

**THE KALEIDOSCOPE  
EACH BELONGS  
QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL**

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THE KALEIDOSCOPE:

EACH BELONGS --

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

Mr. and Mrs. Russell and their two children May and Jennifer go to the school down the street from their apartment to register in an ordinary fashion. They are welcomed like any other parents of children living in the neighbourhood.

No big deal, you say. We agree, but the big deal is that May is a child with Down's Syndrome who doesn't learn as quickly as her friends. The school staff tell the parents that they are delighted to have both children in their school and that they will need to work together to meet May's needs.

This is an example of a new step in the integration of children labelled handicapped. Children are being welcomed and supported in their neighbourhood schools with their brothers and sisters, where they attend ordinary classrooms with students their own age, with the support they need. These schools work on the belief that all children belong and all children are welcome. They focus their attention on ordinary classrooms, and strive to make them communities in which all children can grow, learn, and contribute.

This step in integration -- from special to regular classroom -- is what Gunnar Dybwad had said is the "next logical conclusion" in a century of struggle for the rights of people with disabilities. In this chapter, we will describe the vision

of integration in which all children belong, and outline in detail some of the practices that are being used to make this vision a reality.

#### WHAT IS INTEGRATION? THE KALEIDOSCOPE

What is integration? Integration means people living in a harmonious whole with one another; being part of the community, an integral part and member. In the Random House College Dictionary, integration means:

1. the act or an instance of combining into an integral whole
2. behaviour in harmony with the environment
3. the organization of the constituent elements of the personality into a coordinated, harmonious whole
4. one unified system.

The key words here are "integral whole", "unified system", and "harmonious whole".

Integration can be illustrated with the imagery of The KALEIDOSCOPE. The concept and image is a circle -- full, complete, inclusive. It is not a box, a cascade, a rectangle, or a linear continuum of services. Integration in the true sense of the word is like a kaleidoscope, in which bits and pieces of everything -- all colours, shapes, and sizes -- exist together in a melody of ever - changing colour and design.

Every kaleidoscope has a handpiece. Twist it and you get another colour, another design, another look. The kaleidoscope is magic to the child and art to the adult. The kaleidoscope is wonder and mystery to all who hold it up to the sunlight and see that the whole is far more beautiful than the sum of the parts.

Integration means creating a community in which each person belongs. It is first and foremost a social ethic of acceptance of diversity and then common sense curriculum planning.

In systems using the kaleidoscope image, all children -- with their unique backgrounds, gifts and special needs -- learn together in regular classrooms, in neighbourhood schools, with the supports required. In these school boards, a pattern emerges:

1. All children in the community are welcomed into their local school.
2. If a child with a challenging educational need lives in the community the parent registers the child in the local school.
3. The parent and child are welcomed.
4. The child begins school in an ordinary classroom with children his or her own age.
5. The school arranges meetings to discuss how best to meet the needs of the child and teachers.
6. Life goes on.

In Canada, full community and school integration is taking place in pockets all over the nation. In the Northwest Territories and in the entire province of New Brunswick, a policy of full inclusion has been adopted. Harvey Malmberg, Deputy Minister of Education in New Brunswick, explains his province's direction:

"The education system must approach all students according to their educational needs, not according to their disabilities. A student is a student first! Several years will be required to

reach our new goal of full integration for all students, but with persistence and patience we will eventually get there."

Other examples of systems that are committed to integration include several major separate school boards in Ontario. Most notable are the Hamilton Wentworth Separate School Board under the leadership of the indomitable Superintendent of Operations Jim Hansen, The Wellington Separate School Board under the able hands of Joe Waters and the Waterloo Region Separate School Board under the visionary leadership of its Director of Education George Flynn. These boards state simply and emphatically: "EACH BELONGS."

#### VALUES DRIVE THE SYSTEM

Full integration for all is based on several simple but profoundly deep assumptions about people and about learning.

1) Each child has the right to belong.

Every child needs to be welcomed as a full member of his or her neighbourhood school and community; this welcome should be able to be taken for granted by children with severe handicaps and their families, as it is for others. When a child has very challenging needs, the onus should be on the school environment to problem-solve and make adaptations -- the goal is to make the child a belonging member, not to prepare the child to "fit in" or get ready.

When a child is a full member of the class, it does not mean that he or she must sit in one classroom all day long. Children certainly can be in other places for parts of the day -- for

activities, for work, for learning in other classrooms and other school environments. Full member does not necessarily mean full time; but full member does mean that each child can automatically go to school and become a member of a regular class, just like everybody else. The word "belonging" is the key.

We are often told, "Oh, but you couldn't mean integration for THOSE kids..." Yes, we believe the criteria for membership into the regular class and the community at large is breathing. We invite you to come and visit and talk to the students, the parents and staff. We are proud to share our vision of what a good school looks like -- and a good school must mean that all are included. In both the U.S. and Canada, it is against the law to segregate students based on race, sex or colour; we look forward to a time in the near future when it will also be unequal under the law to segregate on the basis of handicapping conditions and their concomitant labels.

## 2. Each child needs relationships to grow and develop.

Children's cognitive growth and social development is optimized when they feel they belong and have relationships with others, especially FRIENDS. When schools provide the opportunity for students with challenging needs to learn among normally developing friends they are making a move to common sense. Does it make sense to group four children together who have difficulties speaking and expect them to learn to speak, even with speech therapy? Does a child learn to lift her head by headlifting exercises in the "special" room or by being in a regular fifth grade class with friends, where there are exciting people and things to look at?

As educators we need to dramatically shift our thinking about how much is possible in the relationships between children with and without handicaps. For decades, there has been a pervasive myth that regular students will not want to be friends with students who have challenging needs. This comes from us as adults, perhaps because we had no relationships with people who were different -- they were all in segregated schools or classes.

Our approach is to encourage friendships and "being together". Peer buddies, peer helpers, and special tutors are all fine in their place, but we want to bring out the point that the child with special needs often has so much to offer other children that real true friendships can and do exist.

**3. Schools should strive to be communities that value diversity.**

All children can benefit from an environment that is rich in diversity, for children with differences -- looks, learning styles, behavior -- add a richness to school and life. Integration provides the opportunity to teach the worth of each individual. To teach the value of diversity, children who are different must be present; it is a concept that cannot be learned in a homogenized setting.

Because everyone has a contribution to make and has unique strengths and gifts, all children are "gifted". Integration provides the opportunity to teach our children that all children are gifted in one way or another, and to build bridges between children who have not had the chance of knowing each other or learning from one another.

The welcome of children who have been left out changes the system. When teachers learn to adapt and individualize, it helps everyone; and when teachers are accepting of youngsters who are different, it opens the rest of the children to a new sense of belonging. Father Pat Mackan, a noted Canadian educator, emphasizes that when "regular" students see the children who have been left out accepted and welcomed, they experience a deep strengthening of their own sense of security -- they know that they, too, are welcomed, and not at risk of losing their place.

4. People need to dream and to express what they hope for the future.

Because it is easy to be bound by what is "realistic", people need to take the time to dream and to develop new visions and new pictures. We parents, teachers, administrators and students all can benefit from dreaming, and from breaking through the existing boundaries of what is thought to be possible. To dream, and to then make dreams happen, we need teamwork, cooperation, brainstorming, problem solving, imagination, and the will to learn more and to pioneer new frontiers.

#### **CIRCLES OF FRIENDS;**

#### **THE HEART OF INTEGRATION**

There is one major underutilized resource in our schools today. This resource is plentiful, energetic, inexpensive and the heart of schools -- the students themselves. We have found that by including the students in the integration process, solutions have been found that we as adults never dreamed of, and energy has

been tapped that is a source of wonder to all involved! Our assumption here is that it is a valid and vital educational experience for students to participate in planning their own lives and also in helping others.

Many people who are labelled "disabled" have few or no friends. As adults they only have paid services providers in their daily lives. If we stop and reflect for a moment and ask what is important in our own lives, most of us would answer -- our family, our loved ones, our friends. For many of us, friends are a natural part of our lives... something taken for granted. It would be hard to imagine living alone without them, without the phone ringing, without the get-together, the tennis game, the dinner out. Yet for many children with challenging needs, this has been an unspoken area of dread particularly for parents.

As professionals, we often have advised parents to do gross motor and fine motor training, to get therapy, to stimulate cognitive development. This has resulted in parents pursuing a "repair shop" model for their children; they seek tune-ups and fix-ups and search for repair kits. We educators have focused our attention on developing interventions for skill acquisition, maintenance, and generalization; and have lost sight of the most important aspect of the child's life -- his or her social, emotional and spiritual life. We need to focus our attention on friendship building, using our creativity not only for designing programs and curriculum, but for encouraging and nurturing relationships.

One way in which we have been nurturing relationships lies in building a "Circle of Friends" around a student who has been integrated. We use a series of questions that bring out, from the students, the willingness and desire to get involved in the life of the labelled classmates. To make integration work it is crucial to involve the classmates and other peers in the school. This is not a "special friends project" or a "buddy system" to the handicapped... This is not "visit the special education room" or do your good deed for the day. What we are talking about is the actual and real involvement of children in educational planning. As one school principal said to us recently, "If I hadn't seen it with my own eyes I truly wouldn't believe it. The children are at the heart of the process and it works."

Building "Circles of Friends" and involving children means sharing POWER with them and giving up the authoritarian and patriarchal system so inherent in most schools. A special education consultant phoned recently and was appalled that the children were involved in curriculum development. "But who's in control? "Who's in charge?" she asked quite frantically. "Control is shared" was the reply.

#### **BUILDING A CIRCLE FOR MAY**

In September, a few days before May Russell would be arriving in grade 7, an integration consultant visited the class to speak with the students. She asked them a series of key questions that went like this, and these are their actual responses to all her questions.

Consultant (C) "Hi, I've come to talk to you about May who is coming to your class next week. You met her last week when she visited with her mother. For years May has gone to a segregated school or been in a self contained life skills class. What does that mean?"

Students (S)-

"places for retarded people"

"schools for kids who are really bad"

"like the one near my house where all the wheelchairs go"

C- "Well May is coming here and I'll tell you a secret, everyone is really scared. Her mother and father are scared, Mr. Gorman (teacher) is scared, Mr. Cullen (principal) is scared. I'm scared. Why do you think all of us are so scared?"

S-

"You all think we'll be mean to her"

"You think we'll tease her and be mean to her."

"You think she'll be left out."

C- "There are some things we don't want you to do when she arrives. What do you think these are?"

S- "Don't treat her like a baby."

"Don't pity her."

"Don't ignore her."

"Don't feel sorry for her."

C- "Why are we doing this? Why is May coming to this class?"

S- "Why not? She's our age, she should be here."

"How would you feel if you were 12 and never were with kids your own age?"

"It's dumb for her not to be here."

"She needs friends."

"She needs a boy friend."

C- "What do you think we want you to do?"

S- "Treat her like one of us."

"Make her feel welcome."

"Help her make friends"

"Help her with her work"

"Call her and invite her to our parties"

C- "I want to switch gears for a few minutes and ask you to all do an exercise with me called "Circle of Friends." I do this very same thing with teachers and parents and I think you are all grown up enough to handle it." (The consultant handed out the sheet attached)

C- "There are 4 circles. I want you to think about who you would put in your first circle. These are the people closest to you; The people you really love. You can do this privately or in pairs, and you can tell us or keep it private."

(The consultant filled in her own circles on the chalk board while the students did theirs at their seats. When finished the facilitator shared her circles and then asked for volunteers to share theirs.)

S - "OK.I put in my mom, my dad, Matt who is my best friend and Stacey, that's my Mom's best friend and she often helps me when I have a problem."

C- "Why did you put those people in your circle?"

S- "They are people I feel close to.. I love them."

C- "What do you do with the people in circle one?"

S- "I share my secrets, I can be myself, I go to them when I'm hurt, I trust them, I love them."

C- "Now let's do circle 2 -- these are people you really like but not enough to put in circle one."

S- "I put in my dog and my two best friends Tim and Todd and my teacher Mr. Gorman. I put them in because I can do everything with them and we have fun together and we visit a lot".

C- "The third circle is groups of people you like or people you do things with, like Scouts, swimming, hockey, etc."

S- "I have lots -- I'm in Boy Scouts, my church, my Sunday school, this class, my Street Hockey group, and my family is like a group."

C- "The last circle is for people you to pay to be in your lives like your doctor, dentist, and so on."

S- "I put in my doctor and my eye glass doctor that's all."

C- "Now I want you to look at this circle. Here's a fantasy person named Sebastian. He's your age (12) and his circles look like this. (show picture). He only has his Mom in circle one and the rest of his circles are empty except for circle four which is filled with doctors, social workers, therapists, etc. Think hard for a few minutes because this is real serious. How would you feel if your life looked like Sebastian's?"

(This is a list of words from real grade 7 students) in the brainstorm session).

S- "Lonely, depressed, unwanted, terrible, disgusted, like what's the use of living, like I'd want to commit suicide, like dying, awful, crazy, hurt, nobody cares, angry, furious, mad..."

C- "How do you think you'd act?"

S- "I'd act like a vegetable, I'd hide and keep my head down's all day, I'd hit people, I'd cry all day, I'd hate everyone, I'd kill myself, I'd want to kill others, I'd steal, I'd curse and spit, I'd fight."

C- "Ok I want to wind this up for today and I'll be back in a few weeks to see what's happening. Remember I came and we started talking about May who will be in your class soon. Well right now her life looks a bit like Sebastian's imaginary circle. So why did I do all this?"

S- "To help us understand about all the new kids who are coming into our classes -- about how they must feel."

C- "What I'd like is a group of you to act as a welcome committee and another group to act as a telephone crew. I want a phone caller for each day of the week. Do you think that's a good idea?"

S- "Wow, yeah -- What a neat idea!"

C- "Remember friends don't develop overnight. This is just the start. Not all of you will be May's friends -- all of you can be "friendly" but my dream and hope is that out of this great class May will have at least 6 friends who will do things with her in school and most of all after school and on week-ends. This won't happen fast but I bet it will happen. Who wants to help?"

It never fails that when the "Circle of Friends" is done correctly and sensitively almost everyone wants to get involved. The facilitator turns the process over to the classroom teacher who takes ownership and continues selecting a small group of students to be in the integrated student's circle. The facilitator explains that the circle members will participate in the building of the MAPS (Action Planning System) and that this is a commitment not to be taken lightly. No credits are given -- it is all voluntary.

One mistake educators have made so often in the past is to "plunk" into a classroom a child who is obviously different, and attach a teacher-maid (teacher-aide) to shadow the child. This creates dependency, and what Doug Biklen so aptly calls the **ISLAND IN THE MAINSTREAM.**

Circle-building, is intended to make the implicit become explicit. It legitimizes the students and teachers fears, questions, and anxieties. It also provides the opportunity to say that it is ok to be different; that as human beings we all have similar needs, but we all come in unique packages.

Circles must be informal, flexible and open. They must not be turned into behaviour management teams, teaching assistants or disciplinary bodies. They are circles of friends. Tutors can become friends but peer tutors are not the friendship circle. Because friends, especially when young, change and come and go, friendship circles must be given time and nourishment, and above all, they must not be made into something they are not. Circles must meet regularly i.e. once a week, and be facilitated by a

warm and caring teacher who will nurture the reciprocal nature of real friendship.

#### AMY TALKS

Amy is a beautiful red headed grade 7 student who got involved in May's circle. After eight month's of Amy's involvement, her teacher, Kerry Gorman talked to her and recorded the conversation. Their conversation has profound implications for all of us as educators, parents and citizens.

Mr. G- "Amy when you think back to September, can you remember why you got involved in May's circle?"

Amy- "The idea really excited me. I came to see what May could really do, really accomplish. I stayed all year because when I look back at May then and now I can see what we've all done."

Mr. G- "What do you see?"

Amy- "I now see May as my friend -- as one of us. I think she is really very smart but I didn't know that at first cause she had been in the retarded room and acted real weird. I learned she has real feelings and that she feels real bad when people tease her -- it hurts her but now she can come to her friends - to us."

Mr. G- "Sometimes she has hurt you a lot. How do you deal with that?"

Amy- I talk to my other friends and then I tell May "I don't appreciate it when you do that. Don't expect to have me or anyone else as a friend if you act like that!"

Mr.G- "Where do we go from here?"

Amy- "Well of course keeping May as my friend. I think when I'm older I'd like to do what Judith Snow and Marsha Forest do -- help get kids learning together and being friends."

Mr.G- "What do you think of the integration at our school."

Amy- "I love it! I've learned more this year than I have any other year - its been something that really hits you and gets you. I heard Father Pat Mackan speak at Church last week and I really understood what he was saying about community and learning. Yeah, I love integration and I love May and all the others in our circle."

Mr.G- "What do you really think you did with May?"

Amy- "I think we made her feel she fits in and she really does fit in now. She feels human. Before she was always by herself or with a teacher or adult. Now she has us to play with. She has friends."

Mr.G- "What else has being in the circle given you?"

Amy- "It gave me a whole new way of looking at things -- how lucky I am -- that all my life I've had friends and I took it for granted. It makes me feel better about everything I can do. When I see May work so hard I really admire her and I'm thankful I'm her friend and she's my friend."

Mr.G- "Have you seen any differences in the class this year?"

Amy- "Yes! Every one is more open. You are great Mr. Gorman and if you can help May then you can help and listen to all of us. Everyone seems more open and willing to care more this year."

Keep in mind that Amy is 12 years old. She has had no trouble at all with the concept of integration and neither have any of the children we've encountered over these past five years.

Integration is an adult problem as it is we ourselves who are

afraid of people with handicaps because most of us went to segregated schools and lived in segregated communities all our lives. The integrated children of the next decade are open and can help us in our quest to build loving communities.

#### **MAPS: AN ACTION PLANNING SYSTEM**

Equal in importance to building a caring community through friendship is the planning of the day-to-day program for the child who is integrated. MAPS (developed by Marsha Forest and Judith Snow, 1985) is a systems approach to help team members plan for the integration of students with challenging needs into regular age-appropriate classrooms. The planning meeting involves the student himself or herself (when appropriate), the parents (and other family members), professionals who know the student, and most of all members of the student's circle of friends.

Including the family as primary players in the MAPS process is extremely important and cannot be compromised. Family members are key because they know the most about the child; they have a sense of history that no one else realizes. They have been with their child since birth, and often have persevered through years of struggle trying to get the services they need. We have found that when parents have an opportunity to share their child's history, the other members of the MAPS team who are listening gain new insights into the family's perspective. In many cases, they hear for the first time the family's dreams and hopes for the future; they also hear the family's fears and deep concerns.

In our work, it has become clear that most families need support from others around them to express what they hope for their children. They too need a circle of support. The MAPS process should be a beginning of support and strength to the family, as others listen to what they have to say, and work throughout the MAPPING session to make plans based on much of what the family has shared.

The inclusion of students is also a key element in the MAPS process. The point of the exercise is to devise a plan of action that makes good sense for the student being integrated. In our experience, students often understand this far better than adults, and unless some young people are present, it is impossible to get the same results.

