

FACTORS OF SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION

We have identified many important factors which contribute to the success of integration: the belief that all students are capable of learning; the day-to-day modelling of effective leadership; an in-school approach to problem solving; and the inclusion of parents in the planning process. These are contributing factors; they set the stage for integration. They do not, however, guarantee the same quality of learning and the increased social relationships which exist in classrooms where teachers deliberately plan for peer interaction and for participation of students with disabilities in regular curriculum activities.

SUPPORT IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The Importance of Friendships

Full inclusion in the integrated school depends on the recognition that supporting students to build relationships with their peers is a critical aspect of school life. Teachers who have had experience in integrating students with disabilities acknowledge that students who are accepted, liked and involved with their peers show gains in academic, social and physical development.

Students who have spent years in segregated, "handicapped only" settings have been denied opportunities to form the social relationships enjoyed by their non-handicapped peers. Depending on the nature of the student's disabilities, relationships formed in special classes tend to be adult-child rather than child-child relationships. They are dependent relationships rather than friendships born of mutual interest, attraction, or common skills. Relationships formed in segregated settings also tend to be one-sided helping relationships that are usually not reciprocal in nature. Teachers help students, but there is little possibility for students to help teachers or peers. While teacher-student relationships are