

*and basketball games, simply because he is our friend and we care about him. (Carson, 1987)*

Parents have invariably had a deep feeling of malaise both about the prospect and the reality of special education. This has been true even when parents have had no clear conception of why this is so and how it might be changed. Goffman (1963) has provided a thorough description of the underlying factors that affect people's perception of difference. As one parent explains,

*Our experience with special education goes back to 1976. We have seen at first hand the damage the segregated school system has done to some students, particularly those with severe handicaps. The system was based on the negative, stressing the students' differences and inabilities. Special education teachers have told us repeatedly that our daughter Yvonne "does not understand", "is not able to ...", "will never be able to ...", and so on. The turning point came about five years ago with the recognition that although our daughter will probably always need assistance in daily living, the most important element in her life will be friends and the ability to communicate with them. It has taken a number of years for educators to understand the importance of this. (Penner, 1989)*

*The only time in my son's life that he was segregated was in our school system. It is not the only time he has learned; he has learned much as a member of the YMCA, at various jobs, and in groups ... What this tells me is that the segregation that was part of his educational upbringing, unfortunately, was a learned response, it is not natural. It seems to me that in an environment where we believe that [all] people should be treated equally ... there is no place ... in our school system [for the] kind of*