

learning report that it is a powerful tool in teaching children to respect and get along with each other and in improving the social and academic climate of the classroom. One teacher explains:

*We worked in groups often. In these groups, no matter what, there was always something that Dennis could do successfully, whether it was describing pictures, repeating words or role-playing. It did not take long for the other students to become adept at creating ways Dennis could actively participate in their group. Their ideas and suggestions often far surpassed my own. (Bagnell, 1989)*

Research has shown that cooperative learning results in higher achievement and greater retention of what is learned than do traditional competitive or individual learning situations (Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson and Skon, 1981). Other benefits, substantiated by research, include increased student persistence in learning a task, more intrinsic motivation, higher levels of self-esteem, acquisition of stronger collaborative skills, development of positive peer relationships that extend beyond cooperative learning activities, and the promotion of helping, sharing behaviours.

As one teacher realized, it is necessary to give students many opportunities throughout the day to share and explore ideas and bond together. Curriculum is naturally a common subject of discussion:

*September came and all my children arrived. Events went very smoothly. I felt I was meeting the needs of all my children. I breathed a sigh of relief; all was going well. However, around the end of October I became vaguely dissatisfied with the learning of my special needs child. She was in my class, but was she truly a part of the class? Finally, I modified all her subjects to fit in with the rest of the class; whatever we did, she did. I had*