

right from the beginning. Students would automatically be placed in their age-appropriate class and, through direct experience and training, the teachers would become less fearful and would change their attitudes.

For the most part, teachers felt that actually having an exceptional student integrated in their class had changed their attitudes and provided new learning experiences. As one teacher described it, "Integration is in-service, ongoing learning from the exceptional child." Another teacher stated, "Integration is a catalyst for other things; now I look at working with other kids, like gifted and many others who are out of the mainstream in my class."

There was agreement, however, that to ensure the full benefits of an integrated program, the school administrator should be responsible for providing support to the teacher. Initially this support might include release time for the teacher to plan, consult and attend in-service training, and provisions for helping the teacher directly in the classroom through a methods and resource teacher, a teacher assistant, and student and parent volunteers.

Teachers with experience in integration wanted their colleagues to try an integrated classroom and know that it was acceptable to make mistakes. Many teachers felt that they learned through experience because their principals had allowed them to try different ways of integrating students.

### ***Allow for Transitional Planning***

Planning the student's transition from separate to integrated settings was seen as an important strategy in the integration process. Planning should begin before an exceptional student enters school or at the end of the previous school year. Principal support and involvement help make transitional planning run more smoothly and effectively.

Release time should be arranged so teachers receiving an integrated student have adequate time to observe, meet with the parents and current teachers, and prepare for the student.