WHOLE SCHOOLING RESEARCH PROJECT

VI.1 INCLUDE ALL:
All children learn together across culture, ethnicity, language, ability, gender, and age.

KEY FINDINGS

Successful inclusion requires breaking the assumed link between diagnosis of a disability and a "treatment" in the form of a specialized (segregated) educational program.

School communities are unaware of the incidence of disability in the larger community that they serve, and are therefore unable to assess the degree to which their inclusive efforts are successful. (They do not know "who is missing".)

Inclusiveness is a function of classroom culture and pedagogical approach, not the specific characteristics of the individual students in a specific classroom.

An inclusive teacher must have a large repertoire of means for assessing his or her own success with the various students in his or her classroom.

General education teachers were generally not involved in the creation of the IEPs of special education students in their classrooms and often do not even have copies of the plan.

SCHOOLWIDE INCLUSION
Inclusion As A Part Of A School Culture

A basic tenet of Whole Schooling is the education of all students together, in the same classrooms, as members of genuine classroom communities. "All students" means all students who live in the neighborhood or "catchement area" served by the school, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, English language proficiency, disability, or talent. Just as important, individual classrooms are not subdivided into static groupings along any of the lines of difference just listed. That is to say, neither schools nor individual classrooms are tracked according to academic ability or other factors.

Over recent decades, many forces have operated to make such genuinely inclusive schools rare indeed, even in very rural areas. The proliferation of separate programs, whether in separate buildings or in separate classrooms within the neighborhood school, may be in part reflective of a simple unwillingness to be inclusive in the face of growing diversity, but it is also reflective of the emphasis on specialization that permeates American culture. The public view of education often reflects a medical view in which students are diagnosed with learning needs and the school

then provides treatment. It is widely believed that such treatment can be most efficiently provided when students are grouped together by their needs. This belief persists despite a steadily growing literature that shows that it is unfounded, particularly with respect to students with disabilities and learning difficulties, but also with respect to most other groups that tend to be segregated by the education system[1].

There is a continuum of arguments to be made in favor of inclusive education moving from narrowly defined achievements for individual students to broad issues of social justice. At the academic end is the belief that students' academic needs, even when fairly narrowly defined, are in fact better met in well-taught inclusive classrooms than in segregated, tracked, or ability-grouped classrooms. Some people make this argument only for students with disabilities or other "differences"; others make it for all students. At the other end is the belief that schools serve far more, and more important, functions than merely imparting those narrowly defined academic skills. The broader purpose of public schooling is addressed directly in the second principle of Whole Schooling: Empowerment of Citizens in a Democracy. Many participants in Whole Schooling see this latter issue as a matter of basic social justice. For example, there is concern that in "traditional" schools, innovative teaching techniques like cooperative learning groups, writing workshops, and multiage classrooms are reserved for students carrying "gifted" labels, while other students are denied access to the pedagogical methods most likely to help succeed in all aspects of schooling.

Table VI.1-1: Reasons to Create an Inclusive School

Better Academic Outcomes for Individual Students
- With disabilities or other differences
- Without disabilities or other differences

Better Social-Emotional Outcomes for Students
- With disabilities or other differences
- Without disabilities or other differences

Better Preparation of Students for Their Adult Roles
- Tolerance
- Teamwork
- Social skills

Social Justice

The range of reasons for creating an inclusive school is summarized in Table 1. The schools described in this study, like most schools attracted to the Whole Schooling model, see these issues as intertwined. They vary in the relative emphasis on one argument versus another, with Evergreen Elementary placing the most emphasis on acquisition of academic skills and Hamilton placing the most emphasis on preparing for the adult world and social justice. Interestingly, it appears that when the primary emphasis is on academic success, fairly narrowly defined, as it is at Evergreen, the social justice concern does not necessarily grow. However, when social justice is the starting point, experience with inclusive practice brings about a growing commitment to inclusive practices as best instructional practices. This may well account for the vastly different outcomes at Evergreen and Hamilton to date. The inclusive effort at Evergreen has apparently come to a halt: the job has been declared done, even though the three students with the most severe disabilities were all withdrawn from the school by their parents at the end of last year, and there remains considerable confusion about the roles of

1 Allington, Richard L. and Walmsley, Sean A (eds). No Quick Fix: Rethinking Literacy Programs in American Elementary Schools. New York, Teachers College Press, 1995.

co-teaching, push-in, and pull-out support services. There is also little concern about what happens to students with disabilities after they graduate to middle school. Conversely, the commitment to inclusion has continued to increase at Hamilton, and is spreading to at least three other schools in the district. Staff members frequently express concern about students' experiences when they move on to middle school and suggest that better bridges must be built to insure smooth transitions.

Schools discussed in this report vary widely in the degrees and types of diversity found in their student populations. Virtually all of the schools are relatively homogeneous with respect to family income and socioeconomic status. For the schools in the metropolitan Detroit area, this is consistent with the high degree of segregation so that most political boundaries (cities, towns, and townships) define relatively homogeneous populations with respect to this dimension. The remaining schools are all located in rural or semi rural areas where again relative homogeneity would be expected.

The schools vary widely in the degree to which there is diversity along racial/ethnic lines. Some schools are not diverse: of the two schools in Detroit, one is almost entirely African-American; the other is almost entirely Hispanic. Rogers High School is in a virtually all-white, blue-collar suburb close to the city, and the rural schools have very few nonwhite students. The suburban schools are far more diverse along this dimension. Similarly, there is wide variation with respect to linguistic diversity. Some of the schools serve student bodies for whom English is the universal first language. One school serves a largely Spanish-speaking neighborhood. Meadowview and Hamilton both are in districts where official records show 40 or more first languages spoken in students' homes, with the most frequent non-English first language being Arabic. Indeed, Hamilton houses its district's English as a Second Language support services office.

Table VI.1-2: Dimensions of Diversity

Universal:

- Academic/cognitive ability
- Physical/sensory ability
- Social/emotional status
- Level of parent involvement
- Stability and emotional comfort of home life

Site-Specific:

- Racial and ethnic diversity
- Socioeconomic diversity
- Linguistic diversity
- Religious/cultural diversity

Regardless of the demographic and socioeconomic makeup of a school's student body, a central dimension of variation exists everywhere: academic or cognitive ability. Similarly, there is always variation in students' home situation, the degree of parent involvement in the school, motor skills, socio-emotional development, and so forth. Thus, when inclusion is defined in Whole Schooling terms, the creation of inclusive classrooms remains a challenge in every school, even those with superficially homogeneous student populations, if inclusive classrooms are communities in which all students are valued and all students have equal access to resources, acclaim, and respect. Such communities entail a culture of mutual support and mutual responsibility, with rapidly changing alliances between students as they move from task to task or theme to theme. As a result, there is very little use of ability grouping and a strong

commitment to creating a learning community in which all members are both teachers and learners, often simultaneously.

Meadowview had the clearest history of inclusion across ability levels at the outset of this study, and in spite of some recent backsliding due to higher-level administrative changes, it remains the only school that routinely includes students with learning disabilities and mild to moderate cognitive and emotional impairments in general education classrooms full time. There is no "resource room" and the special education teachers and support staff serve labeled students within typical classroom settings. Enrichment programs serve the entire school, not just students with "gifted" labels. Until the 2001-2002 school year, Meadowview had multiage classrooms for students of all ages, not just for lower elementary grades. Many teachers devote considerable effort to creating inclusive and strong classroom and school communities, as well as to creating learning contexts that serve all their students well.

A student with serious behavioral challenges is supported in re-entering a kindergarten classroom.

Armstrong has also been long committed to creating an inclusive school community and also has no resource room or self-contained special education classrooms. Support staff provide most services via co-teaching and there is particular commitment to meeting students' emotional and behavioral needs, even when they are extremely challenging. However, Armstrong classrooms make extensive use of ability grouping, a pedagogical approach that works against genuinely inclusive classrooms. Also, Armstrong serves only the lower elementary grades. Students move from Armstrong to an upper elementary school that does not share its commitment to inclusive education or the Whole Schooling principles.

The other schools have varying degrees of inclusive practice; most are moving away from models where most special services (special education, gifted education, English language assistance, remedial reading, etc.) are delivered in separate places to models where these services are delivered within general education classrooms. However, in some cases, the movement has not been all the way into the general education classroom, but merely into the hallway just outside the general education classroom. At Evergreen and Hamilton, for example, there are tables and chairs placed in all classroom hallways to provide workspace for support staff who are pulling out students receiving one type of service or another.

Placement of Students in School Classes: Who gets included and why?
Inclusion is not a special education issue.

As just described above, "inclusion" is not a special education issue. The most obvious dimensions of variation used as a basis for exclusion in the schools included in this report, aside from disability, are "giftedness" and lack of English language proficiency. At Hamilton, students with "gifted" labels are routinely pulled out for "enrichment" activities and students who are learning English are pulled out for language instruction and assistance with their studies. The

district where Gleason School is located runs a separate magnet program for "gifted" students in the upper elementary grades, so that these students are removed from their neighborhood school and bused to another school where the program is housed in a separate suite of classrooms and where students have little interaction with the rest of the school population. The school that houses the "gifted" program is about to open another segregated program, a center program for students labeled "severely emotionally impaired" from across the county.

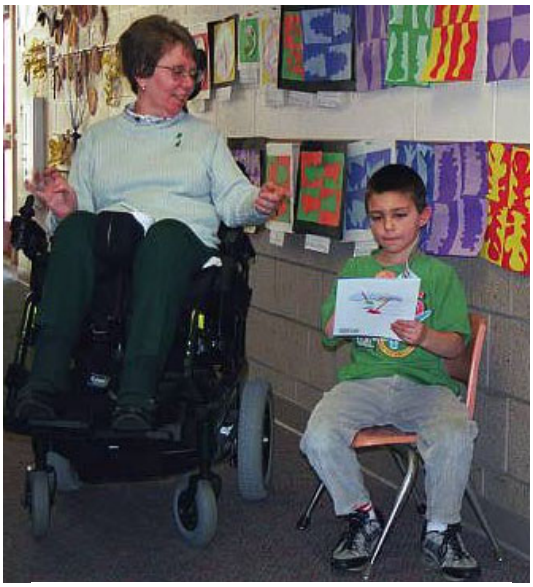
Beyond classroom placement, as we pointed out earlier, is the issue of creating a single, inclusive classroom community versus a classroom that is subdivided and/or has some students who remain marginalized throughout most of the school day. Ability grouping was most apparent at Armstrong, where the co-teaching model in place tended to involve subdividing the class into relatively stable groupings and then offering small group instruction provided by teacher, co-teachers, or support staff. This kind of subdivision also occurred in the supposedly multiage classrooms at Evergreen School. There, students in a 1-2 multiage classroom actually were attending a program where the two grades were separated for instruction under the assumption that the second graders were more advanced than the first graders. The exception to this division was mostly students identified with special education labels; they stayed with the grade one group even during their second year in the classroom. Occasionally, it was reported, a very "advanced" student might be included in the second grade group while in first grade. This contrasted markedly with the 1-2 multiage classroom at Meadowview, where status as a "novice" or a "veteran" had little to do with the support provided for academic learning. As we describe in the chapter on Multilevel Teaching, Meadowview's multiage teachers are engaged in genuine multilevel teaching, whereas Evergreen's are teaching traditional "splits". It is clear that the mere labeling of a classroom as multiage does not imply a truly inclusive community, merely a wider age range of students housed together.

Labeling of students.

Formal labeling of students is often associated with a breakdown in inclusive practice, although this need not be the case – and should not be when Whole Schooling is fully implemented. The rate at which students are labeled varies widely among the schools. To some extent, this may reflect variations in the local community served by the school. This is most obviously true with respect to "ESL" labels and labels associated with socioeconomic status like "Title I" and "at-risk." In addition, it appears that there is a higher level of disability in the general community in some areas than in others. However, it was also clear that labeling rates are a complex function of school and community belief systems on the one hand, and willingness to expend resources for students with specific special needs on the other.

