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## A Disabled Student? In My Classroom?

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# A Disabled Student? In My Classroom?

Carol Ann Moore

## **Abstract**

The Act, P.L. 94-142, The Education of All Handicapped Children, calls for education of exceptional children in the least restrictive environment, often the regular classroom. Integration of the disabled into the classroom ends the physical isolation, rejection, and segregation of the special classes era. But total integration of the non-disabled and the disabled cannot occur without increased educational attitudinal changes toward the disabled. These changes involve awareness by teachers and non-disabled peers of the unique needs and abilities of the disabled, acceptance of them, and abandonment of prejudicial ideas about the disabled.

## A DISABLED STUDENT? IN MY CLASSROOM?

Carol Ann Moore  
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Greeley, Colorado

(Editor's Note--We asked Carol Ann for this article in the form of an editorial because it contains opinion based on her personal experience. More importantly, Carol Ann has the expertise to give advice on this crucial matter, the ability to write convincingly, and conviction to give an editorial feeling.)

A disabled student?  
In my classroom?

As the information that your fifth-grade room will become mainstreamed with the admission of Scott, you get apprehensive. How will your normal kids react to a cripple?

You've heard of paraplegics and quadriplegics but can't remember the difference. The principal described Scott as a quadriplegic with a spinal cord injury. You vaguely remember having seen something about such injuries on "60 Minutes."

But "quadriplegic"? "Quad-", that means four.

Suddenly, you realize; Scott has paralysis in all of his limbs. Your apprehension turns to panic, then anger--I am not a special education teacher!

\* \* \* \* \*

Variations of the above scenario have occurred thousands of times as regular teachers have found themselves confronted with the prospects of students with different disabilities being integrated into their classrooms. Most teachers experience mixed emotions; many have had little, if any, contact with the disabled. Such teachers are uncertain: What is expected of them? Do the teachers ignore the disabilities, emphasize them, or do they accept them?

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room. Integration of the disabled into the classroom ends the physical isolation, rejection, and segregation of the special classes era. But total integration of the non-disabled and the disabled cannot occur without increased educational attitudinal changes toward the disabled. These changes involve awareness by teachers and non-disabled peers of the unique needs and abilities of the disabled, acceptance of them, and abandonment of prejudicial ideas about the disabled.

However, awareness must be nurtured through positive growth experiences. Mere physical proximity of the disabled and the non-disabled in a classroom and information to effect change are insufficient providers of such growth experiences. Rather, adequate contact between the two groups must exist.

Teachers, as catalysts, can do much to normalize the classroom environment, thus assuring that the disabled do not receive degrading, devaluing messages. Yet, studies indicate that many teachers are no more accepting of the disabled than are other people but are more closely affected by integration of the disabled into the classroom. As a result, teachers must review their attitudes and create opportunities in which normalizing of relationships among all members of the class can occur.

Books help to effect the normalization processes in the mainstreamed classroom. In fact, the greatest potential for change in attitudes about the disabled lies in effective use of books and related resources dealing with disablement. In a concomitant way these same resources can assist disabled students to accept limitations imposed by their disabilities and to realize their potentials. In other words, books and available resources provide affective cognitive information about barriers, needs, emotions, and abilities of the disabled.

Some books reveal the various stages of emotional adjustment to disabilities experienced by the disabled--and often, family and/or friends. Awareness of these stages enables teachers to better understand disabled students (and significant others) in the mainstreamed classroom who have experienced or are undergoing such stages as they adjust to congenital or acquired disabilities.

The typical reaction pattern to the stages includes

the following:

1. Denial - refusal to acknowledge the existence of a disability.
2. Mourning - grieving for the lost self.
3. Anger - hostility toward the non-disabled.
4. Depression - withdrawal as a manifestation of the realization that the former self will not return.
5. Acceptance - adjustment to the new self and an attempt to begin life anew.

Some students with congenital disabilities also evince certain characteristics about which teachers should be familiar:

1. No experience with non-disablement.
2. Inability to explore (depending upon the disablement.)
3. Limited skills development (depending upon the disability.)
4. Social isolation from peers.
5. Distorted self-image and/or low self-esteem.
6. Difficulty in establishing personal relationships.

