

hard to break down.

Building ongoing friendships that extend outside school and into the neighbourhood has been a challenge for teachers and families. Part of the challenge is that friendships cannot be defined, analyzed, predicted or assigned like school work. "Friendship is like sex: we always suspect there is some secret technique we don't know about" (Pogrebin, 1987). Friendships can only be encouraged by setting up opportunities for matches to form.

Difficult as it is to define friendship, it is easy to describe why friendships are important and how they enrich our lives. They help us stretch beyond our families; they help children rehearse adult roles; they are a haven from stress; and they demystify strange and inappropriate behaviour (Perske, 1988). As one youngster commented, "Your friends will like you even when you act like a jerk" (*There's Always Belinda*, 1989).

Friendships expand our world and our perspectives; they are attractive and generate their own energy; friendships are freely chosen and voluntary; they are mutual and reciprocal, coming and going with intensity varying over time. Friendships have their ups and downs, joys and pains, laughter and tears (Pogrebin, 1987).

Some teachers become discouraged and doubtful when searching for ways to help a student with disabilities make friends. They feel that "real" friendships cannot exist between disabled and non-disabled people and that efforts to encourage friendships are staged and phoney.

In actual fact, adults can overlook or misinterpret relationships that exist between disabled and non-disabled students. We must be careful not to impose a stereotypical image of how friendships should look and therefore devalue budding friendships that have non-traditional features. There have been some remarkable friendships between disabled and non-disabled students.

Teachers in one school were truly amazed to hear about a student's efforts to visit his friend with a disability who was in