Several schools, including Armstrong, Evergreen, and Meadowview, have strong institutional commitments to avoid labeling students during the first two or three years of school, usually from kindergarten through grade two. There is a belief that children's developmental patterns vary so widely during that period, and that schools are engaged in leveling the effect of variations in home experiences during that period, so label assignments become fairly arbitrary. Thus, younger children carry disability labels only when those disabilities are relatively severe and have clear medical underpinnings. There is also a belief that labels, or at least labels other than "gifted," can be stigmatizing and can also become self-fulfilling prophecies. It is better, these school communities believe, to support each child as best one can and avoid categorically subdividing the student population.

On the other hand, schools like Hamilton rely heavily on labeling. There is a strong belief that information gained from evaluations is useful for classroom teachers and that referrals to special education can generate additional resources (support staff, training, materials) to help students maximize their educational experiences and perhaps avoid difficulties later on in school and in life. Members of these school communities express the suspicion that schools avoiding labeling do so at least in part to save money. If students are not given labels that tie to resource expenditures, then the school district saves money at the expense of high quality education. However, the emphasis on labeling is so strong in Hamilton's district that in actuality few students are newly identified during the first few years of school. Instead, the district has large numbers of toddlers and preschoolers who already carry disability labels. New identifications arise predominantly when learning disabilities are suspected as academic content becomes more challenging. In the past, parents of preschoolers identified for special education services were steered into special programs once their children reached kindergarten age. As a result, it was easy for elementary schools to imagine that there simply were no children with disabilities in the neighborhoods they served. This is slowly changing as attitudes in the district's early childhood centers change and inclusive practices begin to be implemented there.



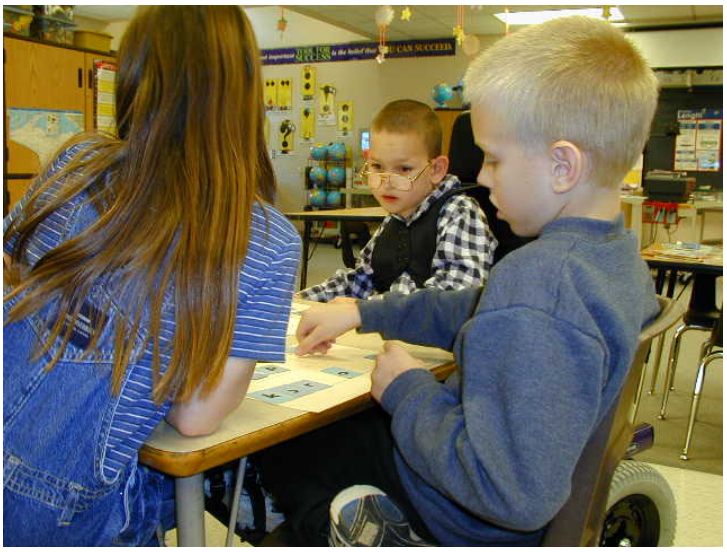
Retired teacher mentors and reads with students in the hall.

In a sense, one can argue that pressures against labeling come from both the left (desire to avoid stigma and treat everyone "the same") and the right (desire to save money). The combination of these two pressures can have two results: either the school moves to become truly inclusive under a definition like that of Whole Schooling, or the school perpetuates the traditional model of teaching to the "average" students and leaving the others more or less on their own to do the best they can. Just as the desire to avoid labeling is a double-edged sword, so is the desire to use diagnostic labeling to its maximum to enhance teaching and garner resources. In particular, the belief that labeling is useful for classroom teachers tends to encourage the belief that specific diagnoses require specific pedagogical approaches. This belief in turn tends to support segregating students by label in the name of efficiency: students needing the same pedagogy are grouped together in separate classrooms. Specially trained teachers must be needed to deliver the special pedagogy required by a specific diagnosis. The change in belief system observed at Hamilton over the course of the study suggests a change in this last belief: the teaching and administrative staff still believes that evaluation and labeling is useful, but no longer believes that it logically follows that students should be segregated by label. We suspect that breaking the logical chain at precisely this link is vital to creating high quality inclusive schools.

Students with disabilities.

For all of the schools described in this report, institutional interest in inclusion has focused primarily on students with high incidence learning disabilities. In all of the schools, for students with LD labels there has been a move to discontinue full-time placement in separate classrooms and to limit time spent in resource rooms or "pull-out " into hallways and other small spaces. Meadowview and Armstrong have gone the farthest with this philosophy and have no resource room and little provision for temporary pull-outs. The movement toward inclusion of these students has been initiated by the schools, rather than by parents.

At the other end of the disability spectrum, several of the schools are including students with low incidence, severe disabilities in their general education classrooms, often with extensive supports. This is most true at Hamilton, Evergreen, and Armstrong. In these situations, however, inclusion has been instigated by parents, who often report a great deal of initial resistance from district and school level administrators. It is probably significant that the highest level of inclusion of students with severe disabilities is found in the most affluent suburban school and the two most rural schools. Transporting students to special programs is challenging in rural areas, and total numbers of students in such center programs may be so low that the programs may be unusually costly. There may also be a stronger sense of community in these areas so that students with disabilities are seen first as community members and only second as "special ed" students. In the most affluent district, some parents have taken the initiative to learn about educational options on their own, becoming experts on inclusive practice. At the same time, they are not intimidated by the school institution and are comfortable insisting on an educational plan that may be very different from "what is usual". The remaining schools are in larger urban and suburban districts where there are large special education departments invested in maintaining separate programming for "their" students. In addition, parents who are less educated and/or less inclined to challenge the "experts" (the teachers and special education administration) are less likely to push for inclusive education if the district assumes that placement in segregated programs and self-contained classrooms is what the student needs. This assumption is pervasive throughout Michigan, which continues to have state special education rules that stress a label-and-place approach to special education programming.



Student with cerebral palsy joins peers in a reading lesson.

In any case, the schools we examined tend to include students with high incidence and mild disabilities in general education classrooms under various support models, and to a lesser degree to include students with low incidence, severe disabilities, usually supported by a paraprofessional aide. The students missing in many of the schools are those with mid-range

disabilities. These students carry labels of "educable mentally impaired (EMI)," "trainable mentally impaired (TMI)," and "emotionally impaired (EI)" under the Michigan classification system. Some of the schools in this report do routinely include students with EMI or EI labels, particularly Meadowview, Evergreen, and Armstrong. Other schools are in districts that so routinely send students with these labels to separate programs that school staff are completely unaware of they are being any such students residing in the area served by the school. In fact, parents of these students may never come in contact with staff from their neighborhood schools at all. Instead, they are steered directly from Early Intervention and "preprimary impaired" programs to segregated programs housed elsewhere, often out of district, without ever talking to anyone at the neighborhood school. As a result, school staff are completely unaware that these students even exist. This point was brought home very clearly when project staff began asking administrators and special education support staff how many students in their cachement areas are attending public special education programs elsewhere. The universal response was surprise – it had never occurred to school staff that there might be students right down the street who were never examining the option of attending their neighborhood schools.

Who else is missing?

All of the schools in this report are located in areas where there are private or parochial schools drawing students who might otherwise attend the local public schools. In addition, growth of the homeschooling movement makes it likely that there are also children in each cachement area being schooled by their parents or by unofficial homeschooling organizations. It is striking that little awareness of this "competition" was shown by staff at any of the schools. Like students with disabilities, these students had no existence to the staff at their neighborhood schools. This situation makes it very clear that the link between the school community and the larger community in which the school is located is tenuous at best, especially in the non-rural schools where many school staff do not live in the communities served by their schools.

INCLUDE ALL
Classroom Level

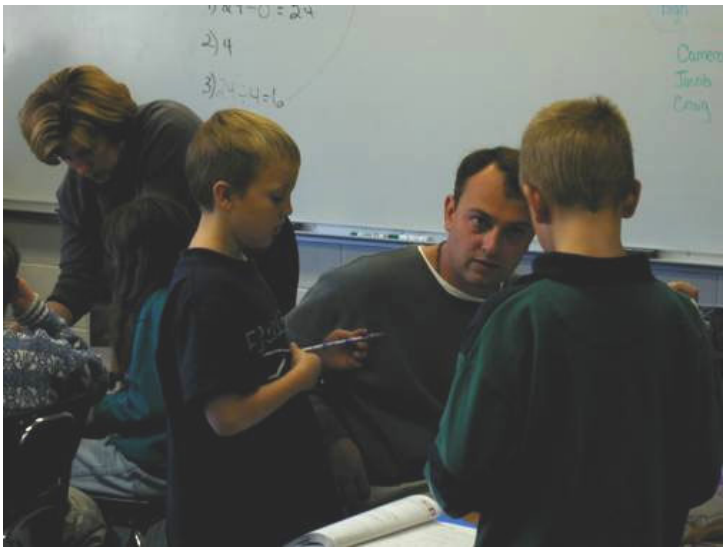
Who gets included and why?

Whatever the overall policy and philosophy at the building or district level, the individual classroom is the central unit in building inclusive community, especially at the elementary school level. (This project initially included two high schools, but one dropped out for reasons that will be discussed later. The other will be discussed separately.) At all of the schools in the project, students stayed with their homeroom teachers for almost the entire day. At the end of the project,

Meadowview moved toward "departmentalization" in the upper elementary grades, but no school used this structure doing the data collection period. There was some teaming of teachers, however. At Evergreen, some teachers cooperated for social studies instruction, with students moving from one classroom to the other. At Hamilton, there was a regrouping of students in the upper grades for mathematics instruction, creating large ability groups by reorganizing students from several homerooms. Hamilton also has an "enrichment" program during which students choose non-academic electives and mix with students from other classrooms and grade levels while pursuing their chosen interests. Likewise, Avery instituted a fifth grade "book club" during which fifth graders were regrouped – but not by ability – and met in smaller groups to discuss books the club read together. Overall, however, the classroom was the primary social unit in each school.

In most cases, teachers have some say in whether or not their classrooms include students who are "being included" rather than being served in self-contained special programs. At Evergreen, grade level teachers get together and decide where "their" students should be assigned the next year. Teachers attempt to create groupings that will work well socially and also to match students to teaching and personality styles. At other schools, principals may attempt to do the same thing, but they do it more or less on their own, inviting input from individual teachers or support staff.

The model used for providing support services to students with disabilities also helps determine the make-up of individual classrooms. For example, in schools making extensive use of co-teaching tend to locate students with mild to moderate disabilities in classrooms that have co-teachers. This results in a higher density of such students in those classes than in the others. Students with more severe disabilities, for whom the co-teachers would not be the sole or even major conduits for support, end up in classrooms without co-teachers. This helps keep the proportion of students with disabilities slightly closer to natural proportions, but deprives those students of any benefits the co-teacher might be able to provide. Instead, primary support comes from a paraprofessional, who may or may not have any skills, training, or experience in providing educational supports to anyone at all, let alone a student with intense needs.



General and special education teachers coach and support students as they work on a writing and research project.

Grouping students with disabilities together within a subset of general education classrooms is usually called "clustering," and occurs even when co-teaching is not the primary service delivery model. For example, Hamilton does not use co-teaching, but at first chose to cluster students by disability label in the belief that this would make it easier for the special education staff to provide support and for the classroom teacher to adapt curriculum and explore new teaching techniques. As a result of participation in the study and the self-reflection participation entailed, Hamilton has

moved away from clustering in favor of distributing students with disabilities throughout all classrooms, thereby maintaining natural proportions both within and across disability labels.

Learning to teach inclusively.

Fairly early in the study, the eye of a researcher walking the halls at Hamilton school was drawn to Larry's third grade classroom by intriguing student work displayed outside the door. Upon entering, the researcher was welcomed to stay but was informed "this is not an inclusion room this year." What Larry meant was that there were no students with disability labels included full time in his classroom. Observations in his classroom, however, quickly led the researcher to ask, "Is the presence of students with disability labels a requirement for being an 'inclusive classroom'?" Over the course of the project, the answer that clearly emerged was "no": Inclusiveness is a function of classroom culture and pedagogical approach, not of the specific characteristics of the individual students in a specific classroom during a specific time period.

