

in the sun. Unintentionally and unexpectedly, they will do something, and other students will take notice. Perhaps my favourite memory of just such a moment is of a Grade 3 French class. Every day I wrote the date in French in a sentence on the board. We would repeat it a few times and move on to something else. One student, who had been labelled autistic, usually spent five or six minutes laboriously copying the sentence into his notebook. He was never asked to, nor did any of the other children copy the sentence. It was just something that he had decided to do. This went on for several months. One day in early spring, I was late putting the date on the board because a little girl met me at the door and wanted to tell me about her birthday. I looked into the classroom to see every eye staring at the board. I was amazed to see this little boy finishing the date sentence. He had written it in French by himself, unaided. It was letter perfect. We were collectively impressed. Several students spontaneously went over to him and told him what a great job he had done. Their praise came not only because he had done it but also because they knew that they could not! After that, several children wanted to try writing the date and eventually some of them succeeded. That is the kind of situation teachers wish for regularly—where one student teaches others something worthwhile! Teachers should allow themselves the flexibility to capitalize on these moments.

### ***Developing Independence***

The teacher must also concentrate on developing independence in the child with a disability. All students need to be independent, but for a child with a disability, it is one of the most important and intensely difficult things the teacher will help that student achieve. The struggle is long and gains are often made in small steps.

Some members of my class worked with a student to help him walk home from school. He does not live far from the school but he had never walked anywhere by himself. For several