

environment to a regular classroom.

The model fails for many reasons. How can a pupil learn how to behave in a regular classroom if he has never been in one but has always been segregated with other pupils who do not know how to behave in a regular classroom? Pupils with a mental handicap need continuity and consistency in order to perform well — as we found with our son — but how can they be expected to survive the discontinuities, inconsistencies and continued changes inherent in the Cascade model? It seems that any pupil who can successfully fight his way into a regular classroom through the Cascade model should have been in the regular classroom from the beginning. That was certainly the case with our son.

A further danger is that, though the Cascade model is clearly segregationist, some people claim it is an integration model. This enables people in school systems to claim to support integration by supporting the Cascade model when in fact they support segregation and rejection. The Cascade model also encourages and rewards teachers who reject pupils whose educational needs they cannot or will not meet. The teacher fails the pupil, so the pupil is thrown out of the class and becomes someone else's problem. The model's existence also continues to waste scarce resources on segregation that would be better spent on true integration.

Early in the move towards integration, well-meaning administrators promoted the Cascade model, no doubt because it represented advanced special education theory. The support waned when its segregationist nature became obvious. However, the model can be made to sound reasonable and protective, and its ideological underpinnings are not always evident, making it the most dangerous weapon in the special education arsenal. It will continually appear like a deadly virus and we must be on our guard against it.