Larry and Tina, a third grade teacher at Evergreen, were teachers who ascribed most vigorously to a constructivist approach to education. In both of their classrooms, the various standards and benchmarks that define the curriculum at the district and state levels are embedded in coherent learning experiences involving authentic tasks, hands-on learning, a mixture of both independent and cooperative learning, and a strong emphasis on personal goal setting and evaluation in light of those personal goals. In other words, these classrooms were demonstrations of the approach described as multilevel teaching and discussed at length later in this report. However, neither teacher had "inclusion students" during the course of the project. Further, it seemed that neither Tina nor the co-principals at Evergreen thought of the constructivist approach as appropriate to inclusive education, assuming instead that students with disabilities, particularly cognitive disabilities, could not thrive in such settings. The fact that this is not true was amply demonstrated in a classroom at Meadowview, where Melanie, another upper elementary teacher who could be described as "constructivist" was successfully creating an inclusive community across many dimensions of diversity, including significant cognitive disability.

Active and collaborative learning gave students opportunities to support one another.

All three teachers, Larry, Tina, and Melanie, as well as several others observed in this project, create classroom communities where students work independently, alone or in small groups, on a variety of tasks centered on a curricular theme. The teachers use a variety of approaches, sometimes offering direct instruction but more often structuring hands-on learning contexts, facilitating group work, helping students learn to set goals and evaluate their own progress, and so forth. They monitor their own success

as teachers on a moment-by-moment basis by looking for indicators in the student behavior as well as more concrete aspects of both process and product.

Listening to Larry talk, both in private conversations and in larger groups, it became clear that a particular challenge to him was finding ways in which to monitor the progress of students with disabilities in his class. The techniques he relied on were not working well, and he therefore felt unsuccessful as a teacher. In fact, from the observer's perspective, it was not Larry's teaching that was unsuccessful; it was just his monitoring system.

Larry brought up his concerns at a faculty meeting where Hamilton's efforts at including students with disabilities were being discussed:

> Larry: Serena has been "escaping." It's hard on my self-esteem! I don't feel I'm doing a great job with her. She's not interacting much with other kids.
>
> Nora [special education teacher]: She talks about you all the time . . . and the classroom. She talks a lot about what she does in "her" classroom.
>
> Some general education teachers think if the kid isn't getting it, they're failing. But just getting them involved and trying is success. You need different markers for those kids.

This interaction also illustrates an important role that special education teachers can play for general education teachers – helping them understand different ways to gauge progress with children and providing feedback of the efficacy of their efforts.

Although Larry had no students with disabilities in his classroom full-time during the observation phase of the study, he did have students who were mainstreamed for significant portions of the day. One boy, Justin, was theoretically joining his class for "reading" and therefore appeared at his doorway when formal reading instruction was on her agenda for the day. His comings and goings were accommodated as best Larry could manage, something that was difficult given his commitment to what he called "student-centered learning" and student-set agendas. Thus, Justin was indeed present for most of the time that Larry spent with whole group reading activities. Unfortunately, when this phase of reading instruction ended, Justin would leave. Larry expressed great frustration over this and Justin himself rarely seemed eager to leave unless his special education homeroom was about to do the prototypical special education activity, a bowling outing. In fact, reading was so thoroughly integrated throughout the school day that it was impossible to be mainstreamed into Larry's class "for reading." Although Larry felt that his class offered Justin something important and he was

welcomed by the students, he could not feel successful about either Justin's progress in reading or his membership in Larry's classroom community. Justin was receiving only a fraction of the reading instruction Larry offered, and what he did receive was disjointed because the rest of the class continued while Justin was back with his special education class. He was not a member of the classroom community because he did not share in their activities, could not be counted on to "be there" for every aspect of a project, and did not participate in the many activities Larry used to consciously create a distinctive classroom culture.

In this case, Larry's usual monitoring systems were working well. It was the situation that was causing problems. Justin looked like any other student while in Larry's class – he participated in the same way and at the same rate, he maintained eye contact when he was speaking, he stayed on task, and so forth. Yes, the kind of performance that might be measured on a test might be lower than other students, but Larry could adjust for that. His frustration with Justin was that his classroom was deliberately designed to present a coherent, day-long educational experience and it did not easily accommodate a student who dropped in only for an hour or so each day. It was teachers' experiences with students like Justin that led many of the Hamilton teachers to join their principal in the belief that mainstreaming was not the best way to deliver special education services to Hamilton students with learning disabilities and mild/moderate cognitive impairments. By the end of the project, situations like Justin's had been largely eliminated as time in the special education room was decreased or eliminated and special education students became fulltime members of general education classroom communities.

The situation of Serena, another student mainstreamed into Larry's classroom for part of the day raised issues that continue even when mainstreaming is abandoned in favor of fulltime inclusion. Serena was present for more time than for Justin, but not "for reading", as her more severe cognitive disabilities had led to a "special" reading program in the special education classroom. In the eyes of the observing researchers, Serena was thriving in Larry's classroom. She seemed interested in the curriculum content, operated autonomously to carry out the independent tasks that addressed her goals within the classroom, had some success in group tasks, and seemed to be an accepted member of the classroom community.

Larry, however, felt unsuccessful with Serena. Conversations with Larry quickly made it clear that Larry's usually ways of tracking his own success as a teacher were not working with Serena. For example, like many teachers, Larry relies on eye contact with students as a measure of student engagement. However, some students with disabilities, particularly vision impairment, autism, and more severe cognitive impairments (as well as some students without disability labels) tend to avoid eye contact even when engaged in listening to a teacher or following a group discussion. Absence of eye contact from Serena made Larry feel unsuccessful, even though an observer could see that indeed Serena was well engaged with the classroom activity.

This difficulty in monitoring student involvement and progress by watching body language, level of verbal participation in discussions, eye contact, and other physical demonstrations is challenging to many of the best teachers, who use these indices to track how things are going in their classrooms moment-to-moment. Particularly when the teacher tries to stay away from using tests and finished products as the primary means of assessing student learning, the inability to easily use other accustomed measures leaves her with little to go on. In addition, she may not even know what a mainstreamed student's IEP goals are, and in any case she is not certain how they fit into the larger context of access to the general curriculum. As a result, teachers like Larry are concerned that they are not successful with some students when it is the measures of success that may be inadequate, rather than student learning.

What about the IEP?

As is typical throughout Michigan, individualized educational plans are usually established each spring for the following year, especially for students included in general education classrooms[2]. May is widely regarded as IEP month by special education administrators and support staff. This timing is problematic, especially when assignment of students to classrooms is normally done even later in the year or over the summer. As a result, teachers at many project schools stated that they were never involved in the IEPs of incoming students and often never saw the actual plans unless they were provided by the students' parents. The cryptic articulation of the goals in the plans, combined with no knowledge of the discussions that led to these goals, make it difficult to figure out exactly how the plans should be implemented. In addition, the plans are written with no knowledge of the nature of the classroom community in which they are to be implemented and therefore do not capitalize on supports offered by that community nor address potential conflicts with the classroom culture.

Conversations across schools indicated that the difficulties with the IEP process were greater than the exclusion of the general education teacher who was actually to be charged with IEP implementation. Particularly with the federal mandate that all students have "access to" the general curriculum, educators across the board are left confused about the relative importance of individualized goals versus standardized (general curriculum) goals. Statewide standardized testing programs, together with the mandate that the vast majority of students with disabilities will take those tests alongside their nondisabled peers, further the confusion. As a result, throughout the course of the project, researchers heard virtually nothing about IEP goals from general education teachers, except in the case of students with severe disabilities. For those students, IEP goals were at least acknowledged, but the role of the general curriculum went unmentioned.

As can be seen in the chapter on multilevel teaching, the confusion about IEP goals disappears to some extent when multilevel teaching is the predominant pedagogical approach in a classroom. In a sense, all of the students have an individualized plan; the only difference is that the plan is more explicit (and is legally binding) for students with special education labels. In the majority of classrooms in the project, however, multilevel teaching was at best a goal and not the prevailing practice. The response to the IEP problem, as best we could tell, was perhaps the best one and was certainly logical: leave the IEP issues to the special education support staff and focus on the general curriculum. In a school with a cohesive support staff delivering services within the general education classrooms

2 At some segregated special education programs where students do not follow the usual movement from classroom to classroom at the start of each school year, IEP meetings are distributed throughout the year. Otherwise, the administrative need to know who will be where when school opens each fall dictates that plans be established at the end of the preceding school year.

(Armstrong), this response may well in the end lead toward multilevel teaching and more genuinely inclusive communities. Where the support staff willingly takes responsibility for the IEP and does their work away from the general education classroom (pull-out, pull-aside, or resource room services), however, a barrier is created to prevent creation of genuinely inclusive classrooms.

The federal law requires that "a" general education teacher be present at every student's Individualized Educational Planning meeting, and many IEP training programs for school districts include general education teachers in the district "team". Nonetheless, it is clear that the vast majority of general education teachers have only a cursory understanding of the entire process and its purpose, and have never engaged in substantive discussions of what it means to integrate an IEP (or, in a truly inclusive school, several IEPs) into their on-going daily planning for their classrooms. While no teachers were clamoring for more training programs, materials to read, or meetings to attend, many did acknowledge the need to have a better understanding of what was expected and how best to meet those expectations. For teachers already attempting to implement the Whole Schooling principles, particularly with respect to multilevel, authentic instruction, gaining such an understanding would not be a major undertaking. In addition, effort expended on the issue of aligning individual and classroom goals would pay off for every student since the teachers explicitly acknowledge the need for such alignment, whether or not any individual student has a disability label.

Students with "severe" disabilities
Grade K - 5

Very often, schools are considered "inclusive" even when there have never been students with severe disabilities enrolled, the schools are not physically accessible to those who use wheelchairs, and so forth. For example, at a recent presentation to the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council Education Workgroup, a representative of the Michigan State Department of Education described a study of four "inclusive" schools carried out with state funding. When asked whether any of the schools had students with severe disabilities, she said that she thought not, although she was not absolutely sure. Throughout the state, students with severe disabilities, particularly those with severe cognitive impairments, have been so routinely sent to segregated programs, often outside district administrative control, that many school-level administrators are unaware that these students exist in the neighborhoods served by their schools. Even district-level administrators forget they exist: the special education director handles the paperwork transferring responsibility for these students to some other entity and the students disappear from district consciousness. (The special programs are most frequently run by Intermediate School Districts, which in Michigan roughly correspond to counties, so that responsibility for the students

effectively shifts from the local district to the entity running the segregated program, either another district or the ISD itself.)

At the same time, however, many inclusion researchers and activists believe that inclusion of students with severe disabilities is one of the most effective catalysts for changing a school or district culture to one that genuinely embraces all students, regardless of disability labels. Complicating the inclusion of students with severe disabilities is that fact that many, perhaps most, Michigan parents believe that segregated programs are best for their children. We suspect that Early Intervention programs, however excellent in many respects, frequently serve to indoctrinate parents into the belief that their children with severe disabilities require the "special" environment and staff of the segregated program. In addition, Michigan special education rules have provided year-round (230-day) schooling to students attending certain categorical programs for students with severe disabilities. Parents were routinely informed that students with the same disability labels, but served outside those segregated programs, would not be eligible for this extended school year[3]. (This is not true: by federal law, the option of "extended school year" is an IEP decision made individually for each student, regardless of disability category. However, parents and concerned school-level educators often difficult or impossible to get reasonable extended school year programming through the IEP process.)