It should be noted here that not all students with disabilities encounter the above-mentioned stages or exhibit all--or even any--of the characteristics.

Many non-disabled students are fearful of disabilities --contact with disabled peers often creates anxiety or arouses intense discomfort so that these peers are avoided.

As noted above, books--both fiction and nonfiction--provide great potential for attitudinal changes and acquisition of information about disabilities in the classroom. Teachers, who have already read the books, can deal with disabilities in positive ways. Reading such books, these students can perceive that they are not the only ones with disabilities, identify with characters who succeed because of or despite disabilities, improve self-concepts, and solve personal problems and/or gain insights into them.

Non-disabled students, by reading books about disabilities, can develop a sensitivity to human relations, acquire better understanding about the problems often associated with disabilities, and learn about barriers, handicaps, that deter many disabled from leading more normal lives.

In addition to books, however, other resources provide

effective and affective information to students. Teachers must have awareness of such resources and utilize them in the classroom.

Plan and have students participate in units about various disabilities. BUDY Kits (see bibliography) can serve as the focus for such units.

After students have completed primary sections of the units, invite adults with different disabilities to talk to the students. Encourage them to ask the adults questions --but be prepared for unusual questions. Children of all ages exhibit great curiosity about certain disabilities. But children, through exposure to persons with disabilities and satisfactory responses to questions, become accepting of the disabled.

Nobody can resist puppets, especially "The Kids on the Block." These hand held puppets, each of which has a different disability (see bibliography), while entrancing children and adults of all ages, creates opportunities for positive interaction among audiences and the puppets. Children, too shy to ask questions of guest speakers, easily respond to these charming puppets.

Television oriented children readily acquire insights about disabilities from viewing class-length movies and watching other media forms.

Numerous other projects and resources are available to teachers as they build normalized classroom environments in which understanding and acceptance abound. Yet books function as the effective adjuvant in mainstreamed classrooms. Through books about the disabled, students may learn to understand themselves. They can become aware of and develop empathy for the needs of others. And teachers acquire knowledge about their students, be they disabled or non-disabled.

Books touch the life of each individual in integrated classrooms. Walt Whitman, in the poem, "So Long!" from Leaves of Grass, describes the impact of a book:

Camerado, this is no book,  
Who touches this book touches a man.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The contents of this bibliography serve only as a sampling of materials available for use by 5th grade teachers and students. It should be noted that selection of 5th grade was arbitrary. K-12 teachers can locate other materials that meet the diverse range of abilities as do those listed here on their own or with the help of librarians and media specialists.

The majority of books in the annotated bibliography have been published since 1980. Other previously published books dealing with disabilities appear in the following:

Baskin, Barbara and Karen H. Harris. Notes from a Different Drummer. New York, R.R.Bowker, 1977.

Dreyer, Sharon S. The Bookfinder, Vol. I. Circle Pines, Minn.: American Guidance Service, 1977.

----- The Bookfinder, Vol. II. Circle Pines, Minn.: American Guidance Service, 1981.

Journals such as Language Arts, School Library Journal, The Horn Book Magazine, and The Reading Teacher also contain annotations of books about disabilities.

Teachers, as they select books and other materials on disabilities, should use certain criteria as guidelines. Such a list, "Criteria for Selecting Literature," appears in the article, "Portrayals of the Disabled in Books and Basals," in READING HORIZONS, Vol 24, #4 (Moore, Carol Ann, pp. 274-279).

The following individuals contributed in part to the compilation of the bibliography: Cliff Baker, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Division of Special Education, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley; Pauline Odegard-Johnson, M.A., Handicapped Programs Coordinator, Cooperative Extension Service, Colorado State University, Fort Collins; and, Ann N. Smith, Ph.D., Director, School Nurse Achievement Program (SNAP), University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Denver.

#### Annotated Bibliography

Beckman, Delores. My Own Private Sky. New York: E.P.Dutton 1980.

Eleven year old Arthur, who has buckteeth, asthma, and a fear of swimming, and his sitter, 60 year old Jennie, learn different kinds of bravery from each other. Other characters in the sensitive, humorous book include: Norrie, and 11 year old girl who is 5' 11" tall; and Mr. Halverson, who, in his mid-thirties, has braces on his teeth.

