

DRAFT

Attitudes of Elementary and Secondary Students toward Peers with Disabilities

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PARTICIPANTS

Participants were elementary and secondary students without disabilities from grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 11, and OAC (final year of secondary). Participating schools were selected from both a system adhering to a Special Education Model (placements for students with disabilities ranging from full time special class to full time integration with students having higher degrees of challenge tending to be in settings removed from the regular classroom), and from an Inclusive system (regular class placements for all students regardless of disability). One elementary and one secondary school represented the Inclusive system while one secondary and three elementary represented the Special Education system. Three elementary schools were included at the request from senior administrators.

Each school was requested to select randomly 3 students without disabilities from class lists for each grade level. A number of interview records were rejected due to selection from grades other than those requested and selection of students who did have a disability. Total numbers of students are noted in Table 1.

Table 1: Numbers by Grade Level of Participating Students from Special Education Model and Inclusive Model School Systems

Grade Level	Special Education Model	Inclusion Model
1	3	3
3	5	3
5	6	3

7	7	3
9	2	3
10	2	
11	1	3
12	1	
OAC	3	3
	30	21

The Inclusion Model system selected participants on the basis of three per grade from one elementary school and one high school. Participants from the Special Education Model system followed an alternate process. However, Special Education system administrators requested that elementary participants be drawn from more than one school and a larger number of students be involved at that level. A total of 35 Special Education Model elementary students were interviewed compared to the 12 in the Inclusive Model elementary school. However, due to various difficulties (students drawn from unrequested grade levels, selection of students with disabilities) 14 interviews were set aside and an elementary total of 21 students participated. A single secondary school and 9 students were involved. Not all students were drawn from the grade levels requested. All students were retained in the study.

METHOD

Interviews were conducted with participants by a teacher with experience both at the

elementary and secondary levels and in both Special Education Model and Inclusive Model systems. A set of guide questions was used to frame interviews. Ancillary questions were asked as the interviewer deemed appropriate. Guide questions were of two types: general questions designed to assess knowledge of disability and overall attitudes of students toward peers with disabilities, and more specific questions if a student with disabilities was known to be taught by anyone other than a regular classroom teacher.

Interviews were transcribed and responses coded to facilitate development of categories of interest. Four categories emerged; Friendships/Acquaintantships: whether regular students considered any peer with disability as a friend/acquaintance Teasing and Insulting Behaviour: whether regular students were aware of students harassing peers with disabilities; Advocacy: whether regular students defended or otherwise supported peers with disabilities; Exclusion - Inclusion: views of regular students regarding placement of peers with disabilities.

FINDINGS

As noted, four categories of interest emerged from data analysis. These categories are discussed individually below. Selected quotes are provided as exemplars of typical statements of students. From such statements significant points suggestive of attitudes of regular students to their peers with disabilities are drawn for each of the Special Education Model and the Inclusive Model school systems.

Friendships/Acquaintantships

Considerable difference existed between students in Special Education Model schools and Inclusion Model schools in terms of whether individual students had friendships with peers with disabilities, and whether students with disabilities were perceived to have friends in the

schools and community in general.

Special Education Model:

Students in elementary schools tended to know one or more students with challenging needs, but few indicated personal friendships. Many did not know the names of students outside their own classes. When asked if they knew any peers with disabilities in their own classes typical responses were:

Brian, Grade 5: - *Not in my class. In another class.*

Brigette, Grade 7: - *None in class. There's two kids in Grade eight.*

However, friendships between regular students and their peers with disabilities did exist. Bert in Grade one said "Ya, Dave is one of my friends". Overall, though, such friendships were uncommon in Special Education Model schools. When asked why friendships did not exist in many instances in their schools, Bert and Brigette explained that, except for gym, students with disabilities were in their special education class all day. Brigette said of the students with disabilities:

They all hang out together. Like, you see them, they all run out in this big group and they go out and play in the field together.

