

7. If this was your classroom, what could you do to ensure that your students were respected by and treated well by other students?
8. *Activity:* Visit a classroom for students with severe mental retardation. What are some skills that they work on in the classroom? What are some of the unusual activities that occur while you are observing?



## 37. KATHY

### *Issue: Inclusion*

*Kathy is a student with severe disabilities, causing her to participate in life in a different manner than other students her age would. Her parents and others have learned that sometimes small, steady gains are the "best" gains to make in life.*

Kathy Klopski is a 12-year-old with multiple disabilities. Kathy is non-ambulatory and can move around only with the use of her motorized wheelchair. She exhibits severe communication and motor deficits and scored within the profound mental retardation range on a recent IQ test. Kathy lives at home with her parents, Carole and Bill Klopski, and her sister, Theresa. Kathy attends the local elementary school and is currently in a self-contained classroom with six other students, all of whom have severe disabilities.

Although she does have a communication board attached to the tray of her wheelchair, it is not of much use because she has a limited vocabulary. To communicate, Kathy uses a combination of gestures (e.g., she makes a fist and twists it to motion that she wants to go to the bathroom) and her communication board. She does not communicate much with other students unless encouraged. For instance, during calendar and morning activity, Kathy will say hello (gesture) to another student only after much prompting from the teacher or aide.

In the classroom, most of the academic activities that Kathy works on are tied to her individualized education program (IEP) goals of improving motor and communication skills. At school, the teacher, Ms. Dawson, has been working on the following skills with Kathy: using appropriate eye contact, increasing the number of gestures used for communication, communicating the greeting hello to another person, using the computer to aid in communication and learning, changing body positions in the wheelchair when sore, independently obtaining objects from the wheelchair, and feeding herself using a spoon. Daily, Ms. Dawson and the teacher aide work on the skills and monitor progress. Through multiple trials (opportunities for response), each person records the percent of correct responses and the time spent working with each child. Before the students leave for the day, Ms. Dawson completes a daily progress report and sends home one activity that should be completed. For example, Kathy's note asked the parent to spend fifteen minutes getting her to respond to the direction of a sound and to touch the object. The parents frequently respond to the teacher about their work with Kathy.

Carole and Bill Klopski are always actively involved in Kathy's life. They are constantly working with Kathy at home in the evenings and often spend weekends working with or getting her involved in community activities through "partial participation." Using partial participation, even though Kathy is not able to perform an activity independently, she is still given the opportunity to participate in the activity. Kathy recently became a Girl Scout with their neighborhood scout group. In addition, she and Carole are also involved in a local "Mothers and Daughters" social group. In the scout group, the scouting leader and organization make numerous accommodations for Kathy. She usually earns badges with the assistance of other scouts. For example, she earned her badge for first aid by watching another student conduct first aid on her and answering "yes" and "no" questions about first aid, even though she answered half of the questions incorrectly. At her "Mothers and Daughters" group, Kathy and her mom volunteer their time at community activities to raise money for various charities. At one recent activity, Kathy's mom made some baked goods and sold them with other mothers at the local shopping center. Kathy was also present and her mother said that her presence there helped to increase bake sales. Despite being known throughout the community, Kathy's limited communication skills make it difficult for others to talk to her or hold a conversation with her.

Kathy's teacher feels that Kathy has made much progress this year. Ms. Dawson has spent quite a bit of time working to get Kathy to respond in an appropriate manner to others, mostly through maintaining eye contact and making a limited number of gestures. Ms. Dawson, concerned with getting her students into the community more often, frequently takes her class on community outings. On one recent trip, they went to an animal farm. At the farm, the children were treated to petting and feeding the animals. As each child petted the animals, Ms. Dawson carefully noted their reactions so that she could report their trip to the parents. On another trip, the students visited a local fruit farm and were taken on a tractor ride around the farm. Later back at the school, the students tasted the different types of fruit and vegetables. Again, Ms. Dawson noted what occurred and reported this information to the parents in her daily notes. Ms. Dawson has a reputation of being an excellent teacher in the district; consequently, parents like Kathy's often request to have their children placed in her room.

During a recent IEP conference with the Klopskis, Ms. Dawson reported to Kathy's parents that she had made much progress this year. She started by telling them how Kathy has learned a new gesture to communicate (i.e., juice) and how Kathy has learned to extend her reach one inch farther since she started in her classroom. She then told them how, through the use of an electronic switch that turns on a tape player, Kathy learned to move her arms up higher in the air. As she reported on Kathy's progress of each objective, Ms. Dawson was proud at how much improvement Kathy had made since entering her room two years earlier. Throughout the meeting, Kathy's parents seemed strangely quiet.

When Ms. Dawson completed her update on Kathy's growth in her class, she turned to the Klopskis and asked what was wrong. Although pleased with her progress, the Klopskis heard of a radical, new program whereby *all*

students, regardless of their disability, attend regular education classrooms. Commonly referred to as full inclusion, the concept is new to this district. As the Klopskis broke the news to Ms. Dawson and her supervisor, Mrs. Frew, that they would like Kathy to attend a regular education classroom next year, a silence fell over the room. Kathy's parents went on to explain that they felt that it was more important for Kathy to develop friends, rather than work on skills that she may never use. Next, the Klopskis related to the group of how they recently saw a TV show in which the students with disabilities at a school had developed a "circle of friends" with their regular education peers. They asked Ms. Dawson and Mrs. Frew why there weren't schools like these in the area. Taken back by the question, Ms. Dawson and her supervisor looked at each other and then told the Klopskis that these schools were still experimental. Not satisfied with this response, Kathy's parents demanded that her new IEP be written so that it reflects their request.

In an attempt to help the Klopskis understand the rarity of their request, Mrs. Frew explained how Kathy's goals and objectives were sequenced so that they built upon one another throughout the school year and over her lifetime. According to her, these goals and objectives could best be achieved in a self-contained classroom. Ms. Dawson said how successful the classroom program had been in the past for other students and how in a regular education setting the friendships that she would develop with other students would be only temporary. Mrs. Frew also mentioned that an inclusion classroom would not be feasible and would go against the current teaching philosophy of the district. After hearing these remarks, the Klopskis were steadfast in their position for a full inclusion classroom.

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## QUESTIONS

1. Inclusion has been defined in many different ways. How would you define "appropriate" inclusion? Why?
2. What are the advantages, if any, of Carole taking Kathy to her "Mothers and Daughters" activities? What are the advantages for Kathy? What are the advantages for others?
3. Should society make accommodations for persons with severe disabilities or should the person with severe disabilities learn to compensate to fit into society? What type of accommodations should society make? What type of compensation strategies could a person with severe disabilities make?
4. Should school districts be mandated to provide "full inclusion" programs? Why or why not?
5. What could you do to resolve the difference between the parents and the school concerning Kathy's attendance in a full inclusion classroom?
6. *Activity:* Conduct an ERIC search on the following terms. Read about each intervention, define each, and describe in detail one example of each: systematic sensory stimulation, microswitches, and partial participation.