The Michigan state special education rules have included a very complex system of classifying students with respect to degree to disability. Although this system has had many undesirable consequences[4], it did afford our research project a partial means for locating students with the most severe disabilities within local populations. Two Michigan classifications carry the word "severe" and indeed refer to situations in which students typically have high levels of support needs: "severely mentally impaired" (SMI[5]) and "severely multiply impaired" (SXI[6]). In addition, the "autistically impaired" label has traditionally been connected with assignment to either "type A" or "type B" programs. Type A indicates attendance at a self-contained "AI program or classroom", where as Type B indicates that the student is receiving special education services in some other setting, including but not necessarily an inclusive setting[7]. Similarly, the "emotionally impaired (EI)" label often leads to assignment to an "EI" classroom, referred to by some administrators as a "basic" classroom, but sometimes leads to assignment to a "severely emotionally impaired" (SEI) program or classroom. SEI programs are often seen as analogous to "day treatment" programs operated by the mental health system and are assumed to serve students with significant mental illness or mental disturbance.

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3 A recent attempt at rule revision was recently defeated due to strong opposition from educators, parents, and advocacy organizations. As a result, the barriers to inclusive education long present in the Michigan rules will continue in place for the foreseeable future. (The full rules revision package contained some very positive changes, but also a number of sweeping administrative changes that left virtually all stakeholders so uncertain as to the quality and equity of future special education services that the public resistance was almost universal.)

4 Most of the time, students are matched to segregated education programs that carry labels matching their own disability classification; that is, a student labeled "severely multiply impaired" was placed in a "severely multiply impaired classroom, and student with "autism" was placed in an "autism program", and so forth. Further, eligibility for many social services and other supports was determined by label rather than by individual strengths and needs. Preference for the label-and-place procedure is so strong that IEP forms have a special check-off where parents have to indicate consent if any other placement is agreed upon by the team.

5 Following the close of the data collection phase of this project, Michigan special education rule changes included elimination of the SMI (severely mentally impaired), TMI (trainably mentally impaired), and EMI (educably mentally impaired) categories, combining them into a single CI (cognitively impaired) category. The separate categories for classrooms were maintained, however. It remains to be seen how this inconsistency will play out for students who have fit the traditional label-and-place model, as well as those who are receiving special education supports and services in less restrictive environments.

6 The "severely multiply impaired" (SXI) label was retained in the latest state rule changes.

7 Both the education and social service systems have tended to assume that students in Type A programs have "severe" autism while students in Type B programs have milder autism. This is frequently untrue, particularly with respect to students with autism who are in general education classrooms with fulltime paraprofessional support in addition to other special education services.

This classification system does not entirely solve the problem of operationally defining "severe disability": the same range of educational needs[8] that exists within the autism category (AI) also exists within "physically or otherwise health impaired" (POHI). Additionally, Michigan did not have a deaf-blind classification until the rule revisions of 2002. Many deaf-blind students carry SXI educational labels, but others may have labels referring either to blindness (VI: "vision impaired") or deafness (HI: "hearing impaired"). While from our point of view, neither a vision impairment nor a hearing impairment alone would necessarily warrant the "severe" label, the combination generally does. At the same time, both blindness and deafness are considered "low incidence" disabilities and in some studies are classified as "severe" on that basis alone. For the purposes of this report, the term "severe disability" refers to the level of disability vis-à-vis support needs that is typical of students carrying SMI, SXI, and SEI labels. Students with other labels who have similar support needs are also considered to have "severe disabilities". Students with less specialized and extensive support needs are not considered to have "severe disabilities".

The schools participating in the Whole Schooling Research Project are unusual in Michigan because several of them have made a commitment to include all students living in their cachement areas, including those with severe disabilities. As a result, the classrooms in our study afforded an opportunity to observe the inclusion of several students with such disabilities, including three students at Evergreen Elementary School, two at Hamilton, two at Meadowview, and two at Armstrong. In addition, this discussion will also include the son of one of the authors of this paper, a boy with "severe multiple disabilities" included in a school located close to Hamilton Elementary (although in another district) and serving a similar population (Gleason School).

The students at Evergreen Elementary included two girls and one boy. By the time the study drew to a close, all three had left the school for segregated programs at the request of their parents. One of the students at Meadowview, who had an EI label and was informally considered to have an "SEI" label, had been transferred to a segregated program at the request of the administration over the objections of the parent. Hamilton, on the other hand, continued to move forward with an active attempt to locate students still attending programs elsewhere and inviting them to reconsider attending general education programs in their neighborhood school. Armstrong is also continuing in its commitment to educate all children together and in the last year of the project engaged in a major struggle to support a student with severe emotional difficulties in remaining at the school. This required enormous effort and creativity on the part of many staff members, as well as coordination with social service and healthcare agencies.

Gleason School has continued to include the one student with severe disabilities for five years, but another boy with similar disabilities was turned away in the past year. His parents

8 Both researchers and educators use the term "severe disability" very loosely (cite TASH paper, 2000). It sometimes refers only to extremely low incidence disabilities that involve "profound" cognitive impairments, physical disabilities that preclude virtually all intentional movement in most of the body, or very severe social/emotional issues. At other times, and particularly in most of the literature on inclusive education, a disability is considered "severe" if it requires any significant adaptation or modification in order to perform the typical tasks of daily life, including school tasks. Thus, sometimes all students with "mental retardation" are classified as having "severe disabilities," but other times very few individuals with this label are considered to warrant this description. Likewise, one person may describe anyone who relies on a wheelchair as "severely disabled," whereas many other people would not. This situation is particularly noticeable in the case of medical diagnoses like "Down syndrome" and "autism", both of which encompass a very broad range of impact on individuals who carry them. In some discussions of special education, all students with Down syndrome or autism are automatically assumed to have "severe disabilities", whereas in other discussions, very few would be categorized in this way. This lack of clarity makes interpretation of research findings virtually impossible, and is a major frustration to parents and educators looking for guidance with respect to avenues for supporting individual students both in and out of school.

were told he should remain at the segregated school he was attending because his "needs could be met there". Gleason students with milder disabilities are congregated in a self-contained "EMI/TMI" classroom with increasing but traditional "mainstreaming."[9]

Evergreen Elementary School

Nathan, *a student with mental retardation and behavioral challenges.*

In 1999-2000, Nathan was a third grader who was supported by a full-time aide in a general education classroom. He is a young man with Down syndrome and an EMI (educably mentally impaired) label. Our observations suggest, however, that in another school district his label might reflect a more severe cognitive impairment[10]. Given our own experience with Nathan, we feel that he should be included in the "severe disabilities" category for the purposes of this discussion. With respect to support needs, Nathan fits in the "severe" category as his IEP specified his need for full-time paraprofessional support as well as major curriculum modifications and ancillary services.

In our observations, we were concerned that Nathan appeared to have a separate mini-classroom within the larger room. The physical set up was such that Nathan was in the back corner of the classroom nearest the door: he sat at a large table/desk with his aide next to him and shelves with "his" materials behind him and to one side. He faced the front of the classroom. Next to his area was a table with three or four chairs: this was sometimes used by a co-teacher (special educator) who came in to work with small groups of students. At other times, it may have been used by other students working alone or in small groups, but frequently it was not used at all. In the main area of the classroom, the other students sat at two long tables that ran perpendicular to the front (blackboard) wall. The teacher most often stood at the front of the room, and the overhead projector was positioned to project onto that front wall. As a result, Nathan was the only student facing the front of the room when seated squarely at his desk. Thus, he could see the other students, at least those who did not face the side walls, and they could see him. The teacher could also see him clearly.

In spite of the existence of clear sightlines, however, Nathan appeared to be invisible to the other members of the class. Students would come and go from the classroom, passing directly in front of Nathan, without ever acknowledging his presence. Class discussions proceeded without inviting his participation. The activities in which Nathan was engaged had little or nothing to do with the activities of the rest of the class.

> When we first came in, [the teacher] was directing a whole group activity while the special education co-teacher worked with "her kids" at a table in the back of the

9 The level of "mainstreaming" at Gleason School steadily increased over the period of the WSRP. During the first and second years of the project, students at Gleason (not a project participant) joined general education classes only for "specials" classes such as art, music, and gym. During the last year, most students in the self-contained special education classroom were also joining general education classes for some portion of the academic day, most often for "stations" – periods when students work in small groups, often playing games or working on projects. None of the project participant schools use this model of "inclusion", but it is probably the most frequently practiced in Michigan.

10 Efforts to use a picture communication system with Nick were observed. He otherwise appeared to be nonverbal. In addition, the activities in which he was engaged were typical of those used with students with Michigan special education labels of "severely" or "trainably" mentally impaired.

room. "Her kids" apparently did not include Nathan, who was working with an aide at a table. Except for Nathan, everyone was working on math. Nathan was working on a letter puzzle. .

Throughout the [subsequent] reading activity, Nathan continued to work alone with the paraprofessional. Nathan was also doing reading, but using his own set of books and materials not related to the book read by the rest of the class. Nathan was the only student who seemed totally engaged throughout the period. He did "get noisy" at times.

I did not observe any interaction between Nathan and the other students, or anyone else besides his aide.

This is not to say that Nathan did not enjoying some of his activities in the classroom, nor that there was never any connection between general classroom activities and Nathan's activities:

Four children read in a class where the teacher helps children learn to work together and help each other in learning.

They are working on math and are broken into four groups arranged by ability level. One group of three kids is working without a teacher. One aide is with Nathan, a student with Down syndrome. She is working one on one with him have him take plastic coins, name them, and match them to a worksheet. He is very engaged with this task and is having fun, it seems.

Next to him is the special education teacher who is working on money skills on the floor with eight kids. … At another group, kids have a plasticized restaurant menu. They use markers to indicate what they want to order and then use simulated bills and coins to count out the amount of money that they need for their purchase.

Nathan's situation is the clearest example we have seen of being physically present in a group without being "included" in any way. Although he had a good relationship with his very dedicated paraprofessional aide, he had little or no relationship with the classroom teacher or his classmates. There is, of course, no way of knowing whether he would have appeared more able to the observers if he had been genuinely included in this classroom. It was not a surprise to learn that he had been transferred to a county-level segregated program at the beginning of the following school year. Although the school principal expressed regret over his parents' decision to have him leave, she did not express any feeling that things could have been done differently or better. To the contrary, she appeared to believe that Nathan had been offered a high quality inclusive education. His parents' rejection of his

"placement" seemed to be interpreted as evidence of their lack of understanding of Nathan's limited potential and their unrealistic expectations. Although the research team requested permission to speak with Nathan's parents, no contact information was ever provided and no permission was granted.

Kelly, *a student with cerebral palsy.*

Kelly is a young lady who also attended Evergreen Elementary. She has a label of "severely multiply impaired," and uses a wheelchair and augmentative communication device. She has spastic cerebral palsy and cannot speak clearly, but she is able to control her power wheelchair herself using a joystick. She needs assistance with self-care and classroom tasks. Her categorical label implies a significant cognitive impairment, but it was difficult to assess her cognitive abilities during our observations. During a chance encounter at the school, her father expressed his belief that her cognitive abilities are not impaired. Observation of Kelly working on learning to use her augmentative communication device (Dynavox) suggested a mild level of cognitive impairment, although lack of previous opportunities for learning or low teacher expectations may have been a factor. In any case, she did not have the severe cognitive impairment associated with the SXI label within the Michigan rules[11]

> Kelly is working with special ed teacher and aide, one on each side, on her "letters" using laminated cards and her talker, which has the same "cards" on it. She is working on writing simple words, apparently by matching letters. She does this first with the laminated cards and then on the computer. She is extremely distracted by my presence – I try to wander around the library for while just listening and then sit nearby and "work" on my own computer.
>
> They spend about 20 minutes on letter matching, then teacher asks aide to Kelly show how she handles the lunchroom. Kelly has to call up the set of pictures relating to lunch. She has to be reminded to slow down and look. Teacher asks, "How would you use this to get something to eat?" Aide gives more prompts and Kelly uses talker to ask for a drink. Kelly starts fidgeting when done.

