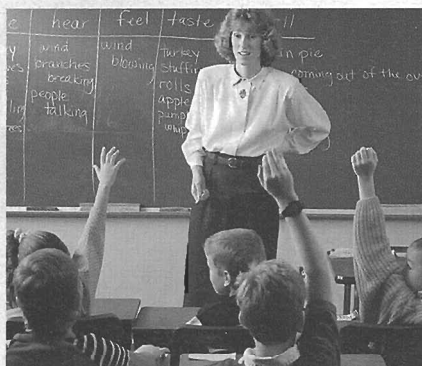


# SPECIAL kids

## Getting Ready to Mainstream

By Judith S. Bloch, A.C.S.W.



Since the passage of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1997, there has been an increasing trend towards full inclusion or mainstreaming, so that school classes include children with and without disabilities. Debates about the advantages and disadvantages for both special- and non-special-needs kids have been voiced by many. Inclusion is beneficial for all children, but it requires careful planning on the part of both parents and teachers in order to be successful.

The parent of a child with a disability can take the following steps in preparing the teacher:

- Before the semester begins, meet the teacher and other school staff who'll be connected to your child.
- Share information about your child's strengths and areas that require extra help.
- Expect your child to need time to adjust.
- Establish a plan for ongoing communication between the school and home, like a shared notebook, telephone calls or periodic meetings.

Remember that the regular education teacher has access to your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). This should outline her role in implementing goals in the classroom.

An assessment of your child's abilities and disabilities with your input will help the teacher prepare a purposeful plan of instruction that takes into account any special curriculum and ways of interacting that may be needed.

Your child will also benefit from preliminary preparation. Here are some suggestions:

- Before school starts, take him to see what it looks like.
- Ask if you and your child may see the classroom, lunch-room and bathroom.
- Point out the school buses on the street. Use a toy bus at home to play at going to school and returning.
- Prepare a book of photos to show your child what to expect. Your child can also draw pictures of her own.

All parents and students are more likely to be supportive of your child when the classroom program's developmentally appropriate and sound and the teacher's prepared and therefore responsive to everyone's needs. ☺

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Judith S. Bloch, A.C.S.W. is CEO and president of Variety Pre-Schooler's Workshop in Syosset.