Brown, Irene Bennett. Before the Lark. New York, Athenium, 1982.

In 1888 intelligent 12 year old Jocie Royal, unable to take more taunts and jeers because of her harelip, moves with her grandmother from Kansas City to a Kansas farm. There Jocie acquires friends, learns of surgery to correct the harelip, and, eventually, is reunited with her father.

Cohen, Miriam. See You Tomorrow, Charles. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1983.

After Charles, who is blind, gets himself and two other 1st-graders out of a dark room, the children, realizing that Charles does the same things as they, show their acceptance of his blindness by saying, "See you tomorrow, Charles." Readers learn correct ways in which to treat persons that are blind.

Danzinger, Paula. The Cat That Ate My Swimsuit. New York: Delacourt, 1974.

A junior-high student, helped by her unconventional English teacher to acquire personal security positive emotions, campaigns for the teacher's reinstatement.

Dyer, T.A. A Way of His Own. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980.

The boy, Shutok, left to die during the winter by his small band of people because of his paralyzed leg, survives with the help of Uita, a slave girl. The people, returning in the spring, give Shutok an honored place in the group.

Gersten, Irene Fandel. Ecidujerp, Prejudice: Either Way It Doesn't Make Sense. New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1974.

The book contains descriptions of different kinds of prejudices, their causes and effects.

Gold, Phyllis. Please Don't Say Hello. Palo Alto, CA: Behavioral Publications, Laders Professional Center, Box 577, 1974.

Infantile autism is explained through the story of 9-year old Eddie. This sensitive story makes a strong plea for acceptance of autistic and other exceptional children.

Grealish, Charles A. and Mary Jane Von Braunsberg Grealish. The Sneely-Mouthed Snerds and the Wonderoctopus. New York: Human Policy Press.

When incorrect first impressions and preconceived ideas are proved wrong, attitudes change.

Grealish, Mary Jane & Charles A. Grealish. Amy Mauro New York: Human Policy Press.

An excellent story that acquaints students with an orthopedic handicap.

Hayes, Marvell Lo. Tuned In-Turned on. San Rafael, Calif.: Academic Therapy, 1974.

A book for and about students with learning disabilities.

Howe, James. A Night Without Stars. New York: Athenium, 1983.

The story realistically portrays Maria's fears about her heart surgery and the rejection experienced by Donald, who has been badly disfigured by burns.

Jones, Ron. Say Ray. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1984.

Ray, who developmentally disabled, survives in Mexico and manages to get back to his San Francisco home and his many friends.

----- The Acorn People. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1978.

Jones describes his adventures with, feelings toward, and ultimate admiration for a group of campers who are disabled in a sensitive, humorous way.

King-Smith, Dick. Pigs Can Fly. New York: The Viking Press, 1982.

Daggie Dogfoot, a runt piglet, who lives because of his determination despite unusually shaped front hooves, becomes a hero during a flood.

Knowles, Anne. Under the Shadow. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983.

Cathy Marshall and Mark Anderson, paralyzed from muscular dystrophy, become good friends. Through Cathy and her father's efforts, Mark frequently rides a horse--his freedom. Fiona, the former horse's owner, overcomes her fear of riding with the help of Mark and Cathy.

Levine, Edna A. Lisa and her Soundless World. Palo Alto, CA: Behavioral Publications, Laders Professional Center, Box 577, 1974.

Non-deaf children learn about their deaf peers, and deaf children learn to participate successfully in social environments.

Phipson, Joan. A Tide Flowing. New York: Athenium, 1981.

Following his mother's death, young Mark refuses to cope with change. Then he meets Connie, a quadriplegic, whose life he saves and who helps Mark to adjust.

- Phipson, Joan. Polly's Tiger. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974.  
Invisible to others, Polly's tiger gives her confidence to confront the problems of a new school.
- Rabe, Berniece. The Balancing Girl. New York: E.P.Dutton, 1981.  
Using a wheelchair or crutches, Margaret, a 1st grader, demonstrates her abilities and makes \$101 for the school carnival and finally gains respect and friendship from Tommy, a classmate.
- Riskind, Mary. Apple Is My Sign. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981.  
Harry Berger, deaf like the rest of his family, is sent to a school by his father. Home during the holidays, Harry is saved from death by Freckles, a hearing-person, and they become friends. The book uniquely demonstrates the sign language with which deaf people communicate.
- Southall, Ivan. Let the Balloons Go. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963.  
John, who has cerebral palsy and is a spastic, decides one day that he has enough of adults telling him he cannot do certain things because he might hurt himself.

Materials for Teachers

- Bosher, Dr. Louis D. Epilepsy School Alert. Washington, D.C.:Epilepsy Foundation of America, 1828 L Street, NW.  
The program--intended for teachers, school nurses, and other professionals--includes various informational and teaching materials.
- Cleary, Margaret E. Please Know Me As I Am. Sudbury, Mass.: The Jerry Cleary Co., 25 Ronald Rd.  
This guide that includes curriculum instruction, teacher application, and student reactions helps children understand peers with special needs. (Inquire about cost.)
- Odegard-Johnson, Pauline. "Handi Helps." Fort Collins, CO: Cooperative Extension Service, Colo. State Univ.  
These free monthly newsletters include descriptions of different disabilities, their symptoms, causes, and treatment as well as professional resources.
- What's It Like? Fort Collins, CO: Cooperative Extension Service, Colo. State Univ.  
This free 56-page manual of activities, resources, and a glossary is intended to increase student awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities.

Materials for Understanding

BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF DISABLED YOUTH (BUDY). Greeley, CO: BUDY Baker, 2330 21st Ave.

This five-unit multimedia kit provides necessary information and activities to create appropriate interaction and successful integration in the classroom. (\$81.50 per kit)

AID: ACCEPTING INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES. Niles, IL: Developmental Learning Materials (DLM), 7440 Natchez. The AID kit helps students to understand, accept, and develop positive attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. (Inquire about cost.)

FEELING FREE: ACTIVITIES AND STORIES. Scholastic Book Services.

The program, designed to help non-disabled children understand those with disabilities, contains a series of activities and stories. (Consult distributor.)

WHAT IF YOU COULDN'T...?...A PROGRAM ABOUT HANDICAPS. Boston: Children's Museum of Boston with television station WGBH.

The 7-unit kit dealing with 6 disabling conditions creates awareness and sensitivity about persons with disabilities among the non-disabled. (Inquire about cost.)

Puppets

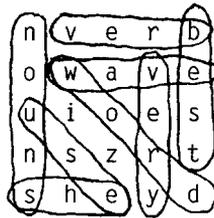
Aiello, Barbara. "The Kids on the Block." Washington, D.C. 1712 Eye St., Suite 1008. These hand-held puppets represent nearly 30 different disabilities and provide insights into problems and questions about individuals with disabilities as well as contemporary problems like child abuse. One puppet program might teach students about deafness, blindness, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, and learning disabilities. Children and adults alike interact with the puppets as they acquire knowledge about disabilities in a unique, enjoyable environment. "The Kids on the Block" is a must activity.

# WORD PUZZLES FOR VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Lee Mountain  
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Suppose you were asked to name all the kinds of word puzzles you use in your classroom.

Probably the crossword puzzles would be the first kind you'd mention. Then perhaps you'd think of the word-search puzzle, a square of letters in which words are spelled vertically, horizontally, and diagonally.



Most teachers say it's easy to come up with two or three kinds of word puzzles for use with pupils, but it's hard to find a wide variety. It's handy, however, to be familiar with a number of different kinds, since word puzzles are useful for vocabulary development.

## Multiple Meaning Puzzles

Throughout the vocabulary development program, we work with students on the multiple meanings of words. Multiple-meaning puzzles can reinforce our teaching.

In this type of puzzle the root word is given at the top of the page. Then clues are given to help the pupil think of expressions, compound words, and phrases which point up the multiple meanings.

Manchester (1979) provides puzzles which point up twenty-five meanings each for such words as step, hand, pin, foot, round, skin, stone, table, show, and run.

The following example shows his treatment of  
RUN

Each definition below should suggest to you an expression which contains the word run. For example, "a person who finishes second" is called a runner-up.