Kelly is an extremely sociable and out-going young lady who understands the speech of others very well. During the last year of the study, Kelly was in the fourth grade. At the end of the year, the principal informed us that Kelly's father, a single parent, had decided to move her to the county program for the next year. The reason relayed to us by the principal was that Kelly had no friends.

Like Nathan, Kelly was supported at Evergreen by a dedicated paraprofessional aide, who seemed on one hand to understand the goals for inclusion for Kelly but on the other hand sometimes to create a barrier. For example, in a period during which Kelly and the aide met with

[11] In the absence of two separate physical disabilities, the SXI label required a level of cognitive development at least three standard deviations below the mean. Many students with severe physical disabilities in Michigan end up with SXI labels because the label-and-place philosophy has tended to encourage parents and educators to use the SXI label to create an entitlement for a higher level of special education support. Severe physical disabilities often make assessment of cognitive abilities extremely difficult, but the "solution" of frequent application of the SXI label brings about an assumption of severe cognitive impairment even where it may not exist.

the speech therapist to work on reading/writing skills necessary for effective use of Kelly's Dynavox, the aide commented that she tried to keep a few basic social communications available on every screen, so that Kelly could always exchange social greetings with classmates and other people encountered in class and in the hallway. She said that she tried to keep these items in the same place on every screen so Kelly could find them quickly. The speech therapist seemed uninterested in this key aspect of inclusion, and wanted to focus on spelling lessons. However, when we actually observed Kelly in the hallways (in the company of the aide), her Dynavox was often slung behind her wheelchair, making it inaccessible for the kind of spontaneous social interchanges that the aide had expressed concerned about. Kelly did appear to compensate for this with a bright smile directed at anyone who greeted her, but lack of the communication device limited her ability to initiate or maintain interactions. On a similar theme, the aide was also observed expressing a desire for better content-specific vocabulary on various screens to address the communication needs of various classes, subject areas, and social contexts. Again, she seemed to be the only one (other than Kelly and probably her father) who was concerned about this. It was apparently not a concern of Kelly's teachers, the principal, or the speech therapist.

For all of the aide's concern, we never observed Kelly in genuine interaction with peers, nor being treated as a genuine member of her classroom. Perhaps most tellingly of all, observations in the lunchroom revealed Kelly sitting at a table with the aide and another adult, but no other students. No students were observed acknowledging Kelly's existence during lunch. One pre-lunch observation shows how this was set up:

> At the end of the reading, it was time for lunch. The aide got Kelly's things together and wheeled her out of the classroom ahead of the other students. A couple of students did say good-bye, but I don't think Kelly heard them and she could not see them - no real interaction. The aide did not stop or otherwise attempt to facilitate interaction. As in the case of Nathan, it appeared that Kelly is physically present in her class (sometimes) but is not included. In her case, this is more surprising than in Nathan's because she is *interested in socializing and cognitively apparently very capable.*[12]

Kelly was observed in both her third and fourth grade classrooms. At no time did she appear to be a genuine member of the class. Teachers did not call on her, and classmates did not initiate interactions or respond to her smiles. The classroom teachers seemed to view Kelly's education, indeed her entire school experience, as the sole responsibility of the paraprofessional aide.

> When we entered the classroom, students were arranged in a U, but she [Kelly] was off to the side with her aide. The aide explained that her Dynavox battery had unexpectedly gone dead and she had to be close to an outlet for recharging. [No extension cords?] After a while, they moved, with the aide sitting at a desk at one corner of the U and Kelly at her side (outside the corner). The teacher was reading

[12] The "sometimes" comment reflects the observer's impression that personal care needs involve extended absences from the classroom throughout the day. It was unclear whether these absences were actually necessary, but it was clear the Kelly enjoyed them. Far more social interactions (almost always with adults) were observed outside the classroom than in it.

aloud from Willy Wonka, so there was not much interaction between students. Kelly's presence seemed completely ignored.

This episode occurred in the third grade. Things in fourth grade were not appreciably better:

> [The teacher] says the students should divide up into groups of three or four to read together.
>
> One girl chooses to read alone, others form groups. One girl joins Kelly and her aide. The aide is helping Kelly read – as she reads, she moves a lot and drools quite a bit. Aide uses towel to clean up. [The girl who joined Kelly is just watching and following along.] Kelly seems very distracted by my presence, more than the other students. A group of boys behind the aide (on floor) starts tossing a hackysack. Aide reaches behind, catches it, and puts it on her table. The boys calmly get back to work.
>
> [A different aide had taken over at the beginning of this reading period.] At the beginning of math, aides switch again – I think the regular aide had taken a break. The [substitute] aide comes over and asks me if I'm observing Kelly, because they (Kelly and aide) are going to library to work with special ed teacher.
>
> The teacher comes over to talk briefly. Tells me that one of the girls (the one who had joined Kelly) "should be labeled. She's very low." She says that this girl is doing addition facts on the test [now being administered], whereas all the others are doing multiplication. She is doing different work from the rest of the class in both reading and math. [The teacher] says that this girl usually chooses to work with Kelly when students choose partners – it may be easier socially and it does give her extra help.
>
> [On the surface this seems like a good solution, but I wonder if it really is. Would Kelly otherwise be alone? Is the redhead less included and less accommodated because the presence of the aide allows an easy out?]

In any case, other than the one classmate, no one pays any attention to Kelly, including the teacher. When Kelly leaves to see the special education teacher, her leaving is apparently unobserved, although the timing suggests that it was deliberately scheduled to give Kelly an activity during the math test.

In addition to her role as Kelly's private teacher, the aide also seems to have a role as classroom policeman. She disciplines the boys with the hackysack, and their response indicates that this was a normal occurrence. The difficult position of aides who on the one hand are supposed to facilitate inclusion but on the other serve as disciplinarians was observed again in the case of David at Gleason School.

Cheryl, *a child with Down syndrome.*

Cheryl is an Evergreen student with Down syndrome who, like Kelly, is extremely out-going, enthusiastic, and sociable. She seems to have very little oral communication ability, but when observed during 1999-2000, in second grade, she was using sign language in a limited but effective manner. Our records indicate that Cheryl has an SXI label, but observations suggest

that an SMI label would have been more appropriately. These two labels are frequently interchanged because categorical center programs are often “SXI/SMI” programs due to the low incidence of both disability categories and relatively similar high level of support needs.

> Cheryl's "program" seems to be almost entirely under the control of an aide, who is very good at including other students. At several points, Cheryl and friends were the most engaged and animated students in the room. The aide included other students in activities aimed at Cheryl (as best as I could tell), and other students seemed to keep a watch to see when something good was going on so they could join in. Otherwise, for much of the time the students were working independently or in small groups on a variety of projects.
>
> It was noteworthy that Cheryl and her aide seem to be working hard on sign language communication. The aide is clearly making an effort to have interested classmates also learn sign, and several students seemed very interested in doing so.

The observations of Cheryl in her multiage, K-2 classroom, were some of the best instances of inclusion of a student with severe cognitive disabilities found in the Whole Schooling Research Project.

> Colleen [co-teacher] and the one lady [paraprofessional aide?] return arms full of plastic bins with what look like packages of academic exercises.
>
> ...
>
> The lady (a mind reader?) approaches me to tell me what she is doing with Cheryl.

> "We have everything color coded: yellow-math, green-spelling (etc.)
>
> There are tubs with activities. When Cheryl masters an activity, we mark it down and get new supplies for her bin. That way, she keeps learning and we are not bored to death"
>
> …
>
> The lady is working with Cheryl and also six other kids have joined up. They are signing. What is the sign for___?
>
> Kids gather around Cheryl to see what is new in her bins.. "We all want to see..." says Mrs. Van [teacher]...other lady says [to Cheryl], "tells them (she signs) to back off if you feel crowded."

Another day’s observations reported a similar situation:

Marissa the aide is with Cheryl, working on reading. After a while, two other kids come to this table and Cheryl and the boy are working to develop a necklace made of a leather strap and various items to put on it. They are huddled close together.

Cheryl talks with the boy. She holds up a book. The aide talks about it with her. They move on. Cheryl is smiling and the other kid too. After another short while, the aide pulls out another activity. The boy and girl hang around to participate.

We do not have observation records of activities like lunch during that second grade year, but Cheryl's air of expectation of full inclusion, and the comfort of her classmates, suggest that Cheryl's situation was significantly better than that observed the following year, when she was in a traditional third grade classroom. The change occurred even though Cheryl was supported by the same paraprofessional aide she had had the year before:

This is the classroom where Cheryl is included. The desks (2-person trapezoidal tables) are arranged in a nested U formation, with seven tables in the inside U and eight in the outside U. Belinda [the teacher] has a large desk at one side, replacing a couple of desks in the outside U.

When I come in, students are seated at their desks and Cheryl shares a table with an aide closest to the door, but in the outer U, not off by itself. Belinda is finishing some sort of whole class lesson when I come in. She then hands out a worksheet on Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas and gives instructions to the class on how to proceed. She also tells the aide what materials she should now use with Cheryl, who appears to be looking at a book independently.

As time goes on, Belinda calls various students up individually for short consultations. The classroom becomes a little louder, but students seem to be mostly on task. Some start to take books out to read silently. One boy reads something interesting and takes it to read to a couple of his friends and then returns to his seat. The aide mostly reads with Cheryl, but she also assists the boy on the other side of her and offers assistance on request to other students sitting nearby.

…

[The teacher] asks everyone to join her up front, on the floor inside the inner U. Belinda sits on a chair at the front of the group; Cheryl joins the group on her own, sitting fairly close to Belinda. The aide does classroom chores in the back of the room.

Although Cheryl was not nearly so isolated as Nathan had been, nor as completely ignored as Kelly was, her situation had changed much for the worst between second and third grade. Observations in the lunchroom were the most telling:

Cheryl attended lunch without the support of an aide, although it appeared that aides present elsewhere in the lunchroom were keeping an eye on her. She seated herself at a table with girls from her class and proceeded to eat her lunch, looking happy and animated. She seemed to be following the conversation of the girls at her table and to consider herself part of the group. The other girls, however, ignored her. When the girls finished eating, they got up as a group and left, leaving Cheryl behind

without a word. Cheryl continued to eat her lunch and smile, although some of the animation left her face and body. She finished her meal entirely alone.

On that same day, we also observed Kelly eating her lunch:

> Kelly was seated at a table in the middle of the lunchroom while her classmates sat in groups at tables along one wall. Her table companions were two adults, "her" aide, and another paraprofessional. She did not appear to be unhappy, but she did appear to be invisible to the students in the room.

It is noteworthy that the situation for students with milder, higher incidence disabilities at Evergreen was vastly different than that of students with severe disabilities. For them, the co-teaching model seemed to be working well and students with disabilities were full members of their classroom communities. A difference between students with mild/moderate disabilities and those with severe disabilities was observed at other schools. While the difference often exists, it can be in either direction. As will be seen, David is far more successfully included at Gleason school than are students with milder disabilities who are mainstreamed from the self-contained EMI/TMI classroom.

Hamilton Elementary

Donald, ***a student with severe multiple disabilities.***

Donald is a young man who has cerebral palsy and an educational classification of SXI (severely multiply impaired). He has been included at Hamilton school for four years; before that, he had attended a "center program" for students with severe disabilities (SMI and SXI labels) run by his district and serving students from a number of neighboring districts as well. According to the paraprofessional aide who has supported him for the past three years, his parents are adamant that Donald be fully included and have fought hard against a reluctant district administration to make this happen. His first year was not very successful. The current aide states that the former aide was abusive to Donald and that his experience was generally very poor. Since then, however, his parents had succeeded in persuading the school to make a genuine effort and also to hire a new aide [Jeri]. After two years in Dennis's grade 4-5 looping classroom, it was decided to allow Donald to "repeat" a year so that he could have the benefit of another year with a supportive teacher, who by now knew him very well. A strong partnership had also been established between

Students read information that they will shortly discuss.

Dennis and Jeri whereby Jeri, too, was a full member of the classroom community. This decision separated Donald from his former classmates, but also delayed for a year the transition to middle school, which promised to be difficult[13] and would effectively break up his social group in any case.

