

have been the easier route — or if I should persevere, doing what I felt was right for Mandy and helping others to see Mandy as I did. Should I challenge this system that wanted to keep her out of their lives?

The decision was made. We felt that education was for everyone and that Mandy should and could belong. We decided to approach the school down the street from our home, the same school her older brother, Justin, was attending.

My husband and I met with the principal and discussed my thoughts and beliefs, and my desire to enrol Mandy in the next school year in their junior kindergarten program. He said they did not have any children with handicaps at this school; however, did I know of the special school across town for the mentally retarded? I assured him that I was aware of it but was not interested in visiting the special school, nor was I considering it an option for my daughter's education. The principal was genuinely supportive and optimistic as he tried to understand my concept. He told me that he would consider my request and would bring it up at the next meeting with his superiors.

As we waited with anticipation, the summer months flew by and fall was upon us. The first day of school approached and still we waited for an answer. Finally, the Friday before school was to begin, the phone call came. That phone call changed our lives. Mandy was to start school on Monday with her brother. We were ecstatic!

The following year was exciting, with none of the anticipated obstacles or problems. It really was an ordinary school year. Mandy was just another kid at school.

Her presence at school that year had a major impact on people's lives, including her brother's. One day, during Education Week, I received a phone call from Justin's Grade 4 teacher. She wanted to share with me an emotional experience she had witnessed that day at school.

Each of her pupils had been required to choose a topic related to education, write about it and present it to the rest