When asked whether students with disabilities mixed with other students, Brigette explained, "*No, not really. Some people.*"

Other comments in this area reinforce this picture of restricted friendships for students with disabilities.

Dawn, Grade 7: *He's not very popular in the school. They're like, I don't know. He tries. He's nice and he tries to make friends, but I guess people just*

don't appreciate him.

Doris Grade 7: - *He's good at basketball so most of the guys play with him. He doesn't really have a lot of friends, but when he plays basketball some guys come to play with him.*

Lorne, Grade 5 *Q. Does he have a lot of friends too?*

- I think he probably does. My mom's friend Judy works here and she usually has to help him exercise and stuff. And I think there's another teacher in the school. I think she helps him too.

Q. You don't see them because they spend most of their time in a special class?

- Ya. I think they spend all their time there.

This general picture extends to the secondary school level.

Ken, OAC: *- For sure most of their friends are within the [special] classroom. Everyone knows who the special people are and they'll talk to them if they approach them and there's a conversation or something. But I think most of their friends are within the [special] classroom.*

Peter, OAC: *- Just watching them in the cafeteria, they'll be talking to people that I know, and they're not friends. I think that the people they hang around with in school, they don't even hang with them outside of school. They just stay with their family. I only see them at school.*

Joyce, Grade 9: *- Well, they'll come up to us and go 'Hi' and they'll start a*

conversation or whatever and we'll talk to them in the hallways and stuff. But then whenever I see them, they're with a friend from their class.

Q. Do you see them around?

- Ya. It's just usually in the 100 hall though, 'cause that's where their classroom is.

Q. Would they go to regular lunch with you guys?

- What they do is they go to a kitchen. I guess maybe its in there.

But I see them with plates of food that's different from everyone else's and they don't eat in the caf[eteria].

Summary:

Schools following a Special Education Model were characterized by distance between regular students and their peers with disabilities. This dynamic was particularly apparent at the secondary level but also where segregated special education classes or extensive withdrawal programs existed at the elementary level. It is interesting to note the hypothetical nature of a number of responses. Phrases such as *I think* used as a preface suggest that some students were not certain of the extent and quality of friendship circles, both in school and in the larger community. The following major points emerged from analysis.

- Structures such as grouping and special treatment of students with disabilities acted as barriers to establishment of relationships between the two student groups.
- Social and academic separation existed between regular students and peers with disabilities with few exceptions. Though most evident at the secondary level, this

point held true, also, at the elementary level whether a withdrawal or a full –time or part-time special class model was in place.

- Secondary students were unfamiliar with peers with disabilities, not even knowing their names in most instances. Elementary students tended to have some familiarity with peers with disabilities and knew the names of a number of such peers, particularly when a part time special class - part time regular class model was in place.
- Regular students believed peers with disabilities to have friends, though most indicated these friends were other students with disabilities.
- There were instances, almost completely limited to the elementary level, where regular students were friends with peers with disabilities.

Inclusion Model

The degree and quality of friendships/acquaintantships between those with and without disabilities was significantly different in the Inclusive Model schools. At the elementary level the majority of students interviewed were personal friends of peers with disabilities and were aware of the quality of friendships their friends had in class, school, and the larger community.

Carol, Grade 1: *- I know she has lots of friends because some of her friends come and play with her. And when I play with her, I see lots of her friends.*

Martin, Grade 3 *Q. Does she have friends outside of school?*

- Yes. I'm sure she has them. Because she is nice and she has neighbours she can talk with.

Kevin, Grade 5: *- I think his friends outside of school, he's got none really. He's got people who he thinks is [sic] his friends, but they're using him, kind of. Because he's got very good Pokemon cards. And I think his friends just act like they're his friend to get his cards. They, like, use him.*

Katie, Grade 7: *- Because she's with us, so we consider her as our friend, and she considers us as her friends.*

Elementary students in the Inclusive Model school know students with disabilities in their own classes and often are friends with them. They also know students in other classes by name and are aware of their friendship status. Interestingly, they have valuable insights into the quality of friendships and know when they are real or contrived. A final point is awareness of friendships and acquaintantships in the larger community.

