief in the rightness of it all in order to function effectively.

Because I was engaged in classroom research, I took a proactive approach to the integration of C.W. and Clayton. I needed them to be there in order to accomplish my own objectives. I might experience integration differently if an administrator had approached me and told me she/he was placing mentally handicapped students in the Drama 9 class in September, in spite of my concerns. (In fact, at Norkam this would not happen without my agreement as the policy is to place students in classrooms where they are welcome).

I was lucky enough to have options in classroom organization because of the presence of drama helpers. Classroom support was necessary even though C.W. and Clayton had no behavioral difficulties. No doubt my attitude remained positive because I did not experience an excessive amount of conflict between meeting the educational needs of the regular and the integrated students.

Thus, a number of factors contributed to my positive attitude towards an integrated class. Had any of these aspects not been in place, my experiences in the realm of the inclusive classroom might have been very different. It follows that the experience of the students might also have been less positive.

Even with the "right" attitude, I was surprised at how challenging the integrated classroom was. Interventions by the teacher and normal students are a factor in successful integration of the mentally handicapped (Lewis & Dourlag, 1987), and I certainly found intervention to be necessary. I discovered that not only did I have to think quickly, but I had to employ some fancy footwork in order to foster interaction between the two groups. It is doubtful that I could have been so effective without the support of the drama helpers.

The area that I have found underemphasized in the literature is the area of support for the classroom teacher. If we expect teachers to continue to honour students while juggling more and more roles in increasingly complex classrooms, it is surely reasonable to ask: who will honour the teachers? Not only did I rely on the support of the drama helpers, but I benefitted from the support of a network consisting of an administrator, the resource teacher, and the teacher aide. We would talk informally about problems the students were facing and also communicate through notes left in our boxes.

One day I found this note in my box:

Jane:

Just wanted to let you know how pleased I was observing Clayton in Drama on Monday. I was amazed to see how far he has come since September .. To see him so involved and so willing to take risks is a real compliment to you.

Thanks for taking that extra step with
him.

Thus, a small group of adults in the school found a way not only to share information, but to create an atmosphere of mutual support through informal conversation, notes, and by coming into the classroom to watch a process or a presentation. At the end of the school year, the resource teacher, aide, and students hosted a lunch for the classroom teachers who had worked with them. As a classroom teacher, I cannot emphasize too much the value of this kind of appreciation.

Sometimes during the year other teachers who also taught the integrated students would talk about their moments of success. We managed to meet once to do this formally, but finding time was a real problem in scheduling meetings. Whereas the integrated students were the main preoccupation of the resource teacher, they were one of many concerns for those of us who are classroom teachers. Perhaps it would have been helpful if we could have been released from regular duties for a short time in order to share our experiences and brainstorm solutions.

The extra support that classroom teachers need in dealing with an integrated class springs partly from the fact that we have to deal with many aspects of the mentally handicapped student. Often, I took on a nurturing role such as checking that C.W. was

wearing gloves in the cold weather, or helping Clayton deal with the bicycle accident. Although I have also become involved in the lives of other students if they were experiencing difficulties, I have found that regular teenagers do not relish prolonged contact with adults, whereas I found that C.W. and Clayton seek out such contact perhaps because they lack both their own resources and peers who might help them. This added involvement nevertheless served to remind me that we have to look at both regular and integrated students in all their complexity. I recall Gavin Bolton's words when I asked him if he had taught special needs students:

"All my students have special needs".

Certainly, the willingness to acknowledge the individual needs of students is a pre-requisite for working with the mentally handicapped, and, as Berra (1989) mentions, this approach may be easier for some teachers than others.

While I found that the special needs students demanded that I look at them as whole people, the integration process also allowed me to watch aspects of other students emerge. A colleague who teaches the Cafeteria Course told the story of an eighteen year old boy who liked to project a "macho" image. One day the teacher walked into the kitchen to find this student with his hand over the hand of a special needs student teaching him to chop

vegetables. This incident echoes many that occurred in my classroom and calls to mind the comment that for regular students "a wide range of social benefits are said to be derived from integrated experiences" (Sasso & Rude, 1988, p. 19).

According to Dorothy Heathcote, when working with the handicapped, "you rely more on what you are rather than what you know" (Wagner & Heathcote, 1979, p. 210). I found that the presence of the integrated students forced me to react more and more from a "who I was" than from a "teacher who knows" stance. The more challenged I was, the more likely I was to react to a situation from the viewpoint of someone learning along with the students. For instance, when the students thought of doing a scene about a mentally handicapped person, I related to them not as a teacher demanding that they change their topic, but as an equal who could not deal with the situation. Certainly, this is the way I often choose to work with students, but it became more and more a necessity, rather than an option, as I ventured into the uncharted waters of mainstreaming.

Thus, teaching special needs students in an integrated class forced me to take into account all aspects of their development. Although in drama I work with all aspects of human existence, working with integrated students served as a reminder of the complexity of all my students. Also, I saw aspects of other

students that may not have emerged without the presence of the special needs students. For my part, I found myself relying on my humanity to guide me through new situations because I had no appropriate methodology to draw on.

I will now return to the questions that I posed at the beginning of the study.

What is meant by the term "least restrictive environment?"

When attempting to meet the needs of the mentally handicapped, it seems important to approach each student as an individual. For this reason, programming must be flexible. C.W. and Clayton probably did get "the best of both worlds". They had opportunities to learn from normal peers in their electives, but they also received individual attention from the resource teacher and they were able to spend a part of each day with their friends in the special class. While this arrangement suited C.W. and Clayton's needs, it may not be appropriate for some of the other students. The search for 'the least restrictive environment' for each student appears to be time-consuming and demands cooperation between the classroom teacher and the resource team.

Are we offering equal opportunities if we fail to modify our teaching sufficiently for special needs students?

In the face of some of the deficits we are trying to address, it would seem almost impossible to guarantee equal opportunities. For this reason, it would be important to plan programs with the input of parents and students. However, my experience suggests that a classroom teacher can go a long way towards challenging the mentally handicapped if she/he modifies objectives and evaluation procedures and offers alternate assignments where necessary. Through working in an integrated classroom, C.W. and Clayton learned a lot about the process and performance of drama and became aware of its benefits to them. One of the main benefits of drama for the mentally handicapped is that in drama we use the resources that we use in everyday life, so students have the opportunity to practise using interaction skills such as voice, body language, and facial expression. (In addition, the advantage of the integrated classroom would be that the students have appropriate role models who are using these resources in a more normal way). Clearly, C.W. and Clayton did improve their ability to use these resources, as their performance at the end of the year shows. Also, they increased their self confidence and believed that drama had helped them either in "the speaking part" or in an ability "to stand out in front of a million people". Even though C.W. and Clayton were mentally handicapped, it is clear to me that they each chose the area where they wanted to

challenge themselves and applied themselves to achieve improvement in that area.

Having said this, though, I believe that one of the most important resources we use in everyday life is the mind, and drama can certainly give us the opportunity to develop thinking ability. In assessing my work with the integrated students, I find that I failed to address the development of their thinking ability in any systematic way. No doubt, they learned a lot in this area from the other students and from class discussion - some of their thinking revealed this, but as a teacher I watched many opportunities pass by simply because I did not have the time, and the drama helpers did not have the ability, to discuss ideas at their level.

Also, it became apparent that Clayton and C.W.'s new confidence and ability shone most brightly when they were among their peers in the special class. These realizations suggest that there are limitations on what can be achieved in an integrated class and point to the necessity for evaluating the whole program for integrated students to ensure that opportunities are offered outside the integrated class to develop skills and to foster self-confidence in a less competitive milieu.

