

Chapter 13

Student to Student: Curriculum and the Development of Peer Relationships

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In four years as consultants for the integration of students with a mental handicap, we have had the opportunity to observe, analyze and compare many classrooms. We have found that the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classes has been most effective in schools where supportive and interdependent relationships between students have been successfully developed. In fact, many teachers and parents are beginning to realize that one of the basic reasons for including students with disabilities in schools and classrooms is so they can be supported in building relationships.

Webster's dictionary defines a relationship as the state or condition that exists between people or groups of people who deal with one another. In schools, students spend most of the day interacting with the curriculum and with each other. Teachers have found that curriculum and regular classroom activities operate as a springboard for the learning necessary for students to form relationships and become happy and successful in their adult lives.