Donald has spastic quadriplegia, with very little intentional control over his body and limbs. He has some head control when properly positioned. He is an extrovert and enthusiastically responds to attention and engagement from peers and adults. His friendly expression and apparent eagerness to communicate serve as an invitation to engagement to anyone who is watching him. In addition, he uses vocalizations to get attention, particularly when he wants a turn during class discussions or simply is indicating agreement with what is being said.

Donald's cognitive abilities are largely unknown. Jeri says that his parents believe he has no cognitive impairments. School staff profess to share that belief or at least to keep an open mind. At the same time, however, there seemed to be little effort to offer Donald genuine academic programming. Instead, he was simply assisted in following along with whatever lessons his classmates were doing. During our observations, these follow-along periods rarely appeared to engage him. He did not look at the books and did not appear to attend to his aide's private instruction, the teacher's comments to the class, or the contributions made by his classmates. On the other hand, he did appear highly engaged during animated class discussions and social interactions of both large and small groups. At these times, his receptive language abilities appeared to be high.

> When I came in, kids were working on a social studies worksheet about [judicial] courts as a whole class. Sitting at desks arranged in three "tables" of 8-10 desks. Donald is parked at the end of the table closest the back corner of the room where his aide keeps her/his things. He has a worksheet on his lap and the aide is using marker pens to fill out the sheet. Donald is acting very sleepy and looking away from the class and teacher. When aide tries to engage him in task, he smiles and "wakes up," but does not look at the sheet. ….
>
> Beth [teacher filling in for Dennis] says that she has to go to another class. It looks like the aide is going to take over responsibility for the class as the students do their worksheets. While aide confers with Bonnie and kids all work on worksheets, Donald is left with nothing to do. He looks around for a while and then drops his head.
>
> Dennis [teacher] returns to the class, confers with Beth, and then both leave, leaving Jeri [paraprofessional aide] in charge. Class becomes noisier and Donald continues to have nothing to do. Eventually aide starts collecting materials for Donald to do his math. She gets same book and a clipboard. Donald appears pleased that he is getting attention. He does not show interest in the actual activity, however. As they get to work, the aide gets out a calculator with large buttons and display, but one that is flat (no raised buttons) and with a fairly dark display. (Can Donald see it? He is visually impaired, I believe.) She holds the book up and reads each problem to

[13] Many parents in this and other districts find that middle schools resist inclusive "placements" even when inclusion has been deemed highly successful in elementary school. Even when middle school, too, works successfully, the same problem can occur when it is time for transition to high school.

Donald. She asks Donald the answers and sometimes he vocalizes. She then talks through the calculations and writes down the answers. Donald is laughing a lot and quite engaged. However, I cannot tell whether he is processing the content or just pleased with all the motion and the interaction. His reaction of a lot of laughter indicates the latter to me, especially as I know this kind of motion makes my son [with somewhat similar disabilities] laugh, too. [I'm wondering whether any thought has been given to truly adapting the curriculum. Does Donald have academic goals in his IEP?]

Across many observational periods, it was difficult to find evidence that Donald was engaged with the curriculum content of the classroom. He seemed to go into "sleep mode" when the teacher talked for extended periods or when the class discussion was very academic. He also was not engaged when the aide took him through the motions of doing assignments, as when she talked aloud as she more or less completed his math assignments for him. On the other hand, Donald would instantly come to life when any gesture was made to include him in discussion:

Donald did not appear to be engaged in the discussion. Then they turned to an article about Egyptian artifacts and some food residue found in an archeological find. Dennis said to Donald, "Donald, we're talking about food." As soon as he was addressed directly, he smiled and reengaged. A peer came up and held his Reader where he could share it with Donald (held quite close). Donald, however, turned away and looked toward the girl who was reading the article aloud. (I don't know how good Donald's vision is.) When the peer started to give up and take back his Reader, Donald turned back to keep him from leaving.

Donald was an eager participant in class discussions where he seemed to understand the topic. On one day, we observed a discussion in which the topic was very well known to Donald: his father.

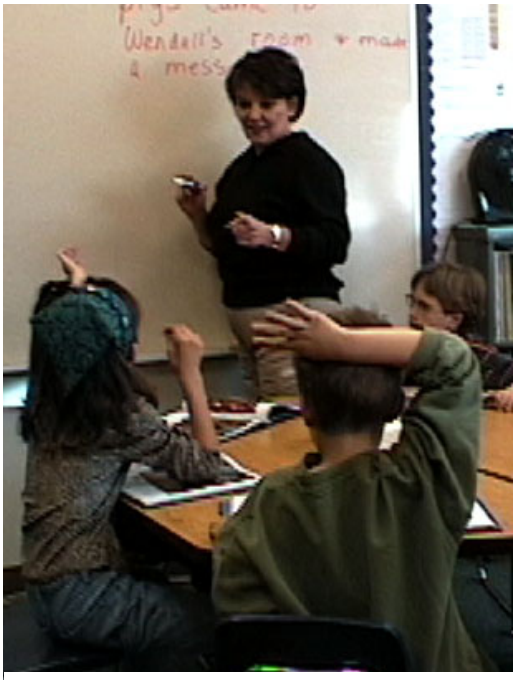
We walk in and the kids are all gathered in a total class discussion. Kids are all around Donald in the back. They are talking about doing an email with Donald's father who apparently is in the Upper Peninsula doing a movie with … an actor. The plan is that they will email his dad about the movie. They are asking questions and talking . . . Dennis says, "It is so exciting, Donald, that your father will keep us informed." He grins and smiles. .

Dennis comes over and explains that Donald is very close to his father, who is away for 3 months. He has been very sad, he explains. So they [Dennis and Jeri] came up with this idea this idea to engage the whole class in keeping contact with his dad to help him feel better. He is using it as an authentic communication and writing exercise.

The students in Donald's class clearly cared about him and many showed affection for him. At the same time, he did not seem to be an equal member of his class. The researchers had several discussions about whether Donald had "class pet" status or something more. On one hand, they did attend to him during class, expressed the belief that he was their friend, and

seemed eager for their turns as his buddy for the day. On the other hand, he was frequently left alone and isolated. On one occasion, Donald was observed with his class during a fire drill:

> A fire drill was in progress [when I arrived]. The school was just being evacuated. One of the first classes to leave the school was Dennis's, with Donald in the middle of the group with his aide, in his wheelchair. At the end of the drill, Donald got left behind. He and his aide walked alone back into the building. He appeared to have fallen behind when he had to detour to a curb cut and the rest of the class just went on [their "normal" route instead of following Donald's route].



Special education teacher leads small heterogeneous group discussion of key elements of a story.

On another occasion, Donald was observed when he went with his class to the computer lab:

> I followed Donald down to the computer lab -- actually, I took the stairs while Jeri, Donald, and three girls took the elevator. In the lab, the kids were mostly required to do Typing to Learn and I think in actuality all were working on that package, although some were playing typing games. One girl was supposed to be working with Donald. She parked Donald off to the side of her PC (at the end of a row) and started working on a typing test. Donald was clearly disengaged and she tried to move him closer but couldn't get him in a position where he could see the screen (as far as anyone could tell). Dennis came over and the girl said she really wanted to work on her typing and not work with Donald. Dennis was slightly annoyed, but assigned Donald to work with another girl at the end of another row. She seemed more interested and more able to meet Donald's needs, parking his chair much closer to the screen. Dennis told her to share the keyboard with Donald so he would "feel like" he was doing something. She put the keyboard in his lap and tried to get him to relax his arms enough that she could guide his hands/fingers to the keys. It quickly became clear that this wasn't working for Donald or for her, so she reverted to playing a game while he "watched."

While computers and assistive technology should open many opportunities for Donald, this was not happening at Hamilton. According to the aide, Jeri, Donald's parents had explored assistive technology options several years earlier, found nothing that seemed to meet his needs, and had shown no further interest. In addition, there was no one at the school who chose to educate himself about this issue, and certainly no one following new developments in a rapidly expanding field. Even so, the lack of accommodation for Donald in the computer lab (and with the classroom computers) was striking. There was no computer with its height adjusted so that Donald could get close enough to the screen to see it "well." (Donald has significant vision

impairment.) There was no adaptive hardware and software to give Donald a chance to control the computer himself or in partnership with a classmate. Instead, the best Donald's classmates could do was position his wheelchair nearby and then try to show him and tell him what they were doing. This activity engaged no one and the helping students soon lost interest in the attempt. None of the adults involved, computer teacher, Dennis, Jeri, support staff, administration, seemed to find anything wrong in the situation described in the computer lab vignette.

In the end, Donald's membership in his classroom was almost entirely social. Students enjoyed helping him and making him seem happy. He probably had the capacity to cheer them up and make them feel appreciated, well beyond making them feel good as a recipient of their charity. Their interactions with him, however, often showed little respect for him as a peer who had his own sense of personal space. Most classmates did not attend to his signals, admittedly subtle, when he was unhappy with how he was being treated:

> When they come back, all the students gather around a bulletin board Jeri made about the election and the candidates. Jeri was leading the discussion based on what she had on the board, but Dennis really guided the students through discussion. Donald was in the midst of the students. Dennis and other students would turn his head to face forward when it fell (seemed liked they were pretty rough and disrespectful). One student spent time rubbing Derrick's head, giving him kisses on the head, as if a pet, not a person -- would they do that to other students? Another girl was putting a pencil in his hand and holding it.

Ned, ***a student with autism.***

Ned is a young man with autism who is included in Shelley first grade classroom. He is supported by Randy, a paraprofessional who worked with him last year at another school. Shelley herself adopted a child with autism and some aspects of her teaching style probably reflect that experience. Her classroom is a very calm place, with relatively little visual distraction. She speaks quietly although she is a conscientious user of her FM amplification system, and makes frequent use of hand signs and gestures, sometimes together with words and sometimes without words. She uses signs almost exclusively for commentary and directions on classroom behavior.

Student with autism sits at wall with other children and paraprofessional talking about a learning activity.

Shelley pays considerable attention to building a genuine community of learners in her classroom. In general, she tends to find support staff disruptive when they come into her classroom or pull students out, although she agrees that sometimes the students do need support beyond what she can offer herself. She mentioned in a casual conversation that at one point in

her career she had spent a summer taking special education classes, thinking that special education had some special techniques that would allow her to reach students with whom she was having trouble; she found that this was generally not the case.

> Kids say it's time for snack. Shelley thanks them for the reminders, but says that Ned is out of the room and she would like to wait until everyone is in the room, then stop for snack. (Ned has been pulled out for Occupational Therapy.)
>
> The OT comes to see Shelley, who asks, "Where do you go [when you pull Ned out]? Aide [who has been with Ned and the OT] says that Ned now has to leave again to "be assessed." Shelley shows her the "lesson that is being missed." The aide assures her she will catch Ned up later.
>
> [Eventually the students have their snacks while Ned is still gone.]
>
> After snack, kids go to the carpet area in the front of the room and one of the students comes to the front of the group to talk with the class and read a book about diabetes that he brought from home. [This student has brittle diabetes and has had several difficult episodes at school, as well as needing periodic testing and medication during the school day. His mother and Shelley have decided that the class needs to understand what it going on.]
>
> Ned is sitting by himself with the aide [during the diabetes discussion] as he needs to have his snack – he came in late – but he is attending to the group.

This episode demonstrates both the disruptive quality of pull-out therapy and the lack of integration between the efforts of therapists and those of the classroom teacher when therapy takes place away from the classroom. Shelley showed similar frustration when a special educator came into her classroom to work with a student with reading disabilities. Even though the special educator was working in the classroom and was embedding his services in the context of a classroom activity, his teaching style was very different from Shelley's and he was setting different goals for the tasks and different standards for both process and product than she had been doing with the same student.

> The speech and language pathologist, Kirby, and the school psychologist, Ruby, come to work with the class. They introduce themselves, Ruby saying that she is the "student assistance person." They explain that they will be coming every Thursday to work with the class. (This is a new attempt at push-in therapy being used in several classrooms where Kirby has students on her caseload and there is a need to work on social skills.)
>
> Ruby has the kids carry chairs to make a circle. They will play "I love my neighbor" – kids groan [at the name of the game]. The game is then explained – students use categories … "I love my neighbor, especially the ones who …(are wearing blue shirts, etc.) One student is in the middle and others are seated in the circle. Everyone in the category gets up and has to switch seats. Middle person tried

to grab one of the seats. Whoever is left standing is "it" next. On the first round, Ned ends up stuck in the center, unable to grab a seat when other students are exchanging spots. Eventually, the aide intervenes and gets Ned out of the center.

Shelley is standing to the side, looking unhappy and disapproving. She says that she had no idea what Kirby and Ruby would be doing, and she is clearly worried that this is not going to end well for Ned. Kirby and Ruby are oblivious to Shelley's obvious distress and do not appear to be paying attention to what is happening with Ned.

The game goes on. Ned leaves the group. (too much stress? Commotion?) This whole games seems like a lost opportunity for good inclusion! Shelley watches Ned go into the bathroom. Kirby and Ruby seem unaware, but Shelley is concerned and unhappy (facial expression).

On her way out, Kirby says to the researcher, "Inclusion! Do we get a plus for that?"

This episode providing an interesting illustration of the problems of "parachuting" even an interesting activity into a classroom without consultation with the classroom teacher. Both Kirby and Ruby are caring and thorough professionals, and yet they have introduced an activity in which Ned was virtually doomed to failure. In fact, this kind of game seems problematic if one places a high value on inclusion because it would be a rare classroom that did not have one or two students who would be almost certain to "get stuck" the way Ned did. This problem was foreseeable with Ned, who, after all, was a primary target of the activity in the first place. It was striking that neither Kirby nor Ruby picked up on Shelley's body language during the activity – or, if they did pick up on it, they misinterpreted it but in any case did not ask for her participation or comments. It was even more striking that Kirby did not seem to feel that Ned's choice to entirely exclude himself from the activity cast any shadow over her "inclusive" lesson.

I see a group of four kids working in the hall [outside Shelley's room] with Kirby (SLP), including Ned and Brandon (boy with diabetes). The kids are working on a tree with leaves that say things to do when "I am calm, quiet, and thoughtful." Ned is partially engaged, making noises and moving a bit. Brandon is sitting with his arm around Ned. When Ned gets noisy, Brandon briefly puts his hand over Ned's mouth. It isn't clear whether Kirby notices. Kids than work on gluing leaves onto construction paper tree. Kirby tries to help Ned open the glue stick. Ned keeps saying that he can't and making "spaceship" noises. Kirby asks Ned if he wants to let Nissa do it. He ways yes and hands glue to Nissa. He settles down quite a bit. It seems like either he responds well to more control or he is relieved not to be doing this difficult/uninteresting task. Ned goes on and off task, cooperating with requests from Kirby but otherwise involved in spaceship noises and motions.

Shelley and Ned's aide, Randy, both report high levels of success in including Ned in classroom activities. During the hallway episode, however, neither of them was present, and the activity itself was more "academic" and probably less motivating than activities that Shelley

typically uses in her first grade classroom. As in the snapshot reported next, one becomes aware of the great and frequently neglected need to have collaboration among all those who work with students with even mildly challenging behavior and different learning modes/needs.

Followed Shelley's first grade class to music. Both Shelley and Ned's aide (Randy) accompanied the class to the room, but then left. On the walk to the room, Ned was toward the end of the line with about four kids behind him. Randy nudged him a couple of times to get going, but he seemed to be just part of the class.

The kids sat on the floor with the teacher in a chair at the front of the group. She told me that today would be "different" because they would be reading a story. (Randy rejoined the class part way through. She just sat at the back and worked on her notes. The teacher said that they were going to read a story, The Sorcerer's Apprentice, but listen to music with it. She said that the music would almost tell the story without the words because it used "themes." She then showed the kids a large picture of a bassoon and had them identify it. Several students made errors, and then Ned got it right…

Ned was seated at the front corner of the group, with Brandon behind him. As they started the story, the teacher held the book up in front of her so that the kids could see the pictures while they listened to a record. She had Brandon and Ned each move back a row to be able to see better. Except for Ned, the kids sat quite still and fully engaged throughout the story. Ned was also clearly interested, but kept moving up to be directly in front of the book. [The teacher told me later that he was also quietly repeating words from the story to himself.] As time went on, Ned became quite active, moving around, both in front of and away from the group. However, he frequently moved up to look at the book when the music started up or otherwise signaled something especially interesting. At one point, he did get up and run to the door. Randy did not immediately react, but watched. He did not leave the classroom and she helped him get back to the group.

After the book, the kids were asked to get up and form a large circle. The teacher then played what were obviously familiar tunes on the piano, to which the kids knew various steps: walk, run, skip, jump, etc. At first, Ned went off to the side of the room, but then he joined the circle and seemed to enjoy the activity. He did not always follow the same circle around the room as the rest of the class, but he stayed more or less with them and adjusted his gait to approximate the various gaits of the other students.

After the kids left, I did speak with the teacher for a few minutes. I asked her whether she knew what the classroom teacher does with respect to responding [or not] when Ned is inattentive, moving around, etc. She said that she did "not have a clue." She said that she tried not to do much unless Ned is making life difficult for other kids – then she asks him to stop… She said that she never knows what is normally done for individual students with special needs. In theory, if there were a para [paraprofessional aide], she would handle things, except that they generally try

to fade the aide, so this approach doesn't really work. [At a staff meeting after school, the school psychologist agreed that specials teachers need supports, but nothing is being done (yet). She acknowledged that special teachers are largely "out of the loop."

Meadowview

Meadowview is an inclusive school in the sense that it has not self-contained special education classrooms and seeks to provide all special education supports and services within the context of the general education classrooms. A wide variety of teaching styles and philosophies are present in the school, but several of the teachers are practitioners of "multilevel" teaching as described in this report. Meadowview exists, however, in the context of a district whose overall special education policies favor segregated special education for the vast majority of students with disabilities. Thus, students in the neighborhoods served by Meadowview but who have relatively severe disabilities tend to be educated elsewhere; their existence remains unknown to the Meadowview school community.

Kevin, *a student with mental retardation.*

One exception to this was a young man named Kevin who was observed for two years in Melanie's multiage, grade 3 through 5, classroom. Kevin attended Meadowview from first grade on, and entered Melanie's classroom with a TMI label (trainably mentally impaired). When Kevin had arrived in first grade, he could talk, but what he said often made no sense. He did not know his colors or letters, generally not displaying the typical indicators of "school readiness." By the time he arrived in Melanie's class for third grade, he could "write" as he knew his letters and some beginning sounds, but his "writing" consisted of long strings of letters, not separated (or separable) into words. He had basic addition and subtraction skills and understood how numbers work, but was well behind "third grade level." Like the other students described so far, Kevin was likable and did not have behavior problems that might have made inclusion more challenging. At the time when Kevin moved to grade three, there was discussion at the school of moving Kevin to a segregated TMI program in another building because there was concern that inclusion would become problematic as the general education curriculum became more "academic" in the upper elementary grades. However, Kevin's family was committed to inclusion, and Melanie was eager to have him as a member of her class.

Kevin did not have the support of a paraprofessional aide, nor did he need one in either the classroom he had attended for grades 1 and 2 or Melanie's classroom. Both teachers make extensive use of cooperative learning and natural supports; these, with a little assistance from an itinerant special educator, were sufficient to meet Kevin's special needs. Melanie describes the special educator as "old school" and not entirely comfortable with the atmosphere in the busy multiage, multilevel classroom. She provided Kevin with support mostly in math, where Melanie

was using highly flexible ability groups to address the wide range of math abilities in her classroom. Sally, the special educator, would take over Kevin's math group when she was in the classroom.

Melanie organized a formal circle of support to involve students in making sure that inclusive education worked well for Kevin. She started with a couple of students who were already established friends of Kevin and then added a few others, representing a broad range of abilities. Before taking any concrete action, Melanie asked Kevin whether he would like to have a group of students that would help him with schoolwork and he agreed that he would. She then gave him her list of proposed circle members and worked with him to adjust it until she had a small group of students that both she and Kevin felt would work well. Nominated students were then invited to join, and the group began meeting weekly over lunch.

Melanie launched the group with an adapted version of a MAPS (McGill Action Planning). Over time, the students talked about different ways to help Kevin and decided who would best help on any given day with any given subject. Students who were not members of the circle also continued to offer informal natural supports and the functioning of the circle was invisible. Circle members would step in when they saw a need, and Kevin also knew that he could always approach them if he needed them.

> The circle was meeting and the topic was helping Kevin with his spelling. After a little discussion of the kind of help that might be useful, Tiffany said that she thought she would be the best person to help Kevin. Tiffany is described by Melanie as "probably the next worst speller" in the class. When asked why she thought she was the best choice, Tiffany said that because she herself needed to do extra work on spelling, it made sense for her to spend the time working with Kevin on his spelling (in addition to time spent on her own spelling). The group agreed that Tiffany would start helping Kevin with his spelling on a regular basis.

Armstrong Primary

Wesley, *a student with serious emotional and behavioral challenges.*

The story of Wesley is incomplete, but demonstrates the kinds of supports and philosophies that come into play for a child with a severe emotional disability. Wesley came to Armstrong as a boy who was almost a "wild man".

> Bobbie (school principal) talked about Wesley, a student who has been having very serious problems with behavior. She said that she made a videotape and showed it to the child's physician, who said, "either you are crazy or a saint for keeping this kid." It has been very hard, given his behaviors. However, she and the support staff looked at the issues and decided that they had to try. They like Wesley and every now and then "see a child in there." "How could we not try to keep him?" asks Bobbie as we reflect on the fact that sending him to an EI ("emotionally impaired") program is likely setting him on the road to prison and even worse behavior.

Wesley's kindergarten teacher described him when he started school as "not seeming to want to be with other kids." He was very destructive, aggressive toward both children and adults, and had used very aggressive, "foul" language when he was upset. The video shown to his physician recorded an episode in which he had become aggressive, attacking his aide and shouting obscenities. The aide took him in a small quiet room (really a large storage closet) and he continued his behavior. She stepped out and closed the door – his angry screams could be heard just as clearly through the door, although eventually he did calm down and just cry.

On one observation day, the researchers arrived at Armstrong to discover that Wesley had "burned his house down" the day before. Although this initially sounded like another purely aggressive act, the more detailed story was that he had been dropped off by his school bus and found no one home. (He is only five years old and the driver should have waited to make sure someone let him into his house.) He went in and decided to cook himself lunch. In the process, the kitchen caught fire and by the time the fire department put out the fire, the house was no longer habitable. Further discussions between researchers and school staff provided more details of a very troubled home life.

Social service workers were trying to find temporary housing for Wesley and his mother, but there were no shelters available in their county, so this would mean moving to a different school and probably into the EI program school staff were trying to avoid. The support staff and principal devoted most of their school day to brainstorming solutions and thinking about alternatives for Wesley. They also tried to get a planned in-patient psychiatric evaluation for Wesley moved up so that he could get intensive psychiatric support immediately, and so school staff could better figure out what kind of actions would best meet his needs. They did manage to assist in coming up with a solution that kept Wesley at Armstrong and also to move the psychiatric evaluation up somewhat, although they could not make it immediate. In the interim, the support staff reworked their planning for Wesley:

> They have a new 'behavior plan' for Wesley where he is being asked to (1) respond to adult directions and (2) establish some sense of routine in which Wesley does not go off. Everyone told us that Wesley began not wanting to go to kindergarten class even before his house fire. His teacher said that Wesley had a hard time at first … No one seems to really have a sense of why Wesley has not wanted to be with other kids. They are focusing more on having him 'control' his behaviors. Wesley's mother was supposed to have come to the school yesterday but did not show. They were upset and concerned about this. Wesley is spending the day with the paraprofessional in a separate room where she does different activities with him, trying to get him to respond. They continue to be concerned that "he only wants to do what he wants to do" and that this has been even more so since the fire. The principal and the others are continuing to hope that the psychiatric evaluation will tell them a diagnosis so that they will "know what to do." The kindergarten teacher said several times that "we are not trained" to deal with Wesley…
>
> I continue to be impressed with the consistent commitment of all involved to this child who is, in the words of his teacher, a "very wonderful little boy."