This pattern repeats at the secondary level.

Marilyn, Grade 9: *- Yeah. A lot of people talk to him. Like when I come in, I say 'Hi' to him all the time. And other people talk to him. Like the guys talk to him sometimes. There's no reason why not. He's pretty well to get along with. He doesn't talk much. He's quiet. He's like everyone else.*

Sue, OAC: *- I think it's probably difficult for her because she never wanted to put the effort forward to become a friend with someone. I had a really good relationship with her, but that was only because we spent a lot of time together. 'Cause with her, she really had to trust*

people and she didn't want to trust a lot of people. Like, she didn't trust teachers. She didn't trust very many people at all.

Wayne, Grade 11: *- He talked with everyone and you see him walk by and you'd be, like, 'What's going on, Sam?' You give him a little pat on the back. He's just in the class, no big deal. Just Sam. Most people like that.*

Interestingly, a number of students in the Inclusive Model schools commented on effect of the model on the development of friendships. Carol in Grade 1 said that she wanted to have her friend Alexandra in the regular class and not in special education "because you make new friends" in the regular class. Sue, an OAC student, noted, "I think it's a good idea for them to get more interaction. 'Cause I know, with Suki, she didn't have as much interaction with other people as she would've liked. So that gave [her] more opportunity".

Summary:

In general, both elementary and secondary students in Inclusive Model schools knew peer with disabilities personally and by name. They were aware of friendship status in school and, at times, out of school.

- Regular students at both the elementary and secondary level knew the names of peers with disabilities and were friends in many instances.
- Regular students were aware of the friendship status of peers with disabilities in the school as a whole.
- Regular students tended to be aware of friendship status beyond school as well.
- Regular students were aware that some friendships were superficial or contrived to the advantage of one or more regular students.

- Some regular students connected the Inclusive Model and the development of friendships.

TEASING AND INSULTING

Concern with teasing and insulting of students with disabilities by their peers often is advanced as a reason to place students in segregated settings. There, the theory suggests, they will be protected from unpleasant encounters which, it is feared, would characterize life in inclusive, or even integrative, environments. Proponents of an inclusive approach believe that no such protection will exist in a Special Education environment, but that Inclusion will reduce teasing and insulting behaviour. This study looked at the issue of teasing and insulting.

Special Education Model

Teasing and insulting behaviour directed at students with disabilities was a part of life in elementary schools under the Special Education model. However, such behaviour was not generalized. The majority of elementary students, asked if their peers with disabilities were teased or insulted, indicated they were not aware of such behaviour.

Dean, Grade 7: *Q. Did people call him names or anything like that?*

- No.

Ted (Grade3), Ed (Grade 5), and Brian (Grade5) all indicated that teasing and insulting were not elements in their classes. Brian responded, when asked whether it was appropriate to call other people names, "*No. Everybody's a human being*".

Nevertheless, other elementary students were aware of teasing and insulting. Such behaviour appeared not uncommon. Dawn, who originally said she was not aware of teasing and insulting, indicated that in the case of one boy in her class:

Some people do make fun of him 'cause he has disabilities.

She described the behaviour as covert and behind the individual's back.

Lorne (Grade 5) agreed that name calling is part of what happens at school, saying *"People I know call them different things"*. Laura (Grade 7) commented on examples of name calling and its effect from experiences during recess, *"I think they feel sort of weird because people call them names. Like, they're dumb and stuff."*

Alex, also in Grade 7, picked up on the covert nature of some people's teasing and insulting. She also hypothesized that they engaged in such behaviour because *"some people may think they're weirdos and they need help and they can't do anything"*, whereas others believed peers with disabilities were *"normal people and they need help and they're getting it which is a good thing"*. As for Alex herself, she declared:

Some of my friends make fun of people, but I just tell them that it's not nice and I don't want to be a part of it.

