

## ASPECTS OF SUE'S ALIENATION

### *Behavioural Barriers*

At the time of our involvement, Sue was a twelve-year-old girl in Grade 5. She attended a junior high school in a small, rural town. Sue was fortunate in many respects. She had been in an integrated school since kindergarten and she lived at home with her family. Her teachers made efforts to identify her individual needs and to provide supports and resources so that she could prosper within her classroom.

Still, Sue's schooling had a history of challenges. Sue was known as a person who had an inclination to hurt others by scratching, kicking or hitting. She was sometimes self-abusive and, at times, engaged in self-stimulating behaviours. Sue's behaviours prevented her from taking part in meaningful social activities and real learning situations. They also got in the way of any natural interactions that Sue might have had with her peers or with adults.

Few people understood the communicative function of Sue's behaviour. Her outbursts or temper tantrums were seen as the behaviour of a person who was different, or as a symptom of her disobedience or lack of control. Factors such as her behaviour, and the school's fear of injury to other students and disruption to the class, led to measures which kept her from her peers.

In an attempt to help her cope, Sue was given an aide. She was often seen with her aide, studying during class time or playing solitary games during recess or lunch. Someone was always close by keeping an eye on her. Sue was being looked after, but rarely was there any interaction between herself and her teacher or her neighbouring peers.

Having an aide for Sue was a mixed blessing. Over the short term, the aide was helping to deal with immediate concerns such as Sue's tutoring, general welfare and behaviour. But over the long term, the aide's presence seemed to further distance Sue from those around her. A cyclical pattern