Wesley is the most challenging student we observed with respect to inclusion in general education. It remains to be seen how Wesley's situation resolves, but there is no question that his

school is deeply committed to working with medical professionals, social service workers, and anyone else who can assist in trying to keep him in the Armstrong Primary School community.

Gleason

Gleason School is not a project school, but it is located only about five miles from Hamilton School. The school does not aspire to be an inclusive school, and its district also does not espouse an inclusive philosophy, although it does have a policy of trying to "give parents what they want. David's parents, one of who is a researcher on this project, moved David from a segregated center program in another district to his neighborhood school when he was almost six years old.

David *A student with severe multiple disabilities.*

During David's first year at Gleason, he attended the center program in the morning and then traveled to kindergarten at Gleason School in the afternoon. The staff at Gleason School would have preferred to maintain this arrangement in subsequent years, but his parents insisted that he attend Gleason full time, with all necessary supports and services provided within the context of general education. This has been done for four years, with increasing success each year.

David's disabilities present a challenge to any educational setting in that he has significant physical disabilities, a vision impairment, and severe cognitive impairments. David is nonverbal, although by the end of grade four he had a repertoire of three signs and was beginning to use a picture communication system to a very limited degree. When he began at Gleason, he could not walk and required special seating for all activities. He took his first steps midway through the first year, and by the end of grade 4 he was walking independently throughout the school although he was just learning to manage steps on his own. For longer distances, he was also beginning to self-propel his wheelchair. All of his gross motor gains occurred first at school, where he seemed highly motivated to be able to do more things that his peers could do and where both professional staff and peers provided continuous encouragement.

In spite of the fact that unlike the other students in this study who attended schools with formal commitments to inclusion, David attended a school that had grave misgivings, David's inclusive program overall was the most successful observed by project staff. While there is little doubt that his parents' clear vision of what a successful program of supports might look like for him was key in defining David's program, there was also strong support from one of the school staff on David's IEP team, the speech and language pathologist. Although Elaine had never worked with a student with David's level of disability before, she was an experienced professional who was eager to try out many of the ideas she had seen at workshops and in the professional literature over her many years of experience. In addition, David started at Gleason School the same year that a new teacher arrived to take charge of a newly opened self-contained "EMI/TMI" classroom. This teacher, Kim, had previously worked at a center program for students with SXI and SMI labels for many years and was experienced with students with severe disabilities. Kim was designated as a teacher-consultant for David, and she proved to be helpful in designing ways to provide David genuine access to the curriculum and activities in his general education classrooms.

Occupational and physical therapy were provided to David (and some of the students in the self-contained classroom) by itinerant therapists[14]. Over time, the therapists became comfortable with a model of therapy that emphasized helping David participate in all school activities. While none of the therapists had prior experience with truly inclusive settings, the physical therapist, who stayed with David all the years he has been at Gleason School, has changed her practice. During the first years, she followed her familiar practice of pulling David out of class and working with him in a large hallway, using equipment she brought with her and took away with her at the end of her visit. During the last two years, she has primarily worked with David in the context of physical education classes, where she could also work with the paraprofessional aide and the teacher so that the same approaches could be used when she was not present. She also worked with David on the playground and when he was ambulating throughout the school.

As it happened, David had a different occupational therapist every year. Nonetheless, there has been a similar progression in the style of service delivery, probably at least in part because of the physical therapist's model and changing expectations on the part of the school principal and core IEP team members. During the last two years, the occupational therapists have focused on oral-motor skills by working with David at lunch, and with fine motor skills primarily in the context of art class. They also consult with the teacher and paraprofessional about adaptations and equipment in the classroom and other settings. For example, the occupational therapist has been instrumental in making sure that seating in the classroom meets David's needs and that his ability to use assistive technology, especially classroom computers, is maximized. The school has been providing various adaptive hardware, including a switch-adapted mouse and a touch screen, as well as both standard and specialized software (e.g., Intellikeys) to make use of computers within the classroom and to provide David as much access as possible to computers outside of school and in the future.

Like the other students except for Kevin, David has a paraprofessional aide to assist him throughout the day. Over his five years at Gleason School, he has had three different aides, all of whom have learned their job doing it. Most of the daily work of adapting and modifying curriculum falls to the aide, who has less direction from the classroom teacher than we would consider optimal. Only in kindergarten did the aide and teacher function together as a partnership. In that classroom, while the aide most often worked with a group that included David, it was not uncommon to find the aide working with another group while David was in the teacher's group, or even in a group operating more independently. Since that time, however, the aides have been more focused on David and have never had the level of classroom membership that Donald's aide, Jeri, had.

Particularly in grades three and four, the support staff and classroom teachers worked hard to find ways to help David be a fully participating member of his class. Efforts in third grade were fairly modest:

> The students have a long-term project of learning the shapes, names, and capitals of all the states in the United States. Part of this project involves short periods every day or two when the teacher puts up an outline map of a state on the overhead projector and asks a student to come up and identify the state and its capital. When

[14] In all cases, occupational and physical therapy were provided to students at project schools by professionals who move from school to school and have no membership in the school communities. In some cases, the therapists are employees of the school district; in others, they are employees of independent agencies that have contracts with the school district.

she determines that she will call on David, David works with a peer (and his aide) ahead of time to record the information for a given state on his Big Mac switch[15]. She would then call on David and his peer assistant would help him walk to the front of the room and help give the answer via the switch (if David needed such assistance). Although the content of this task was probably meaningless to David, he was clearly eager to participate and proud when he was successful.

By fourth grade, this kind of participation became much more sophisticated, and seemed to have more meaning for both David and his classmates.

The students were working on a large project for a science unit on insects. David's group was assigned the cricket, and all students first worked at home and at school to gather information about crickets. David's mother worked with him at home to locate information on the Internet, and he contributed several recipes for making edible dishes from crickets and closely related insects. (David's mother chose this topic because she wanted him to bring information his peers would find unusually interesting.)

In the next phase of the project, the students developed group reports that would be presented in a formal program with parents invited. David had an important role in the writing process. He had a vote on every item of information to be included, using his yes/no switch or signing "yes" or "no" for each choice. As his receptive language is variable, it was not always clear what criteria he was using to make his choices, but his opinions often appeared to be deeply held. Once the basic content had been identified, David also helped formulate the actual sentences, again by choosing between alternative methods of conveying the information using his yes/no switch and signs.

Finally, the students prepared the final presentation and presented it to classmates and parents. David participated by using a different communication device that allowed recording of a number of different messages, each represented by a different picture. He, his aide, and his fellow group members selected the sentences David would say, recorded them on the device, and found appropriate pictures to help cue David. On presentation day, one of the group members helped David use the communication device to deliver his portion of the report.

During much of the school day, David's work addresses his own IEP goals within the context of classroom activities. Sometimes the support staff or David's parents make suggestions about how best to do this, but the paraprofessional aide is responsible for the day-to-day details and implementation. In one of the more successful adaptations, a traditional class project where students made informational posters about the state of Michigan, David instead made a "Michigan counting book". Since David's goals included learning numbers and learning to handle book pages, this project addressed those directly. At the same time, his book included

[15] The Big Mac is a communication device made by AbleNet that allows one to record a short message on a recorder that looks like a large, round adaptive switch. When the switch is pressed, the message is played.

information about Michigan because each item counted was an item of significance in the economy or history of Michigan.

Severe Disabilities and Classroom Membership

It was clear in the case of Wesley that the staff at Armstrong felt Wesley's membership in the school community was of primary importance. In the other cases described, motivation for inclusion was also primarily membership in the school community although the concern originated with the parents rather than the school. The students described in this section had various levels of success with respect to classroom membership; at one end of the scale, the Evergreen students were unsuccessful enough that their parents removed them from the school and at the other, Kevin has genuine friends at school who also play with him outside of the school setting.

The "frames" describing the relationships between students with disabilities and their peers developed by Mary Fisher and her colleagues is very helpful in thinking about classroom community membership[16]. The lowest level is called "ghost/guest" and is associated with a student being excluded or treated as invisible. Nathan at Evergreen was clearly in this category, at least whenever the research team was observing. The other Evergreen students, Kelly and Cheryl, sometimes fell into this category, but more often fell into the next level, "Inclusion kid/different friend." This status is marked by differential treatment by other community members, but sometimes also with shows of affection and polite treatment. Donald at Hamilton also fell into this category some of the time.

More often, Donald fell into the next category, "I'll help," which is marked by helping and teacher-like treatment from peers. During the first year of observations, Cheryl at Evergreen also fell into this category much of the time, and David sometimes does, too. From our observations, these first three categories are closer together, followed by a leap to the fourth category, "Just another kid," which is marked by clear performance expectations and typical consequences. None of the Evergreen students made it to this category, and we suspect that this missing leap is what led their parents to give up on inclusive education. Donald did not either, but conversations with his father and school staff suggest that no one on his support team expected that much, so they were content with "I'll help." From observations and some conversation with Donald himself, however, it appeared to us that Donald would indeed have been far happier if he could have moved to "just another kid."[17] David's experience at Gleason, however, indicates that the expectation that a student with very severe multiple disabilities could still arrive at least at "just another kid" is entirely reasonable as this is the status which he enjoyed most of the time.

Only Kevin at Meadowview seemed to gain the higher-level frame of "regular friend." This level is marked by having peers to hang with, affection, being invited to parties, and generally

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[16] Fisher, M., Bernazzine, J.P., and Meyer, L.H. *Participatory Action Research: Supporting social relationships in the cooperative classroom*. In J.W. Putnam (ed), Celebrating Diversity In The Classroom: Cooperative learning and strategies for inclusion (2nd edition, p. 145). Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Company, 1998; cited in Fisher, Mary. *Andre's Story: Frames of friendship*. In Grenot-Scheyer, Marquita, Fisher, Mary, and Staub, Debbie (eds). At the End of the Day: Lessons learned in inclusive education. Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Company, 2001.

[17] Donald has good receptive language skills and communicates responses well with eye movements and facial expressions. When asked whether he would like it if he had friends to be with, his face lit up and he showed vigorous agreement. Conversely, he often showed discomfort when his peers treated him more like a favored pet than a friend.

being involved in humor and fun. David seemed to skirt the edge of this category, but never found himself solidly in it for very long. We do not know if even Kevin had relationships that could be described at the highest level, "friends forever." He does, however, have long-term friends with whom he associates himself both at school and at home, and who choose to associate themselves with him.

Our observations of Ned at Hamilton and Wesley at Armstrong were too brief to apply the frames analysis with confidence. Both boys were younger than the other students described here, and had not been with their peers nearly as long. Nonetheless, it seems safe to say that neither moved beyond "inclusion kid" despite major efforts on their behalf by their teachers. Since both boys have disabilities that involve social behavior, it is perhaps not surprising that they had so much difficulty at the outset of their school careers. Indeed, except for Nathan at Evergreen, all of the others were described as extremely sociable and likable children. On the other hand, research elsewhere has demonstrated a great deal of success in moving students with autism into social situations that take them into higher categories on the scale used here. It seems likely that Ned, too, will move up as he matures, gains more social experience, his peers gain more experience with him, and specific interventions help him negotiate social relationships. Although we did not hold out much hope that a psychiatric diagnosis would bring the answers the Armstrong school staff were hoping for, if the school can find ways to continue to support Wesley, he too is likely to reach a point where he both wants and has genuine friends and classroom community membership.