

THE TEACHER AND THE STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY

Multi-Level Instruction

While each member of the class should be treated equally and given the same rights and value, equality must not be confused with sameness. All students in the class are individual and have needs different from each other. Individualization within the class should be built in as much as possible. We must acknowledge that students do not learn at the same rate or in the same way, and we should be equally aware that one set of goals is not appropriate for all students. As logical as this sounds, it is sometimes difficult for teachers to accept.

One of the most useful strategies for the classroom teacher is to design lessons which permit multi-level participation (see Chapter 11). This means, for example, that while some students are reading a novel, the child with a visual impairment is listening to a taped version of the novel, while other students with lower reading vocabularies have access to a modified version or a peer reader. It means that while one student prepares a written report, another prepares a report orally or with pictures.

Multi-level instruction promotes the use of questions designed to address all of Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1969) — levels of cognitive difficulty developed by Benjamin Bloom, a psychologist and educational theorist at the University of Chicago (see page 197). Therefore questions will reach children at different levels of understanding. Similarly, many learning tools, including computers, calculators and recorders, are encouraged and accepted so that all children can be involved.

Life Experiences

Providing meaningful experiences is one of the most interesting aspects of teaching children with special needs. Because many of the students I have worked with have had limited understanding of their world, it is essential to create situations