To illustrate MAPS, we will once again focus on May, whose Friendship Circle, built during the first weeks of school, was described in the previous pages. May's "regular education" teacher said that he was willing to welcome May into his class with no assistance for a few weeks, to get to know her and see what she could do. He was worried and sceptical but willing to try. A month later, when the initial MAPS meeting was held, the class and May had gotten to know each other.

Included in the MAPS meeting were: May, May's mother, May's sister Jennifer, Mr. Gorman (grade 7 teacher) , Mrs. George (special education teacher), Mr. Cullen (school principal), the MAPS facilitator (Marsha Forest), the MAPS illustrator/recorder (David Hasbury) and May's grade seven circle of friends -- Stacey, Becky, Amy, Fatima, Tina, Kelly, and Pam.

Now it was time to focus on the seven key questions that are the heart of the MAPS planning process:

1. What is May's history?
2. If you could wish and dream anything you wanted (with no money restraints etc -- WHAT WOULD YOUR DREAM BE FOR MAY?
3. What is your nightmare?
4. WHO is May?
5. WHAT are May's unique strengths, abilities, talents?
6. WHAT are May's needs?
7. PLAN OF ACTION BASED ON THE ABOVE

Design an ideal day for May.

What do we need to do to make this ideal day real?

#### 1. WHAT IS MAY'S HISTORY?

This important first question is meant to give everyone present a picture of what has happened in May's life. May's mother was asked to summarize the key milestones that made an impact on the life of the family and have affected the school situation. For example in May's story we found out that May was born six weeks early and had major surgery within 24 hours of her birth. She began an infant stimulation program at six weeks after her birth and has continued her education from then on. From age 2 and a half to age 11 she attended segregated schools and classes until September 1988 when she became a full member of grade 7 at St. Francis School.

## 2. WHAT IS YOUR DREAM FOR MAY?

Parents of children with handicaps have often lost their ability to dream for their child and haven't often asked themselves what they really hope and wish for their child. This question restores the dream and the ability to have a vision of the future based on what they really want not what they simply think they can get. The following were answers from the group:

### DREAM'S for May

(answers from the groups)

- \* to be out on her own and have a place of her own
- \* to share a life with her friends
- \* to achieve in school
- \* to go places
- \* to have independence with friends
- \* to be self supporting
- \* to be free to choose friends
- \* to have friends - have lots of roommates
- \* to have a good education
- \* to have a good job
- \* to have self respect
- \* to have happiness
- \* to take a trip to Hawaii
- \* to figure things out on her own
- \* to have singing and dancing lessons
- \* to play baseball

- \* to learn computers
- \* to get married
- \* to play in a band with Jennifer

May's dream for herself is the following (her speech is not perfectly clear but her friends acted as interpreters for Marsha if she couldn't understand).

Marsha: May what is your dream when you grow up?

May: I want to get married.

Marsha: What else do you want when you grow up?

May: I want to have my own baby named Joey.

Marsha: Anything else?

May: Yeah -- a job with a computer also buzz around.

Marsha: Where are you going to live?

May: On a farm. Fantastic!

### 3. WHAT IS YOUR NIGHTMARE?

The nightmare makes explicit what is in the heart of most parents of a child with a challenging need. The nightmare for May was that she would face rejection from the community; be pigeon-holed into a sheltered workshop; be taken advantage of sexually; be ostracized from others because of her disability; and live in fear of being sent to an institution.

### 4. WHO IS MAY?

The next question is meant to begin a general brainstorming session on who May is with no holds bared. The facilitator asks everyone to go around the circle and give words till they run out of words and all thoughts are exhausted. This is how May's WHO question was answered:

**WHO IS MAY**

- |                     |             |                |
|---------------------|-------------|----------------|
| *stubborn           | *confident  | *she has style |
| *enthusiastic       | *active     | *good memory   |
| *sharing            | *determined | *spontaneous   |
| *friendly           | *tries      | *independent   |
| *loving             | *smart      | *character     |
| *fun                | *emotional  | *actress       |
| *friend             | *shy        | *willing       |
| *sensitive          | *helpful    | *hyper         |
| *lovable            | *kind       | *bossy         |
| *cute               | *hard work  | *giggler       |
| *caring             | *bugger     |                |
| *joker              | *moody      |                |
| *expressive         | *talker     |                |
| *likes to do things |             |                |