Given their keen interest in the subject, drama was an appropriate way to foster the integration of Clayton and C.W.. By

creating interaction in the drama class, they built relationships with some students who then acknowledged them in the hall with a handshake or a smile. It would be a mistake to call these relationships "friendships" as teenagers tend to make friends with those who think the same way they do. I believe that C.W. and Clayton already had their friends in the special class and needed allies in the crowded hallways who would help them feel a part of Norkam.

If we do modify the curriculum and change the methodology to suit the special needs student, how will these changes affect the regular students in the class?

There is no doubt in my mind that the regular students were affected by the presence of the integrated students. In this case, changes in content and methodology did not affect the regular students as much as did their working with students who have fewer skills than they had. Regular students in Drama 9 had to make adjustments for the different skill level of the integrated students. I believe that their frustration was allayed somewhat by the presence of the drama helpers. However, the effects were not all negative. Many of the regular students in the integrated class learned, or were reminded, that by becoming involved in helping others they could make a difference. When we

face planetary challenges such as pollution, starvation and disease, this learning might be the most important learning of all.

Do teachers require special training in order to adapt their teaching to accommodate special needs students in the regular classroom?

I am sure that I would have benefitted from special training in teaching the mentally handicapped. Special education teachers would be able to offer valuable information on integrating special needs students and meeting their educational needs. As a classroom teacher, such inservice training could only have enhanced my experience of integration. However, in the absence of such inservice training, I believe that my attitude and willingness to seek help from the resource team allowed me to seek solutions to some of the challenges I encountered.

What effect does the mainstreaming of mentally challenged students have on the attitude of the regular students and the teacher?

Because it is necessary to look at all students - especially mentally challenged students - as individuals, it is not possible to generalize about the effects of mainstreaming on the attitudes

of regular students and the teacher. Having said that, however, it is possible to make some comments about the students and the teacher in this study.

It seems that those regular students who had experienced working or living with the mentally challenged already had a positive attitude toward integration. However, the presence of Clayton and C.W. in the class seems to have made other students aware of both their challenges and their strengths. Because the integrated class functioned quite well, due, at least in part, to the involvement of drama helpers, the maturity of the other students and the motivation of the subjects themselves, the experience enabled the students to change their perception of the mentally challenged in a positive way. Several of them were able to give clear indications of their growth by noting how they had changed their behaviour with regard to special needs students, such as not telling jokes about them any more.

Thus, the changes in attitude that did occur in the regular students were, as far as I could tell, positive ones. If we are concerned about the changing attitudes and behaviour of regular students, it seems imperative to ensure that the experience of integration is a fruitful one for all concerned. Had the experience in this case been poor, then not only would I as the classroom teacher be bearing the brunt of negative attitudes from

the students, but I would also be taking responsibility for not handling the class well and being a cause of the deterioration.

As for any change in my attitude, it is more difficult to assess. Certainly, I had a positive approach to integration, but I was not entirely sure that it would be beneficial for all the students. My experience in this class has taught me that, in two cases at least, integration of special needs students can indeed offer "the best of both worlds".

If we are teaching the student and not the subject, will mainstreaming change the nature of what happens in the classroom?

In my experience with an inclusive classroom, I found that the nature of what I do in the classroom did not change, but the degree to which I was performing certain tasks did. It is this added complexity that I believe warrants more support for the classroom teacher both in training, extra hands and minds within the class, and encouragement from outside. As I consider myself more a teacher of students than of a subject, I was still engaged in extending the thinking and honing the skills of my students; I was still an adult attempting to model appropriate ways of relating and reacting for my students. Above all, I was still trying to create in my classroom, a microcosm of the world the way it could be; indeed, integration offered me another way that I could demonstrate how I think we need to be living in the world.

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| 9. | The student is able to use an object to represent something else | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10. | The student is able to recall the drama experience | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11. | The student is able to identify the emotion she/he felt | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 12. | The student is able to describe the drama experience | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 13. | The student is able to write about the drama | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 14. | The student appears to gain pleasure from the drama | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |