

PROPOSAL:  
FUNDING FOR  
THE "GET-TOGETHER" MODEL

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TO: Mr. Jacques Pelletier  
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Integration or mainstreaming of children with educational or emotional handicaps is now well accepted in education circles. However, actual examples of mainstreaming are few and far between. In the Fall of 1980, a group of education students at York University along with one of their professors decided to start a programme which would show that a diverse group of children could learn and work together. Twenty-five children (aged 5-12) got together every Saturday for seven months. One-third of the children had an obvious label (i.e. mental retardation, deafness, cerebral palsy, down's syndrome) and two-thirds were "average, normal" children. They were all shapes, colours and needs.

The children voted to call the programme the "Saturday-Get-Together". Every Saturday they were encouraged to take responsibility for one another's learning and in the course of seven months each child made dramatic personal strides in his/her ability.

The Saturday programme led to a summer model funded by a Federal Government "Summer '81 grant. Using the same principles that motivated the Saturday programme the Summer was a huge success.

I propose that as the next step, NIMR grant funding to further plan and develop the "Get-Together" model into a full time school to open in September, 1982 and to continue the Saturday school throughout 1981-82.

The sum of \$10,000 would allow time to further develop the Saturday model and to plan for Summer '82 and September '82. There is already wide-spread interest in this project.

The principles we operate under are clear and are as follows:

1. We believe in a small manageable size programme -- i.e. quality not quantity.
2. We believe in community involvement.
3. We believe in pluralism and diversity.
4. We believe that schools will grow from strength to strength -- in other words we do not operate from a deficit model.
5. We believe that schools must change the way they deal with handicapped children.
6. We know all children can learn.
7. We believe the basic skills of literacy are a key to learning and that they can and must be taught.
8. We believe there are many appropriate learning environments and many ways to learn and teach. No one way is good for everyone; hence the need for alternatives within schools.
9. We believe in relating school to the real world -- i.e., being out of the school and in the community as much as possible.
10. We believe educational leadership is necessary in the local system to support alternatives.

We also operate from a strong value base which states that:

1. few aspects of a child's life are more important than sharing normal educational experiences with children of his/her own age;

2. if the rights of any are diminished, so are, in the long run, the rights of all;
3. new attitudes and values come from action, not from talk; from deeds, not words;
4. integration is not possible as long as special schools and special classes exist because these "special" programmes will always try to 'maintain' the handicapped children for funding (economic not educational) purposes;
5. integration will cause problems, but not for the children involved. Problems will arise because of outdated and unchallenged attitudes and values, and because of an existing network of institutions, special classes, hospitals, clinics, etc. whose purpose will be challenged.

The first step is to act. We need now to develop this model further and hopefully to influence others to develop their own integrated projects in their local communities. If integration is to become a "normal" procedure, people must see it working. Given the progress of the children who have gone through the programme so far we know it is a worthwhile effort.

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