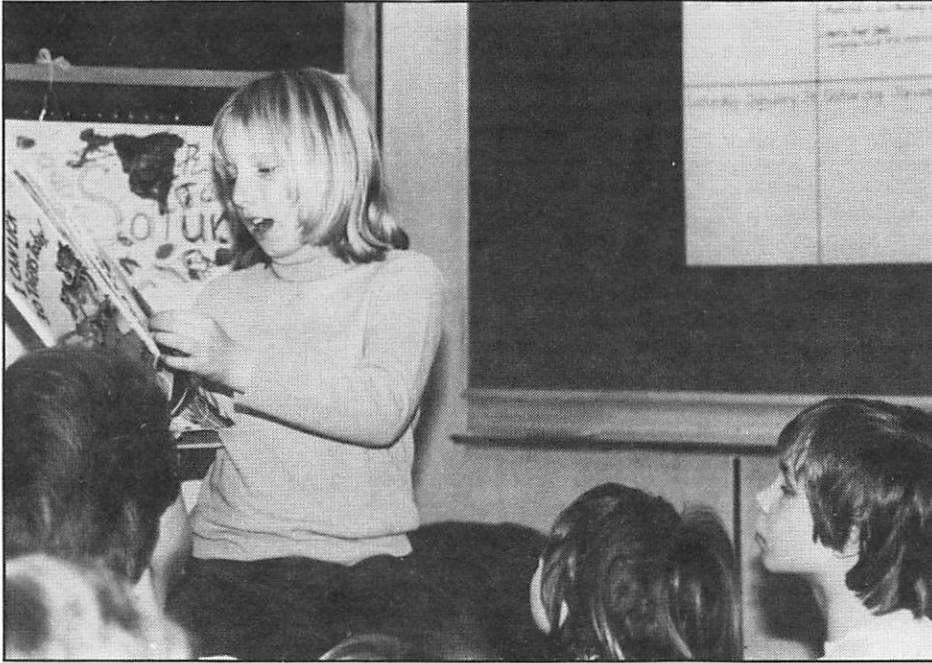


Mainstreaming Project Succeeds Beyond Expectation



"Normal" and handicapped children learn together during Saturday classes.

Mainstreaming — educating handicapped children along with their "normal" peers — is a contentious issue in education. However, educators in York's Faculty of Education are proving that the experience is rewarding and enriching for students, their families, and teachers alike.

The project, informally called the Saturday-Get-Together, began last fall with a class of 20 children. Three have been labelled "trainable mentally retarded" by their home schools, one is profoundly deaf, one is in a wheelchair, another two have cerebral palsy, one has a severe learning disability, and the rest are bright, lively, "normal" children, some very verbal and others quiet and shy. They come to York every Saturday to learn together from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Saturday-Get-Together is the brainchild of special education professor Marsha Forest (who supervises it), education student Donna Bracewell, and part-time lecturer and former Director of the Centre for Handicapped Students, Judy Snow. Donna runs the program with other education students Kathy Milligan, Sue Shearer, and Atkinson student Clark Hortsing.

Prof. Forest asserts that, while many educators agree with mainstreaming, few are putting the rhetoric into real practice. She says that there are very few programs of this nature in North America, and believes that York has the most extreme version of it in Canada.

The results of the project are astonishing and delighting everyone involved: the parents all agree it's a raging success, and the initiators say that none of them knew it was going to be so good.

The children initially showed little interest in interaction. They were passive, reliant on adult authority and largely self-interested. Ms. Bracewell notes that the children "came in with the feeling that they had to be the best at everything they tried, and if they didn't succeed, they were devastated."

However, in the passing of three months, twenty children emerged from their shells to form a caring, non-competitive learning community, each more self-reliant and more eager to take a leadership role.

How did it happen? Ms. Bracewell and Prof. Forest both explain that instead of focusing on the child's failure, they emphasized the enormous variety of untapped potential. "We shifted the emphasis from the handicap label to the individual, and we set extremely high expectations and demanded they meet them."

The children were allowed to interact in a relaxed, informal atmosphere in which the emphasis was not so much on academics as on learning to live together, self-reliance, self-confidence, and a sense of community.

Individual changes are clearly apparent in a written comparison drawn up by Prof. Forest and Ms. Bracewell. For example, according to home classroom teachers Theresa (age 6 with Down's syndrome) has been classified as "incapable of working near the level of her classmates, has a very short attention span, and is only interested in playing with toys."

But Prof. Forest and Ms. Bracewell say that Theresa is a "delightful and energetic child who is very strong willed (which serves her well). She is eager to learn when

material is of interest to her. She has been taught by the school how *not* to learn but she frequently 'slips up' with us and will read or count quite adequately. Adorable!"

In the case of Mike, age 9, home teachers say he has a "severe spatial-perceptual handicap, and that his disability will hinder his academic progress as he gets older." The York educators, however, believe "Mike is a shy child with a delightful sense of humour. If allowed to learn through auditory channels rather than visual, he shows the great extent of his potential."

The response of the parents is perhaps best expressed in a letter to President H. Ian Macdonald from a University of Toronto professor whose child is in the Saturday project. "Our own child is stimulated through the efforts of the teachers to create specific programming to meet his individual needs at the same time that he feels secure in a group of which he is a valued member . . . the York experiment appears to demonstrate that, with suitable support and the appropriate environment, 'mainstreaming' can be extremely effective".

Prof. Forest says that the Saturday-Get-Together is a "created situation that exhibits a value base, namely, that it's good for all kind of people to work together on the basis that they're different but not defective."

