

SUMMER CANADA REPORT

THE YORK UNIVERSITY SUMMER GET TOGETHER

SUMMER 1983

"There are obviously two educations:
One should teach us how to make a
living and the other how to live."

-James Truslow Adams

A large part of the success of this summer's Get Together in accomplishing its objectives was the program's powerful embodiment of the two educations mentioned above. Our first main objective was to hire seven students with a wide variety of interests and talents, and train them to become excellent teachers of children with a broad range of abilities and backgrounds. The second main objective was to provide an educational, recreational, and cultural enrichment summer program for 30 to 35 children (5 to 6 of them labelled "handicapped", either physically or mentally) aged 6 to 12 that would lead to the formation of a community of genuinely caring, helping and respecting individuals.

A. OBJECTIVES IMPLEMENTATION

I PROGRAM SET-UP

1. HIRING

Dr. Marsha Forest of NIMR, program supervisor, hired Ron Ballentine as project manager. Mr. Ballentine interviewed prospective applicants from ManPower and sought out other suitable individuals from the University population. Eventually seven York University students (two males, five females; physical education, psychology, theatre, dance, music, sign language backgrounds) were hired and began training.

2. TRAINING

Training included one intensive weekend session on methods, values, resource materials, and problem solving and numerous hours reading articles, listening to experts, visiting schools, and talking to parents (during home visits).

3. SPACE

Bethune College at York University very generously granted us the use of their Art Gallery, one office including telephone, a kitchen, and several classrooms, wholly rent-free. We enjoyed the full support of the Bethune College community led by both the incoming (Griff Cunningham) and outgoing masters (David Lumsden), the Assistant to the Master (Joyce Thompson), and the Fellows of the College.

The Physical Education Department allowed us to use their swimming pool and charged us only for the lifeguards' time whom they provided. They also granted us the use of the games field closest to the college.

4. SUPPLIES

The Faculty of Education Dean, Andy Effrat, allowed us to do some photocopying and provided us with some stationery.

The National Institute on Mental Retardation provided us with the majority of our photocopying, typing, and accounting.

Commodore loaned to us two PET computers and one printer for the entire summer.

Black Creek Food Co-op lent a large refrigerator/freezer, a vacuum cleaner and a radio/tape player.

Bethune College had our piano tuned free-of-charge.

5. ACTIVITIES

Various students from York's Theatre Department put on theatre performances and workshops.

The Toronto Sun offered a tour of the premises and 30 baseball tickets to a Toronto Blue Jays double-header, free of charge.

Various mothers and fathers came in and offered their services.

Example: Teaching a dough craft and providing all the necessary supplies.

6. CHOOSING CHILDREN

With the exception of eight children, we had the same children for both months (a total of 41 children). We attracted the children with advertisements in the York University Bulletin and by word of mouth from other children and parents who knew the program. Also, we have a waiting list of children labelled "handicapped" who are waiting for a place in the program.

We chose the children on the basis of who needed the program most, with an emphasis on children from the immediate community (Jane-Finch area).

II PROGRAM

1. FORMAT

The program was organized under larger weekly themes and smaller daily component themes.

Example: Weekly Theme: Rights
Daily Themes: Childrens Rights, Animal Rights, etc..Rights of the "Handicapped".

A typical daily schedule follows:

- 9:30 - Hello/Announcements/Jokes and Quotation of the Day
- 9:45 - Exercises
- 10:00 - Circle Discussion on Daily Theme
- 10:30 - Arts & Crafts, Language Arts, Theatre, Lunch Groups
- 12:00 - Lunch
- 13:00 - Relaxation
- 13:15 - Sign Language, Reading
- 13:45 - Outside Co-operative Games
- 14:45 - Arts & Crafts, Environmental Studies, Problem Solving Groups
- 15:15 - Music
- 15:30 - Farewell/Parent Discussions
- 15:45 - Daily Meetings (1 to 1½ hours)

(Evaluate the day and plan the next day: compile lists of art/craft activities and games, add to song book, etc.)

In addition, every Tuesday we split into three separate groups and went on an off-campus trip via regular TTC (somewhat difficult with one of us in a wheelchair but the kids worked it out by taking turns at lifting and pushing). Also, every Thursday the entire group went on a trip often out of town (when in town we usually took regular TTC also).

Every Friday afternoon we went swimming at the pool on campus.

Visitors and friends were encouraged to participate and regularly did.

Various staff members wrote up home books for those children who didn't speak.