At the secondary level higher degrees of teasing and insulting behaviour were brought out. Only one secondary student, Patty in Grade 11, said unequivocally that people in her group did not name call.

Other students mentioned negative interactions involving their acquaintances, often stating that they did not agree and halted such behaviour if they could. Jane, Grade 9, said that some students would tell peers with disabilities *"something that's not true"* simply to take advantage of them. Such behaviour was both overt and covert. Joyce in Grade 9 knew people who dismissed peers with disabilities saying, *"Oh, he's retarded. He shouldn't be in here"*. Ray, Grade 10, said that some of his peers would show disgust when others were *"playing around"*

with students with disabilities. In Ray's experience insulting and teasing behaviour was hidden at times but in public view at others because the tormentors liked *"to see how they react....They talk to them and say things to see how they react"*.

Grade 10 Sara reinforced the idea that student reaction had two sides.

Sometimes when they [students with disabilities] walk by there are kids who make faces or start whispering to each other. That's all I see. If they go up on stage, 'cause sometimes they have spirit days, everybody cheers for them and claps in a nice way".

Miro, an OAC student, also referred to students with disabilities being on stage. His example was less pleasant.

[The school would] have competitions on the stage with, like, just for small prizes for dancing, or fastest pop drinker. Everybody would chant to get the mentally retarded students up on stage, and then everyone would laugh.

Lastly, Peter in OAC held the view that out in public teasing and insulting of peers with disabilities was more common than was hidden behaviour. To support his point he provided the example of some peers saying to a student with disability:

'Go ask that girl out. I think she likes you.' simply to laugh at the girl's reaction.

Teasing and insulting behaviour appeared to be more a secondary school dynamic than an elementary one in Special Education Model schools. It took on a variety of forms: name calling, embarrassment in public, whispering, active rejection. Evidences of such behaviour were apparent in elementary schools, though not generalized. The majority of secondary students, when asked, indicated awareness of teasing and insulting behaviour by their peers, though those interviewed did not suggest that they participated in such behaviour.

Summary:

Teasing and insulting behaviour was a known and acknowledged aspect of life in elementary and secondary Special Education Model schools. However, it did not involve all regular students, being limited to relatively few individuals.

- Teasing and insulting behaviour, while not generalized in Special Education Model elementary or secondary schools, was a dynamic in the schools, particularly the secondary.
- Teasing and insulting behaviour was both open, or overt, and behind the backs of peers with disabilities, or covert.
- Teasing and insulting behaviour tended to take the form of name calling, public embarrassment, whispering and making faces when those with disabilities were nearby, though less direct harassment also was noted.
- Teasing and insulting behaviour was attributed to regular student focus on differences in peers with disabilities, opportunities to set up a situation humorous to other regular students, and sheer dislike.
- A number of students at both the elementary and secondary levels indicated in one way or another that they disagreed with teasing and insulting of peers with disabilities. At the secondary level some students indicated that they would intervene to halt such behaviour. A few others stated that they would not.

Inclusive Model

Teasing and insulting behaviour dynamics among nondisabled peers was not a concern of any extent in Inclusive Model schools. Though minor evidences could be ferreted out from

interviewee remarks, the picture was starkly different from Special Education Model schools. As Rose (Grade 11) suggested, *"Our school is pretty respectful with the disabled and they don't make fun of other kids going in there"*.

Almost no evidence of teasing or insulting behaviour among elementary students was found. Kevin in Grade 5 was quoted previously under Friendships/Acquaintantships. He spoke of nondisabled peers pretending a friendship to get Pokemon cards. As was the case in Special Education Model schools, some students used students with disabilities for their own needs.

Desiree (Grade 5) speaks of rejection of a particular student with disability who *"may pick her nose, or she might be at a different level of learning because she doesn't understand that maybe you can't do that She's not treated very well by some other students who say 'Eew. Go away'"*.

However, the response of the large majority of Inclusive school elementary students is best described by Diane, Grade 7.

