

Notes & Discussion Key for Analysis of Kevin Duffy's Article, "At St. Joseph the Provider, Retarded Students Enrolled in 'Mainstreaming' Program" (Rutland Herald, 10/9/78)

(This article was retrieved from the State of Vermont's historical archives in Middlesex, Vt., which is managed by the Secretary of State.)

- The use of the word "retarded" to describe individuals with intellectual disabilities was commonplace for many years, but it is now considered derogatory and should not be used.
- "Handicapped" was another term formerly used to describe individuals with disabilities.
- Lack of person-first language: The article refers to retarded students instead of putting the students first and not describing them just by their disability but as individual students who have a disability
- "So-called normal:" the author was sensitive enough to realize that there was reason to question considering some students normal and others not. Calling people without disabilities normal assumes that people with disabilities are not, when the reality is that disability is a common human experience.
- "Non-retarded peers:" This is another use of an undesirable word. Today we might say something like, "Bringing students with and without disabilities together benefits both groups."
- Mainstreaming is a term for including students with disabilities in public schools. Teachers may be more familiar with the term than students.
- 94-142, the federal law that established a right to public school for children with disabilities, is now called IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- What makes this news: The story is about the move toward closing Brandon Training School, Vermont's former institution for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. The closing of institutions and the move toward allowing children and adults with disabilities to return to or stay in their local community represented real change and a significant policy shift in Vermont and other states. Vermont was the second state in the United States to close its institution for individuals with intellectual disabilities. New Hampshire was the first.