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ABSTRACT

Provided is the transcript of Part I of a two-part series on education for the handicapped, presented by Options in Education--a weekly radio broadcast devoted to coverage of news, features, policy, and people in the field of education on National Public Radio. Issues in special education, such as mainstreaming, implementation of Public Law 94-142, parents' roles, residential schools, attitudes, and labeling are discussed. Among participants listed are disabled students, parents of handicapped children, special education teachers, parent educators, and such experts in the field of special education as Y. Galiber, J. Gallagher, F. Weintraub, and J. Callahan. (IM)

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OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is an electronic weekly magazine devoted to coverage of news, features, policy & people in the field of education. The program is available for broadcast to the 185 member stations of National Public Radio.

The Executive Producer is John Merrow. The Acting Producer is JoEllyn Rackleff, and the Co-Host is Wendy Blair.

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EDUCATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED

PART I

(OPENING MUSICAL THEME)

BLAIR: I'm Wendy Blair with NPR'S OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a news magazine about all the issues in education -- from the ABC's of preschool to the alphabet soup of government programs. If you've ever been to school, we have something that will interest you.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow. There are 8 million school age children with some kind of handicap. How public schools treat these children now, and what their future may be like in our schools, is the subject of this week's OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

YETA GALIBER: It's really not easy to fight this system because I feel that this system programs people to fail.

WOMAN: It's really amazing how much affection you can have between the non-handicapped and the handicapped youngster.

JOHN BOBO: You see it in the face. You know that they feel uncomfortable.

LAURA RAUSHER: Normal kids don't learn to accept the children, and the kids who are handicapped don't learn to live with the so-called "normal" children.

JOHN BOBO: Society feels that these people need to be isolated because they hate to think of themselves in this position. They shove us aside in a corner, and they don't have to be reminded that these things exist.

JOHN CALLAHAN: They're saying that they're above the fray, and they're more important than anyone else. That just doesn't wash.

JOHN BOBO: They say, "Hey, oh, I'm sorry. You're an amputee." They don't say, "Hey, what are your views on this or that?"

"MAINSTREAMING"

MERROW: Laura Rausher and Billy McCarthy talk to Reporter David Freudberg in Boston.

LAURA: Our school, when it first started, was named The Industrial School for Crippled & Deformed Children. So, they tried to change it. They changed it to The Industrial School for Crippled Children, which was still not that good. And, then, finally, they changed it to the Cotting School for Handicapped Children. The kids got together and decided on that name.

BILLY: Because of attitudes, some non-handicapped people are more handicapped than the actual physically handicapped. Just because of their attitudes.

FREUDBERG: Do people stare at you a lot?

LAURA: Yeah.

FREUDBERG: How did that make you feel inside?

LAURA: Angry. But I guess I've learned to accept it more. But you realize - maybe like you said - that they're the ones with the problem; if they have to stare at you, you know. And you eventually learn to accept it, and not let it bother you.

FREUDBERG: You both go to a school where there are other handicapped children. Does it give you some comfort and make you feel better to be among people who are in the same boat?

LAURA: I think that integration would be a great benefit to almost all handicapped kids. If 150 kids are put into one school, a special school for handicapped kids, the kids who are not there - the so-called "normal" kids - don't learn to accept the children, and the kids who are handicapped don't learn to live with the so-called normal children.

BILLY: The kids I know - right? - are the same as we are like. I get along good with them. We wrestle, and we play kickball, and we have a lot of fun playing that.

FREUDBERG: Being handicapped is an education in, and of itself. What lessons about life have you learned?

BILLY: My teacher last year - right? - told us where the world was and stuff.

FREUDBERG: On maps and stuff?

BILLY: On maps. So, we had to help the teacher to get a flat map so she could show us how the flat map and the round map make different kinds of people - and the handicapped people. A flat map, right? It's held different than the round map.

LAURA: But it's the same world.

MERROW: Laura Rausher, age 16, and Billy McCarthy, age 13, talking with Reporter David Freudberg of Station WGBH in Boston.

