

Assigning Tasks

Patrick's teacher also created ways for Patrick to assist his peers in their work in order that he could reciprocate the assistance he received from them. Each student had a personal notebook which they wrote in everyday. The teacher pasted a picture of the owner on each notebook and Patrick, who could not read, could then identify the picture, match the picture to the person, and pass the notebooks out to his classmates. He was also able to lend crayons and glue and other things he had in his desk to a classmate who had learned to sign with him. Not only was Patrick able to reciprocate conventional greetings and help in the classroom, he was practising some of his individual academic goals as well, which included signing, matching and student identification. Behavioural goals such as moving quietly around the class and passing out books without pushing, prodding or hitting were also being practised and achieved.

Jane, a student in Grade 5 who could speak in short phrases but who could not read or write, was involved in a Scrabble game the teacher devised to assist students in practising spelling and vocabulary words. The teacher explained to the group that Jane was allowed to place up to five letters around an existing word on the gameboard even though she could not really spell. The student to her right would ask her what word she had created before tallying her score. In this way, Jane was involved in the vocabulary of the classroom and she was expected to learn. She was also made a vital part of the classroom culture because the curriculum became a vehicle to highlight her thoughts and interests, which she revealed in the words she chose. This set the stage for the development of friendships.

The teacher observed that Jane's in-class relationships were carried over into the playground. Even though Jane was fairly unstable on her feet, she was invited to jump rope by the students in her class. Several of the students demonstrated for her and then took great pains to make sure that she got over