To find out more about May, everyone also said what they thought

**May likes:**

- |                                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| *to demonstrate what she can do | *stickers       |
| *to be around friends           | *sports         |
| *to make people laugh           | *laughing       |
| *to be involved in games        |                 |
| *reading                        | *computers      |
| *food                           | *working hard   |
| *t.v.                           | *on her own     |
| *people                         | *meeting people |
| *music                          | *boys           |
| *helping people                 | *dancing        |

\*eating

\*singing

\*she likes her teacher

\*horseback riding

\*super stars

\*to help people when they are scared.

\*to be part of a group

From the above we get a picture of a real person named May who is unique and different from anybody else.

#### 5. WHAT ARE MAY'S STRENGTHS, GIFTS AND TALENTS?

All too often the focus has been on what a person's weak areas are. Many parents have problems with this question as they have been made to focus on negatives for so long. This question switches the tables and tide to the positives. Parents generally love to hear good things about their children. Here's how May's group characterized her strengths:

\*independent

\*caring

\*likes helping

\*outgoing

\*good memory

\*talkative

\*determined

\*helpful

\*stubborn

\*strong

\*smart

\*generous

\*see's people for who they are

#### 6. WHAT ARE MAY'S NEEDS?

Needs can be found in many areas - social, emotional, physical, spiritual, academic, and so on. Here is the lists that May's MAPS team generated when asked to say what she needs most:

friends

love and caring from her family and friends

a good education - to be challenged and have a challenging program

extra help from teachers to accomplish her goals

to communicate more clearly

an exercise and nutrition program

to drink water (4 cups a day) at school

to develop more leisure activities and sports interests

awareness of her body and how she presents herself

to learn to accept help more

people to teach her more things

to be more understanding of her friends and their problems

to be more patient

to get medical attention for her feet

lots of water during the day

to do more reading

**7. Last but never least is the plan of action. What would an ideal day for May look like?**

To many educators May is still seen as a child with a severe mental handicapp who should be segregated in a school or class for the mentally handicapped. To Brian Cullen and his staff at St. Francis school and to Mr. Gorman the grade 7 teacher May is a spunky 12 year old who should be in grade 7 with her peers.

With fear, trembling and excitement and with a TEAM approach (MAPS) that involved other students in the process a plan emerged for May's day. Much to the surprise of everyone involved May's day looks almost identical to the day of the rest of the grade 7 students. Step by step we went through the timetable and asked at each point:

Does it make sense for May to be doing this activity? YES or NO.  
Does any modification need to be made.? Yes or No and if yes who needs to provide extra assistance? (teacher? assistant? peer tutor? high school helper? etc.)

Here's the timetable for grade 7 in Mr. Gorman's room...

8:30 - 9 Kids hang out in the yard and are in room by nine sharp.  
Announcements, prayers etc.

9 - 9:25 Physical Education (March schedule) basketball review and drill - shooting with one hand and doing set shots.

9:25 - 9:50 Religion

Unit 7 - "Who do you say that I am" continuing discussion on who people think we are and who we really are.

9:50 - 10:30 French Conversation

10:30 - 10:45 Recess

10:45 - 11:45 Science Unit "Characteristics of Living Things".  
This deals with behaviour adaptation in birds of North America.

11:45 - 1 lunch

1 - 2:30 Language. The class is reading THE HOBBIT and working on recap and predictions of what comes next in the story. The class does individual reading at this time for spelling and grammar.

2:30 - 3:45 Mathematics. The class is studying "Improper fractions and mixed forms". Individualized math programs are common.

The language period is on rotation with other subject areas: geography, history and art.

There is also a music and guidance period once a week.

May follows the general pattern of all the students and has modifications when necessary. For example, in language arts May listens to the story, takes part in the discussion as well as she can, and is expected to copy the notes from the board or borrow notes from a friend. She writes in her journal along with the others and asks for help when needed from other students or teacher.

May does have several individual periods of speech with Ms. George during the week in the school library -- this focuses on conversational forms.

In math, May is working on an individualized program designed for her by the special education teacher called "Money Use and the Calculator." May is learning to do problems sloving with real money and using her own small calculator.

History, geography. May is part of a small group project in all the subject areas and is expected to do some part of each project and follow through on all assignments. She is learning to do research with the others in the school library.

In summary May is doing what no one thought possible. One visitor recently said, "I never thought I'd see a 12 year old child with Down's Syndrome in a grade seven class with real

friends and doing real school work." He and most of us are pleased and surprised that May went from the world of segregation into the real world of learning and challenge and pain and excitement so easily.

When asked how she likes her new class May beams and says, "Fantastic."

### CONCLUSION

Kerri Gorman wrote the end of this chapter in a letter he sent. Perhaps he represents the majority of hard working and caring regular education teachers who have had no training in dealing with "special" kids. Kerri took direction from the principal of the school Mr. Brian Cullen who also has a clear vision of a school in which all children are welcomed with all their unique gifts and talents. In one year St. Francis School was transformed into one which had segregated self contained life skills units into one unified system. Here's how Kerri Gorman summed up his year...

"It is now Easter time. A new student arrived last week so we now have 35 students in this grade 7 class. May is fully part of my class and their circle is still continuing. It has all not been all sweetness and light. May has managed to hurt and anger many of the people in her circle so much so that many were ready to give up on her on several occasions. She has trouble learning that she too can hurt people. They share together as a group and although some sessions have been highly charged they have really made it work and all their school work has improved to boot.

At the beginning of the year everyone had a tendency to mother and smother May or to be "teacher" rather than a friend. They would almost gang up on May when she did something wrong. I had to help them sort out their roles. There needs to be stronger ties built outside of school... that's our next step.

May's mother has such high hopes for the circle of friends. Will these hopes be realized? I don't know. Some may.

She is thoroughly assimilated into the group and her school work astounds me. She is doing the regular spelling tests now. She is quite slow in her other school work but does what she can. She has, I believe, come a long way this year. She is part of our class.

I didn't have a clue what was going to happen this year. I guess I wasn't burdened with a lot of preconceptions nor were my students. Thus we were able to trade ideas and thoughts back and forth. I was reasonably sure that circles were really to be friends -- that is helpers, confidants, companions and not teachers or mothers or fathers.

The students have proved to be what Marsha Forest said they'd be -- sources of useful and realistic ideas for the integration of everyone in our school. They have helped me and gently corrected me and the other teachers when we have not perceived what was so obvious to them as children. They have also accepted advice from me. It has been a most amazing year and a most amazing partnership!"

This school is being transformed. Here, is a living vision that school can be a place in which all children are welcomed with their unique gifts, talents, and needs.

Integration is controversial because it raises deeply provocative educational and social issues. At its root lies the question -- What do we want our society and our communities to look like? What life do we want for ourselves and for our children?

May, Amy, Mr. Gorman, Mr. Cullen their families and friends have all changed this year. They present one scenario for the future. They are the lifemakers. They represent the part of this society that is welcoming back people who have for too long been left out. They are the bridge builders to the future.

### Finale

**What is integration?**

**It is a community rich in colour, texture and diversity.**

**It is the future.**

**It is peace and social justice.**

It is the right to belong and to contribute.

It is love.

**IT IS THE VISION OF THE KALEIDOSCOPE IN ACTION AND PRACTICE**

**FINAL THOUGHT:** May, who was always assumed to be far to "handicapped" for the regular education system is sending us a clear message. When we asked her where she'd rather be i.e., downstairs in the segregated room or upstairs in her new class, she responded, "Down there I was nervous all the time. This is marvelous. I'm staying her with my friends". May's story says it all.