

<b>CARLA'S IN HIGH SCHOOL</b>
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Carla's in high school.

That may not seem like news to you, but it is. Let us tell you why...

The first striking thing you notice about Carla is her size. She is very small. Her records tell you that she is also an exceptional pupil -- multiple exceptionalities the reports go on to say. Trainable retarded. She is described as having severe physical and academic limitations, Turner's Syndrome, scoliosis, speech delay, gross motor delay and at the end of grade eight is described as being at the preschool level.

Carla just turned 15 and began her second year in high school this past September -1989. She has earned many new labels at the high school she attends -- cute, sociable, fun, cool, trendy, helpful and capable..

When she first entered the doors of Cardinal Newman East high school in Hamilton, Ontario in Sept. 1988, everyone was concerned and a little scared, particularly for Carla's physical safety. The school campus has about 800 large sized high school students. The building has two floors and there were genuine concerns over Carla being accidentally knocked down, trampled or falling down the stairs.

If you have spent any time in a high school recently, you will realize these concerns were justified.

What really happened however, was that everyone, especially the other students, learned to be aware of Carla's presence in the school. They knew when they were rushing down halls that she might suddenly appear. They were always prepared to stop in midflight. We have seen students joking, pushing, or shoving one another in the halls only to stop suddenly and make a space like the parting of the

red sea while Carla strolls safely past and the activity then resumes at full blast.

In two years Carla has not been knocked over, trampled upon, pushed or fallen down the stairs.

The school year in this Canadian High School is divided into 2 semesters. A student usually takes 4 courses. The standard day is four 76 minute periods with one lunch break.

In her first semester, Carla was enrolled in two classes -- typing and science. She began by attending each class for 30 minutes and gradually worked into the full 76 minutes. The aim for these classes for Carla was learn to:

- \* Sit quietly and attentively in a class,
- \* Develop good social relations with her peers,
- \* Be with her friends in a normal classroom environment,
- \* Follow regular classroom instruction

The aim of all these activities is to have Carla ready to get a real job in the summer, and in the future, a real job with real people in real places. High School settings are perfect places to practice to make this happen.

As well ,there were specific academic goals for each subject.

Typing: Carla learned to recognize and use several keys including the space bar. She also mastered feeding the paper into the machine.

Science: Carla participated in simple experiments and learned a wide range of new vocabulary.

Because Carla tires easily, she rested in the resource room area for approximately two periods. While there, she had tutorials on her computer, sight vocabulary reading and time to socialize with her high school buddies.

In semester II, Carla was ready for more classes -- Vocal Music, Art and Food and Nutrition (Cooking). She attended two of these classes for the full 76 minutes and one for 45 minutes. In addition, she traveled to her cooking class via the shuttle bus to the other

campus with her friends. With some simple modifications she thrived in all three classes.

Carla received three Basic Modified credits last year and all her courses this year are for credit. It should also be noted that all Carla's classes include students from Basic, General and Advanced levels.

**CARLA'S TIMETABLE NOW:** This year, 1989, Carla is able to handle a full schedule of 4 classes. She participates for the full 76 minutes. Her scedule is.as follows:

- Period 1 -- Sewing (NFM2G1)
- Period 2 -- History (HCT2A7)
- Period 3 -- Lunch
- Period 4 -- English (ENG1G1)
- Period 5 -- Physical Education (PHF1G1)

**Sewing class:** Carla is learning the symbols found on clothing and what they mean, as well as the recognition of the "tools" of sewing.

Their first project involved decorating a T-shirt or sneakers using stencils and paint. Carla chose to "do" her white tennis shoes.

Their second project involves the making of a sweatshirt. Her teacher has an open mind and says: "Where there is a will there's a way for Carla to sew. We just have to find the way." She decided to put the sewing foot pedal on the table. Carla uses her hand to push the pedal.

At present, Carla is practicing along with the other students on paper and without thread -- following the marked lines. She is doing remarkably well.

The other students really enjoy Carla's participation in the class and are learning valuable lessons through the attitude of their creative teacher.

**History class:** Carla is working on a modified unit on Canada. This involves such things as recognizing a map of Canada, locating the province of Ontario, recognizing the birds and animals of Canada, and narrowing down to her city and community. There is an assistant in the room for half this period. The rest of the time Carla works alone or with another student.

**LUNCH:** Carla is a social butterfly and like most high school students, lunch is her favorite period of the day. She eats in the noisy cafeteria with her friends. After lunch she can be found chatting with the other kids out in the halls or in front of the lockers.

**ENGLISH:** Carla stays just over half time in this class as she is getting very tired by this time of day. While there, she works on increasing her sight vocabulary, writing her name and listening to stories told by the class and teacher.

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION:** The teacher considers Carla a real asset particularly during warm up exercises which is her favorite part. The rest of the girls hate the warm ups. Carla shames them into hard work. In phys. ed., Carla is becoming more comfortable walking on uneven surfaces. She is learning to kick a soccer ball, play baseball and crickets, run, and change quickly for classes.

Carla's physical stamina has increased incredibly this past year. Considering her size, her physical condition, the length of the halls she travels and the stairs she climbs, her progress is really astounding.

**FRIENDS & STUFF:** Carla usually attends all school dances and has become quite comfortable in that atmosphere. She also attends school football games. She has established a couple of good firm friendships. These friends phone her regularly and insist that she phone back. Her mother reports that she now races for the phone along with her brothers. These girl friends visit one another and go to the mall and bowling.

**SUPPORT:** A special education resource teacher in augmentative communication comes to work with Carla once every two weeks to add new symbols to her communications book. Carla uses both the book and some speech.

**THE REPORT CARD:**

Comments quoted from Carla's report card:

*Subject: Clothing  
very good*

- I am pleased with Carla's progress. The sweatshirt will prove a challenge to all of us. I know Carla will be successful.

*Subject: History*  
*satisfactory*

-- Some days Carla's progress is great -- some days it's not.

*Subject: Physical education*  
*very good*

-- Carla especially enjoys the warm up exercises. She gets involved in all the activities she can.

### Final comments:

Now let's put all the above in perspective.

If Carla was in many neighboring Cities, she would be a high school for the "retarded" and treated as a medically fragile, severely handicapped student. She is lucky to be living in Hamilton and attending the Separate School Board there. They believe that ALL CHILDREN BELONG:

- \* in their neighborhood schools,
- \* with an age appropriate program plan.

Their goal is full participation in the community as an adult..

Carla is also lucky to have a creative and imaginative high school special education teacher, Rosemary Deeley, who believed that Carla had the right to be in high school and the right to an excellent school day.

Carla is also lucky to have supportive and nurturing parents who are willing to take risks.

This is not a game "Who is More Handicapped", but be assured that Carla is indeed a student with many many challenging needs. Everyone said it couldn't be done, but in the Hamilton Separate School Board, anything can be done because they believe it can be done.

This kind of high school program can be achieved for ANY student if the school is ready, willing and able to say "we'll do it!". It doesn't take incredible skills. But it does take a new and different value system which assumes that:

