

Mainstreaming the Handicapped

A Design Guide



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ABSTRACT

Educating handicapped children in the least restrictive environment--including integration in public school facilities--is an emerging trend called mainstreaming. Presently, design responses to the new needs created by mainstreaming are limited in scope and focus mainly on barrier-free environments. Barrier-free design is an important but incomplete approach to a wide range of problems in mainstreaming. A number of reasons explain the professions' focus on physical disabilities and on physical solutions for problems related to physical handicaps. A survey of both literature and selected facilities confirms that the broader range of handicapped children, as well as the broader concept of mainstreaming are barely addressed by environmental design.

To provide more appropriate environments which are supportive of mainstreaming, a user-based research and programming process was undertaken. The key activities included (1) identification of user-needs in the mainstreaming context (2) development of design principles and recommendations responsive to these needs.

The report points toward a series of issues involved in supporting shared experiences and common settings for exceptional and regular students. Appropriate design principles suggest the important characteristics of environments which promote children's interaction, positive self-image, confidence, accessibility, and allow for learning and development.

Preface and Acknowledgments

This document is a product of a pilot research and development project supported by a Graduate Faculty Research Grant, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The Center of Architecture and Urban Planning Research, and the School of Architecture and Urban Planning Dean's Office provided the project's staff with encouragement and administrative support.

The concept of design principles and some of the specific design guidelines in this report were developed by the first author and his colleagues in several other projects. Papers and reports discussing design principles, their evolution, development, use, and application projects include: Cohen and Moore (1977); Moore, Cohen, and Team 699 (1977); Cohen (1978); Moore and Cohen (1978); Moore, Cohen, Oertel, and van Ryzin (1979); Cohen, Hill, McGinty, and Moore (1978); and Moore, Lane, Hill, Cohen, and McGinty, 1979).

The contributions of these prior and concurrent projects to this project were very important and influenced its approach. Our thanks to all of these projects' participants, and especially to Gary T. Moore and Team 699. Also, our thanks to Stanley Cairns, who assisted us in the preliminary information search.

The overall goal of this project was to identify the basic needs of mainstreaming programs in public schools and to suggest design principles which respond to these needs. This report is a preliminary design guide based on a pilot survey of the issues and needs, and an effort to develop the recommended design responses based on research information compiled from various sources.

As the subject of mainstreaming is still a topic of controversy, and the experience with its applications still too brief, a great deal of testing and examination are still needed to develop better learning environments for handicapped and non-handicapped children.

Milwaukee, June 1979