Well, my opinion is I don't think that some of the students should make fun of [students with disabilities] because it's not really their fault. She was born that way, born with a disability.

Comments of secondary students were almost entirely in defense of their peers with disabilities and the value of the inclusive model. Edith (Grade 9) indicates that some students who do not know what to do when a student with disabilities acts inappropriately, *"are sort of paranoid by the fact that [a particular student] has a disease and you really don't know what to do"*. It may be a stretch to interpret this lack of knowing how to behave as teasing or insulting. The only other evidence was provided by Wayne and Rose (both of Grade 11) who refers to

students who joke at the expense of students with disabilities as “immature”..

The majority of Inclusive Model secondary students offered comments such as:

Francis OAC: - *We don't have the nicest people here, but I have never heard anyone say anything....I would speak out against any derogatory words. I don't tolerate that. It's not in my nature. People just don't realize what they're saying. If someone was saying something like that to them, they wouldn't really enjoy it. So there's no need for them to be doing it to other people.*

Barb (OAC): - *But if it was really brutally, like, making fun of him, I'd probably intervene because I think all kids at one point just don't understand it and then they react by making fun of them and stuff. I definitely feel against it. I would be completely against it.*

Summary:

There appear to be some students in the Inclusive Model schools who would tease and insult their peers with disabilities. There also appear to be many more students who would not tolerate such behaviour and would nip it in the bud, because, in their view, such behaviour violates the principles of inclusion and relationships with others.

- Though teasing and insulting behaviour was a dynamic in Inclusive schools, it was a minor one. Almost no interviewee made reference to teasing and insulting at the elementary level.
- Teasing and insulting which did exist was reported to be both overt and covert.
- Teasing and insulting tended to be credited to immaturity in the tormenters.
- A number of students indicated at both the elementary and secondary levels

indicated in one way or another that they did not accept teasing and insulting of peers with disabilities.

- A number of students suggested that proactive educational programs for both students and teachers would be of value in reducing resistance to placement of students with disabilities in regular classrooms.

ADVOCATE

Some students defend the rights of peers with disabilities if they are teased or insulted, or if suggestions are made that they remain apart from regular classes. A common form of this activity is a reactive one, to speak to and correct the abuser. A second form is proactive, one in which peers ensure that the abilities and the challenges of those with disabilities are understood. Comments indicating some type of advocacy position were almost entirely restricted to the secondary level.

Special Education Model

Examples of the reactive approach were found in the Special Education Model secondary school. In most instances reaction was in direct response to witnessed teasing and insulting, as may be seen in the following quotations. Students in this school are personally familiar with incidents of teasing and insulting behaviour.

Direct reaction was common as indicated in the following quotes.

Jane, Grade 9: - *Ya, like, I mean although I've seen a lot of people insulting them and doing all kinds of stuff to them, but usually I try to stop it.*

Ray, Grade 10: *Q. Would you ever speak out if [your friends] were making fun?*
 - *I have. Yes. I usually get teased afterwards, but it doesn't really*

bother me 'cause what they say has no effect on me.

Miro, OAC: - *Ya. I tend to interfere. I'll just walk up to my friends and just say 'Leave him alone'. Try and change the topic and divert them from encouraging [other] students.*

A few responses, however, had a more hypothetical tone. It was unclear in these instances whether abusive behaviour had been witnessed personally. Nonetheless, it was clear that the individuals concerned believe they would advocate for peers with disabilities.

Sara, Grade 10: *Q. Would you speak out if someone was offensive"*
- Ya, I would. I would defend the person because it's not fair that they're getting picked on for something that they can't help.

Peter's (OAC) response introduced a passive response category. This type of response indicates that even though an individual might be aware of teasing and insulting, no action would be taken.

Q. Did you ever feel inclined to say 'I've gotta end it here, because this is wrong the way they're treating the kids?'

- Sometimes I sort of feel like it, but I never acted on it.