2. REPRESENTATIVE ACTIVITIES

a) Arts and Crafts

- Silhouettes (integrates art and language)
 - painting, photography, cutting, writing
- Making Musical Instruments (make and perform)
- Making Dashikis and Caftans (for Africa Day)
- Bookcase (the children built and painted our bookcase)

b) Environmental Studies

- Exploring Black Creek Flora and Fauna
 - hiking, photography, awareness of environment, food gathering (berries)
- Experiments with Elastic and Air Propulsion, Magnetism, Air Pressure, Body Heat, Volcanic Forces, etc.

c) Exercises

- Calisthenics
- Theatre exercises
- Dance exercises
- Eskimo exercises for Inuit Day
- Yoga

d) Games

All outside games were co-operative and accorded with the principle of maximum active participation (all of the children could play them; there was no

losing and no one had to sit out)

Example: Duck/Goose - crawling replaces running, our software for the computer included mathematics and problem solving games.

e) Language Arts

i) Reading

Kids read to kids and/or teachers; teachers read to kids and teachers; kids and teachers read alone. Our library included daily newspapers, magazines, information books, how-to books, prose, poetry and biographies.

ii) Writing

- Producing the newsletter (writing prose and poetry or without the computer or typewriter)
- Letters of complaint and/or support.

iii) Speaking/Listening

- Circle Discussions of values and events related to the program

Example: Integration, respect for people and property, democracy, co-operation.

f) Lunch

The children under the supervision of one teacher took turns in groups preparing, serving, and cleaning up after lunch. The lunches always consisted of highly nutritious food free of preservatives and additives. Often they represented different cultures. In variety, they ranged from whole wheat spaghetti to "gorp" (carob chips, nuts, seeds, raisins).

g) Music

Throughout the day there was tape-recorded music (all kinds from many different countries) playing, or someone was using the piano. Often the children or teachers brought their own instruments or tapes or records to play for all. At the end of every day we sang songs together.

h) Relaxation

- Complete body relaxation with all children and teachers participating.

i) Sign language

- Names; the alphabet; common words, phrases, and short sentences.

j) Theatre

- Theatre Games and Exercises
- Mime
- Puppet Play
 - writing, direction, performance
 - production of props.

k) Trips

i) Whole Group

- Centre Island
- Kleinburg (McMichael Gallery)
- Niagara Falls (Great White Water Slide Park)
- Followed by an overnight at the College with National Film Board Films and the Free To Be You and Me Movie.
- Camp Samac
- 3 day camping trip
- the highlight of the summer

ii) Small Groups

- Kensington Market
- Noon-hour music concerts downtown
- Science Centre
- Ontario Place
- Ron Satok School
 - mural project (produced by "handicapped" people)

III PROBLEMS

Almost all child to child interaction and child to teacher interaction problems were solved successfully by whole group circle discussions where input was encouraged from the entire group.

The high cost of transportation was partly solved by searching out a less expensive bus company or taking regular TTC buses and trains.

The problem of having access to computers at York University (another group paid a large amount of money to monopolize their use) denied to us was solved by one of our teachers negotiating doggedly with a computer company to gain the loan of two computers and a printer.

B. CONCLUSIONS

As children, parents, and teachers would all agree, the Summer 1983 Get Together at York University was an outstanding success. We witnessed often dramatic growth in the development of both the "handicapped" and "non-handicapped" children's level of interaction with others, confidence in themselves (as evidence primarily by their increased participation in large group discussions), use of language (more articulate and complex), attitudes toward people and things (increased respect and eagerness to help), and physical abilities (improved coordination, endurance and strength, especially in the case of the child who almost walks: he led a night walk in the forest with minimal assistance (previously he insisted on using his wheelchair for getting around)).

The teachers experienced equally exciting growth in the areas of self-confidence, leadership abilities, and creative learning activity ideas.

This program is an invaluable experience in improving the lives of the children involved (especially these children who are either mentally, physically, or economically "disadvantaged"); the program is essential solely for its alleviation of the ignorance of children who often fear "handicapped" children simply because "handicapped" children are traditionally segregated and unknown in the regular school system.

For potential educators the challenge of teaching to such a large array of abilities and backgrounds provides a tremendous teaching experience, and forces them to function at their most innovative. In addition, they learn the skills crucial to integrating children with special needs into the regular school system. Also, the knowledge gained of group dynamics, both that of children and adults, is very useful with colleagues.

For three years and because of all of the above, this program has proven its exceptional value. The money granted

to this program is highly appreciated and most assuredly well-spent. In addition to continued support for the York University Main Campus program we strongly believe there needs to be additional financial support for setting up other programs such as this one (perhaps at the Glendon College Campus for example).

FOR THE STAFF OF THE
YORK UNIVERSITY SUMMER GET TOGETHER
Ron Ballentine

Addendum:

Excerpts from unsolicited parent letters

"you are truly a unique and wonderful group...
I'm looking forward to having Jennifer attend the
Saturday program"

John and Silvana Porto

"Innovative educational experiments such as this
one deserve to be identified, endorsed, and enthusiastically encouraged"

Noel and Betty Corbett

"Many thanks for a wonderful summer"

Sandra Small