

educators, and therapists have often taken a "them and us" attitude toward the services delivered by each other, which is detrimental to both handicapped and nonhandicapped students. Isolation of students or fragmentation of services is an undesirable process

for the outcome that is desired. Professionals should work together, and administrators should reinforce this cooperation.

Teach nonhandicapped students about handicaps. Students with special needs have been removed from

the real world for so long that they have not been an important aspect in the development of nonhandicapped children. For this reason, interactions may be strained and uncomfortable. Administrators can improve this situation by incorporating into the curriculum information about handicapping conditions and the lives of persons who have them. The use of peer tutors and the development of "special friends" clubs will also be helpful. Most important, administrators and teachers can teach students, through their own behavior, that every person has the right to live a normal life.

"Regular Lives" (A Review)

Marcia D'Arcangelo

Ten-year-old Mel lived in an institution for two and a half years. At that time he had no spoken language and had been variously diagnosed as mentally retarded, epileptic, hyperactive, and multiply handicapped. Now he is successfully attending public school in a regular classroom.

Chris, an emotionally disabled teenager, is learning to manage his anger. By interacting with students his own age in a regular junior high school, Chris sees socially acceptable ways of behaving and is learning to fit in.

Patricia Howard, an elementary school principal, says: "I vowed that we would not compromise the academic program of typical children, and in no way have I seen that suffer. If anything, mainstreaming helps to reinforce many of the skills that typical children are learning."

Case studies of successful mainstreaming of the disabled are presented in "Regular Lives," a powerful half-hour documentary film featuring educators, students, parents, and community leaders. Narrated by actor Martin Sheen, this videotape shows the obstacles and benefits of placing children with physical and mental disabilities into regular classrooms with typical students. The program is ideal for staff development activities, to build awareness and support for the efforts necessary to make mainstreaming work.

The program, which aired last fall on PBS stations nationwide, shows classrooms where teachers and disabled students interact in a variety of situations. Teachers talk about overcoming their initial fears of teaching children who are physically and mentally handicapped. The video also addresses teachers' questions about necessary skills, special knowledge, and additional time required to meet the needs of special children. It points out the importance of administrative support and training for these efforts.

Throughout the program, we see typical students displaying patience and kindness in their interactions with friends who are disabled. We see principals come to support mainstreaming as beneficial to both disabled and typical children. We see parents hesitant to place their special-needs child with typical children for fear of teasing or ridicule reassured by the acceptance of teachers and other students.

"Regular Lives" presents all aspects of mainstreaming for consideration. Viewers previously unaware of some of these issues will come away with a clear understanding—and perhaps with understanding will come support.

"Regular Lives" was produced by State of the Art, Inc., Washington, D.C., in cooperation with Syracuse University, School of Education, Division of Special Education and Rehabilitation. The program won a CINE Golden Eagle from the Council on International Nontheatrical Events and a first place Gold Award from the John Muir Medical Film Festival in May 1988.

The half-hour videotape is available for \$34.95 (including shipping and handling). Also available is a *Community Discussion Guide* designed to promote group interaction, for \$3.50. To order, write to WETA Educational Activities, Box 2626, Washington, D.C. 20013, or call 1-800-445-1964. "Regular Lives" is closed captioned for the hearing-impaired.

Marcia D'Arcangelo is Senior Producer, Media Production, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 125 N. West St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

Time for a Change

That people who have mental handicaps are different, are in fact deficient in their learning abilities, is not a viable reason to offer them a segregated educational program or one inferior in its composite. On the contrary, their handicaps call for the most appropriate education in order to enable them to function as participating members of their communities. In past years we thought an appropriate education could best be provided through a model in which they were withdrawn from the rest of the school population. But research and experience have taught us otherwise. What we have learned should now change what we do. □

Author's note: Also contributing to this article were Christine Blasini, Deborah Carr, Elizabeth DeSousa, Elizabeth Farmer, Larena Fleck, Marta Garrido, Melissa Herring, Janis Kenyon, Sylvia Patterson, and Cathy Waltermeyer.

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