Summary:

Secondary students in Special Education Model schools indicated rejection of inappropriate behaviour directed at peers with disabilities. While many indicated that they would

intervene to prevent such behaviour, a subset would not be proactive.

- Secondary students as a group generally indicated they would actively intervene in instances of teasing and insulting behaviour toward peers with disabilities.
- Some students witnessing teasing and insulting behaviour choose not to become involved.

Inclusive Model

Responses from the Inclusive Model secondary school fell into categories similar to those found in the Special Education Model school. One difference was the hypothetical tone of some responses which suggested that actual incidents of teasing and insulting had not been witnessed.

Jack, Grade 9: *Q. What would you do if someone's being nasty to Jeff?*
- If I knew the person, I would probably tell them to stop. But, I'm not that big, so I would find someone bigger or older to tell them what to do.

Karl, Grade 11: *- I could try to correct them. Some people might call them retards or something and that's wrong.*

Barb, OAC: *- I'm an extremely passive person. And so I usually tend not to get involved in anything that doesn't directly involve myself. But it was, like, really brutally, like, making fun of him, I'd probably interfere.*

Francis, OAC: *- Not derogatory. We don't have the nicest people here, but I have never heard anyone say anything like that....So, it would be - no....Totally....I don't tolerate that. It's not my nature.*

In addition to the reactive categories which crossed the Special Education and the Inclusive Model schools, new categories were introduced by students in the Inclusive Model school. Some students dismissed as immature those who teased or insulted their peers with disabilities, but also corrected them, or took other action.

Wayne, Grade 11: *There's some kids that are immature, but we just ignore them. If you ignore them, they don't say anything....If it got really bad, I'd probably tell the bus driver or principal.*

Rose, Grade 11: *- And the ones who laugh at them, they're just immature.*
Q. Would you say anything to the students who laugh at them?
- Oh, for sure I do.

An insightful suggestion by a few secondary students was that educational programs to reduce teasing and insulting behaviour be introduced.

Edith, Grade 9: *- Instead of just putting him into class and being like, you know, just let him be in here [regular class] and make friends and stuff.*
Tell them about the disease, The effects of it.

Karl, Grade 11: *- Other kids don't know enough about him. They're not educated that way. We could educate other people. I think they get educated just by Ralph being in this place.*

One OAC student extended this suggestion to the teacher level.

Sue, OAC: - *We should be working with teachers on how to address issues.*
Some teachers are great, but some they ----.

Summary:

Secondary students in Inclusive Model schools routinely indicated that they would act as advocates for peers with disabilities if inappropriate behaviour occurred. Compared to secondary students in Special Education Model schools, they articulated a larger range of reactions to the idea of inappropriate behaviour.

- Secondary students did not report any significant number of teasing and insulting instances. Many responses were phrased hypothetically with the suggestion that they were not based on actual witnessed events.
- The majority of secondary interviewees indicated that they would actively intervene if they witnessed teasing and insulting behaviour.
- A subset of secondary students indicated that they would not intervene directly, but would advise an older student, principal, or school chaplain of teasing and insulting behaviour and ask these individuals to intervene.
- Secondary students suggested that teasing and insulting behaviour was related to immaturity and that such behaviour could be reduced through an educational program which would explain disability and its effects.

EXCLUSION - INCLUSION

Interviewees commented on both exclusion and inclusion in school of peers with disabilities. The great majority of comments were offered by students in the Special Education

Model system.

Special Education Model

Both elementary and secondary students commented on exclusion and inclusion. All mentioning segregated placement on a full time or part time basis were unquestioning of the practice. Responses pointed to the belief that special placement would address the needs of peers with disabilities.

Mitchell, Grade 3: *Q. Do you think that children like to go or do they prefer staying in their own class.*

- I think they would like to go because it's more easy to concentrate when it's not so loud.

Q. Do you think it's a good idea that they go out?

Ya.

Brigette, Grade 7: *Q. So they don't have a regular class like yours?*

- No. They join other classes for gym. That's all.

