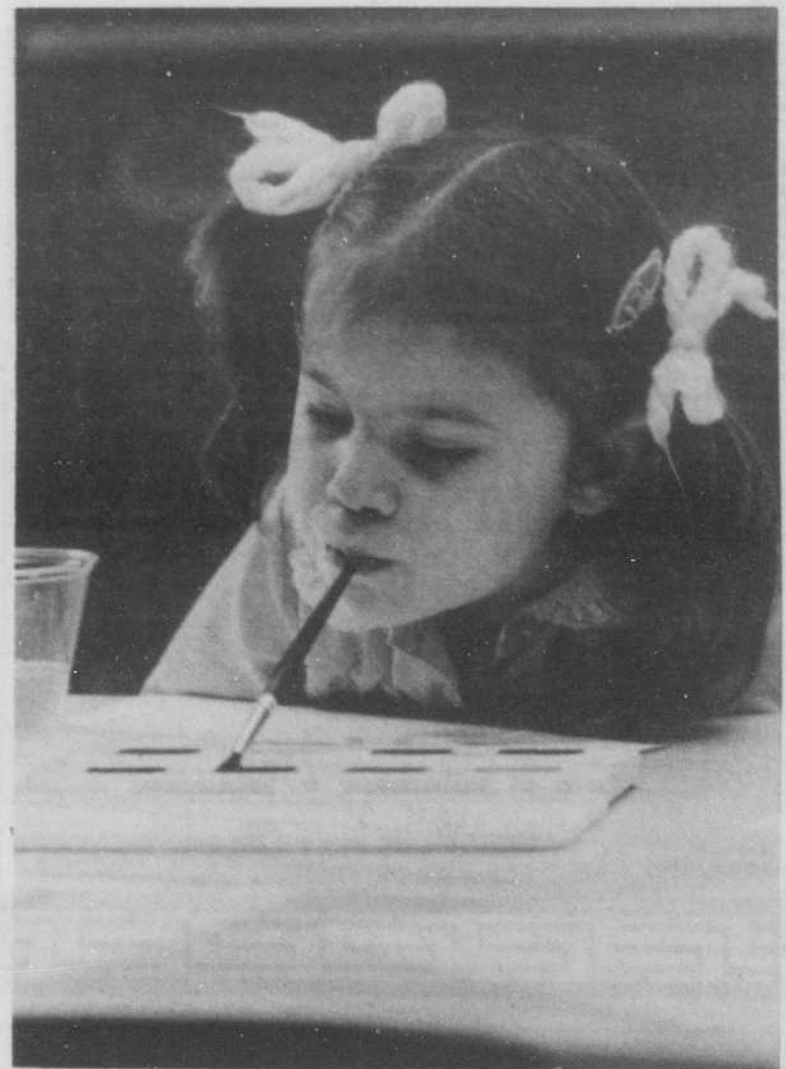


Kids benefit from mainstream class



Travis Tendick hangs on to a table during a moment of rest during recess.



Like most young children, Jessica Aaron enjoys painting, she uses her teeth because her joints are too stiff to move.

A traditional school setting teaches 'natural integration'

It could be a scene from any pre-school: children romping together in playhouses, reading Dr. Seuss and painting. But in this class, two of the children are handicapped and are being "mainstreamed" into normal activity.

"We were really delighted with how sensitively the other children treated the two handicapped kids,"

says Pam Perfumo, head teacher/administrator for the new program in clinical services, in the University's education school.

To build self-confidence in all the children, Perfumo had the children talk about their bodies. The children also got a chance to use the special equipment of the handicapped children. One handicapped child uses lofthand crutches and the other child uses a scooter because her joints don't bend.

"The non-handicapped and handicapped preschoolers had an opportunity to interact with each other and learn from each other," Perfumo says. "Now the kids are integrated really naturally."

The children, who range from three to five years old, are given an opportunity to direct their own learning. Perfumo says she and her assistants will loosely structure the environment and allow children to take their own initiative to produce their own knowledge instead of becoming dependent on adults.

Perfumo stresses that they put a lot of thought into individual observation and assessment of the children to

make sure each child gets the maximum benefit from the program. Then the parents and teachers will meet to plan the child's activities together.

Besides providing a learning environment for the children, the preschool also allows University education students to interact and "learn from the dynamics of a mainstreamed class," Perfumo says.

The parents can also benefit from the mainstream program by educating them about the needs of handicapped children, Perfumo says.

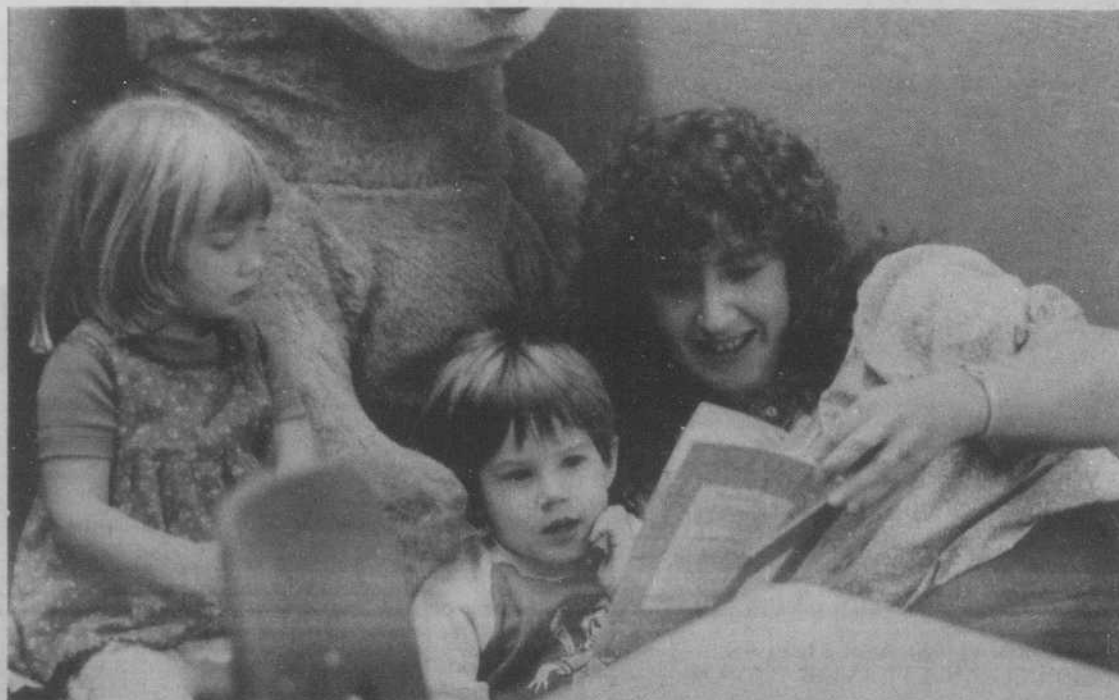
"Most of the parents with non-handicapped kids were excited about giving their children the opportunity to grow up with experience of accepting people's differences and to see the strengths of each individual person. The parents of the handicapped kids were very eager to get them into an environment when all the things about them which are normal will be focused on," Perfumo says.

Space is available for three more children in the 12-student class. Cost is \$120 a month for a half-day at the preschool.

**Story by Sandy Johnstone
Photos by Bob Baker**



The "mainstreaming" idea focuses on integrating handicapped and non-handicapped children.



Pam Perfumo, the class instructor, reads some Dr. Seuss.



Travis Tendick struggles to keep pace with his classmates on lofthand crutches.