Ms. Bracewell adds: "It's not healthy to have a homogeneous group because it promotes ignorance and intolerance of people who are in any way different or unusual."

Prof. Forest explains that a segregated school has very low expectations of the handicapped, and that the system destroys students by making them so passive and by not giving them options.

"The result of the program is that the children don't believe they're handicapped . . . they don't see the handicap anymore, they see the individual."

The teachers and students now want to move into Phase II of this experimental model and run the program on a daily basis this summer. The summer session will stress cognitive skills and language development (i.e., reading), as well as the usual summer activities.

Should the summer program prove a success, Prof. Forest says, "we hope some day to establish a model school at York." She adds that, unless Faculties of Education create models like this where student teachers can see mainstreaming in action, the next generation of teachers will recreate the same problems."

Members of the York community are welcome to enquire concerning the summer program. For more information, contact Prof. Forest at 667-6303.

MCU Increases Student Assistance by 16.4 Percent

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities has increased funding of the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) by 16.4 percent for 1981-82 to a total of \$98.2 million, \$13.8 million more than last year.

This figure includes \$4.2 million to meet increased tuition fees for those who qualify for student assistance.

OSAP comprises four plans. Three of these — the Ontario Study Grant Plan, the Ontario Student Loan Plan, and the Ontario Special Bursary Plan — are funded by the Ontario government. The fourth is the Canada Student Loans Plan, financed by the federal government through the Secretary of State.

The Ontario Student Loan Plan was introduced in 1975 to assist students whose needs were not met fully by Canada Student Loans. The province expects to issue about \$25 million in this plan during 1981-82 (compared with only \$1 million during 1977-78). Dr. Bette Stephenson, Minister of Colleges and Universities, said that increased OSAP interest charges plus the federal government's not increasing the loan maximum under the Canada Student Loan will cost OSAP \$6.2 million in 1981-82.

The Canada Student Loans Act, although amended recently by the federal government, limits assistance to approximately \$1,800 per year to a student attending college or university for two terms (Sep-

tember to April). This maximum has not increased since 1974.

The personal and living allowance for single students living away from home will increase from \$72 to \$77 per week under Ontario's grant plan. The loan criteria will allow for an increase in the allowance to \$86 per week.

The maximum allowance for books and equipment will increase by 20 percent for both the grant and loan plans.

The maximum grant for independent single students will increase from \$1,000 to \$1,100 per term or semester. As most students attend college or university for two terms each year, such students will be eligible for up to \$2,200 in grants, an increase of \$200 over previous years. Under the grant plan, independent single students are students who have worked for three years in the work force and are no longer expected to be receiving parental support for post-secondary education costs.

The minimum contribution from summer earnings will increase from \$50 to \$60 per week. Students, who search for employment and are unable to locate a summer job or full employment during this period, can appeal this minimum. However, they will be required to document their employment search.

The Ontario Student Assistance Program assists over 82,000 students annually.

Applications are now available from colleges and universities in Ontario, from Ontario secondary schools, and from the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities. Call 965-5241 for information.

CBC RADIO SEEKS PROGRAM IDEAS

Interested in free-lance broadcasting? CBC FM radio is looking for program proposals for the 1981-82 season of its Ideas show.

Faculty, staff, and senior graduate students are invited to attend an information meeting on May 6 at 1 p.m. in the upper library of the University of Toronto's Massey College (4 Devonshire Place). Parking is available at 113 St. George.

Ideas' Executive Producer Geraldine Sherman will discuss how to develop a proposal, as well as the responsibilities involved (researching the program, taping interviews, choosing the music, etc.) and the fee (ACTRA rates, approximately \$1280 per broadcast hour).

If attending, please contact the CBC office at 925-3311 (extension 2084).

research

AVAILABLE FUNDS

For further information, please contact the Office of Research Administration, N718 Ross, 667-3777/3782.

Deadline Dates

The following programs detailed in previous *Gazette* issues have deadlines in April, May and June.

April 30: NATO Research Grants; SSHRC Small Grants; Association of Commonwealth Universities Administrative Travelling Fellowships.

May 1: SSHRC Travel Support for Lecture Series; SSHRC — Consultative Group on Research and Education in Law (submission of briefs); NSERC Strategic Grants; Sigma Xi Research Grants; Aid to Artists: Short-term, Program Cost and Travel Grants for arts administrators and composers in classical music.

May 7: Canadian Electrical Association proposal submission.

May 8: Atkinson Charitable Foundation.

May 15: SSHRC Research Grants (over \$2,500); Aid to Artists: Short-term, Program and Travel Grants (multidisciplinary work, performance and video); Clarke Institute Research Fund Award.

May 31: SSHRC — Population Aging Research Workshops.

June 1: SSHRC — Population Aging Research Grants; J.P. Bickell Foundation Aid to Artists: Short-term, Program and Travel Grants (dance, and some areas of music); SSFC Questionnaire to York University Task Force.

1981-1982 Strategic Grants Program (SSHRC)

The Strategic Grants theme offered this session is population aging. Research projects are encouraged from both social

scientists and humanists in order to cover all aspects of an aging society.

SSHRC has announced three new themes which will shortly emerge as programs under the Strategic Grants division. These themes are: the family and socialization of children; the human context of science and technology; and Canadian studies.

Population Aging Program: SSHRC has announced a second competition deadline of **October 15** for Research Grants on Aging.

The guidelines for regular research grants apply to the strategic grants with the following differences:

- discipline eligibility will be decided by the Tri-Council (SSHRC, NSERC and MRC);
 - "Health and Welfare, Canada" proposals will be referred to the Population
- (continued on p. 6)