Q. What do you think about that?

- I think it's a good idea because if they can't keep up in regular classes, then they should have special teachers to try to get them to understand it because they might have more troubles than other people.

A lesser number of elementary students pointed to the value of spending time in regular classrooms, but also in the special education classroom. Both responses of this type came from

students speaking of peers with disabilities who were placed full time in special education classes.

Lorne, Grade 5: *- But it would be better if they could do half time in our class. And another time in a special class.*

Q. 'Cause they spend most of their time then in a special class?

- Ya. I think they spend all their time there.

Brian, Grade 5: *Q. So why do you think they're in the specific learning disability class?*

- 'Cause they need some more help to catch up.

Q. Do you think that's a good idea?

- Yup.

Q. Would you like to see some of them in the same class as you?

- Yes. And then they could make more friends.

Related to these elementary school responses indicating perceptions of positive values particularly for special class placement, but also for regular class experience, are other responses which suggested negative possibilities in special class experience.

Alex, Grade 7: *Q. Do they ever go to regular class?*

- I haven't seen them go into regular class.

Q. Would it be possible, instead of people going out, could we

leave them in the same class if we got them some help?

- Ya. I think it would help them. Because they wouldn't feel embarrassed and they would feel more comfortable with everybody else.

Laura, Grade 7: *Q. So, somebody was in grade seven and they had a learning disability problem, they wouldn't be in your class. They'd be in that [special] class. What do you think of that idea?*

- I think it's pretty good because, so then they'll understand what they're learning better if they're in a class that has extra help.

Q. How do the kids themselves feel about being in there?

- I think they feel sort of weird because people call them names.

Like they're dumb and stuff. 'Cause they're in another class.

Some secondary school responses supported the perception of experience both in regular classes and special education classes for peers with disabilities. These responses were offered by students who were in a school where segregation appeared to be the norm. First evidence that segregation was the norm.

Patty, Grade 11: *Q. Do you think it's a good idea they go to special class? Do you think it's good for them?*

- Ya. I'm pretty sure because in our class, we learn a chapter a day. For them, maybe, it'd be too fast, since they're not totally with us.

Peter, OAC:

- I've never seen them in regular classes.

Q. So they don't mix with the rest of you?

- No.

Ken, OAC:

Q. Would you come into contact with those students?

- No, I wouldn't normally. 'Cause I'm just not around them. Just not in class or anything. We're actually at opposite ends of the school.

Despite the fact that students in the Special Education Model secondary school did not spontaneously question the segregation model, when asked they found problems with it. Also, when asked, they found positive aspects to the idea of peers with disabilities being placed in regular classes for part of their learning.

Peter, OAC

Q. Do you think it's a good idea to go to a special class or would they be better off in a regular class?

- I think they should almost go to both. 'Cause I don't know what they're learning. But they can't be learning much. I've never seen them walking around and stuff and it seems they're not even doing anything.

Joyce, Grade 9:

Q. Do you think these students should spend more time in regular classes and maybe go out for help or have a [Teaching Assistant]

help them?

- I think it would be good [if they spent time in regular classes] because you have all these kids who are sitting there and they're making fun of them because they have a disability. I just think it would be better. 'Cause then you could get to know them better if they were in regular classes.

Miro, OAC

Q. Do you think it could be better for them regardless of money, for the students themselves if they were in with the so-called regular students?

- Actually, it would benefit them just so people will become more accustomed to them and the way they act, the way they behave.

Like only when you begin to learn about something, then you lose the ignorance.

Summary:

The views of students in the Special Education Model schools were mixed. Initial responses to questions with regard to segregated placement of peers with disabilities accepted that such placement was necessitated by the needs of their peers. Further, valuable learning was believed to result. Opportunity to consider placement more deeply brought out suggestions by some elementary and secondary students of negative effect of segregated placement and possible values of regular class placement

- Elementary and secondary students were supportive of full time and part time placement in special education classes for peers with disabilities.
- This support was based on the perception that peers with disabilities needed help and that help was available in special education classes.
- The help available would result in peers with disabilities learning more than they would in regular classes and that they would “catch up” to regular peers.
- A limited number of elementary and secondary students suggested that peers with disabilities might not enjoy special class experience as it centred them out as different.
- A subset of elementary and secondary students believed experience in both special and regular classes would result in peers with disabilities getting the help they needed and also in interaction with regular students.
- Secondary students had almost no interaction with peers with disabilities compared to elementary students who had somewhat more.

Inclusive Model

In the Inclusive Model schools Inclusion is the norm for all, with the exceptions of short-term withdrawal for some students at the elementary level, and a resource room at the secondary level where some students spend a minor part of their day working with teachers and student peer helpers. The result of this focus on inclusion is that interviews in the two school systems differed in that few mentions of special education classes were made in the Inclusive Model schools. Special classes simply do not exist. Those comments made, however, indicated that special education placement was not considered appropriate for peers with disabilities. Even the idea of

having a resource room at the secondary level was questioned.

Karl, Grade 10: *Q. [Do] some think Ralph should be in a segregated school for the blind?*

- Other kids don't know enough about him....If they got to know him, they might change their views. I believe he should be here.

Barb, OAC: *Q. What do students think of peers with disabilities going to the resource room at time?*

- Its not the topic of conversation. It kind of gets some negative connotations toward it. "Cause, you know, if you're going into a separate room and it's not really what everyone else is doing. Then, if it's out of the normal, then more attention is drawn to it. People will talk about it.

Francis, OAC: *Q. Does Lucy have friends in your class?*

- Yes. It's just like anyone. I don't think they belong in a special school.... I would be very upset if they decided to move them out of this school into another school.

Karl, Grade 11: *- Its just his presence in class.*

Q. Do you think it's [inclusion] a good idea?

- Yes, I do. Get to know the kids. I think it's good not to isolate him I like him being with us.

Francis, OAC

- The only thing I've ever noticed at my school is how much people just consider them another student. It's really nice to see.

These comments sum up the responses by Inclusive school students about special placement of peers with disabilities. No student suggested in any way that students with disabilities should be anywhere but in regular classes. Even the one secondary student who felt a peer with disabilities should not be in her class due to the academic nature of the work, did not suggest special placement, but simply placement in a less academically oriented regular class.

A number of elementary and secondary students indicated in various responses that they understood many peers with disabilities required adaptations and modifications in regular classes. They were quite comfortable with such supports and participated in their provision.

Carol, Grade 1:

Q. If someone said to you "Would you help Shalina with her work?", would you do it?

- Yes, only a little bit.

Q. Why only a little bit?

- Because she has to do it.

Kevin, Grade 5:

- Like, he does his work on phonics. It's in spelling. Instead of having to write it down on a separate piece of paper, he can write right in the book. I'm, like, spelling words like "athlete" and he's spelling words like "dog, cat".

Katie, Grade 7:

- She sits beside me. Sometimes she needs help with a certain

word. What does it say or what does it mean? Or she doesn't understand a question, what the work is asking. So she kind of asks me to help her out.

Edith, Grade 9: *- No. He does completely different work than me. He's doing oceans and stuff and we're doing immigration/emigration.*

Francis, OAC: *- Ernie has been in a few of my classes throughout high school in English and Religion mainly, and they write the same test almost. They participate the same. They're marked a bit differently overall.*

Summary:

- Inclusive school elementary and secondary students rarely mentioned any placement other than the regular classroom.
- Mention was made of a modest amount of withdrawal at the elementary level and of a resource room model in the secondary school.
- Some students questioned the need for a resource room.
- Students at both levels indicated acceptance of the Inclusive Model.
- Students accepted that included peers with disabilities should work at their own pace.
- Students believed it was part of their responsibility to actively support peers with disabilities with their work.
- The few mentions of special education placement indicated that such placement

was not appropriate for peers with disabilities.