BLAIR: Laura, who's paraplegic, believes that handicapped and non-handicapped children should go to school together. There's a word for that - "mainstreaming" - and schools began placing some handicapped children in regular classes as early as 1920. By the 1950's many educators questioned the wisdom of segregating handicapped children into special education classes.

YETTA GALIBER

GALIBER: It's really not easy to fight this system because I feel this system programs people to fail.

BLAIR: That's Yetta Galiber of the District of Columbia Information Center for Handicapped Individuals.

GALIBER: We've lost a generation or two of people because we have not cared, and reached out. But I think the new legislation that's being enacted will enable all handicapped persons to have an opportunity for education, socialization and for real life. And I think the community needs to understand about the rights of the handicapped. All kinds of rights: The legal rights, the sexual rights -- whatever rights we enjoy they, too, have a right to enjoy. They pay taxes.

BLAIR: Galiber mentions new legislation. It's called "The Education of All Handicapped Children Act" - or PL 94-142. Passed in 1975, the Act says that the states must provide a free and appropriate education for all handicapped children. The legislation also mandates "mainstreaming" or putting handicapped children in the least restrictive environment. Yetta Galiber believes that this is desirable and possible.

GALIBER: This way we will make productive citizens, hopefully, out of these children, and give them an opportunity to have the so-called "good life" in America. The key to this whole thing is early intervention and early identification - so that many of these children, if they're picked up early enough in life, by the time they reach school age, they might well fit right into the mainstream.

Every human being has the right to reach his or her maximum potential, and if we pick up these children early in life, many of them - by the time they reach school age - the help that they would have received might even do away with that handicapping condition.

Many of these children are not picked up until they do reach public schools. So, they've lost that period of their lives when help could have been given.

BLAIR: Yetta Galiber of the D. C. Information Center for Handicapped Individuals talking to Reporter Tim Cox about early identification of disabilities in children so that they can be "mainstreamed" into a normal school situation.

MERROW: Mainstreaming has many proponents. One of the strongest is Dr. James Gallagher.

DR. JAMES GALLAGHER

GALLAGHER: There are some people who have lived their whole life, you know, and if they've played their cards right, they'll never run into a handicapped individual.

MERROW: Dr. Gallagher directs the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He told Gary Shivers of Station WUNC about the difficulties of training teachers to instruct handicapped children.

GALLAGHER: Well, there's no one teacher that deals with all of them. In certain special areas, like deafness for example, you have to have special training in that particular area to help a youngster develop language and help the youngster understand what other people are trying to communicate to them.

SHIVERS: Is it important to integrate the special student and the non-handicapped student in the same classroom, in the same kind of setting?

GALLAGHER: I think most people in special education would say "yes" - that there are a number of phrases used now like "least restrictive environment," which means -- Take the youngster who is handicapped only as far from the normal setting as is absolutely necessary. In one case that might mean taking the youngster out of the normal classroom for an hour or two a day with a special teacher, where he'll get remedial lessons. But he'll stay in the regular classroom.

For others, the more serious and long-term effort, it might mean a special class. In a more and more severe case, it might mean taking him to an institution. It's relatively easy to push the youngster off. Special education, sometimes, turns out to be an exclusionary process masquerading as a remedial process.

It's easy to get the youngster from the regular education program into the special education program. It's very difficult to get him from the special education program back into the normal program. What we're now trying to do is to take that handicapped youngster only as far as absolutely necessary, and we think that that's an advantage to the handicapped youngster who has to eventually integrate into a non-handicapped world, and, also, it's very good for the non-handicapped youngster who learns a little bit about what a handicapped child is. They're children with handicaps, and they've got the same needs and interests and desires as other youngsters.

SHIVERS: Teachers, really, of all ages must have handicapped children in their classrooms.

GALLAGHER: Most people do not really grasp the tremendous range of individual differences that you can have in a given age group. If you took a group of fifth graders, ten year olds, for example, you'll have a number of them who will be performing at a second or third grade level. Some of them will be non-readers. Some others will be reading eighth and ninth grade and starting to be interested in Shakespeare - just as gifted youngsters.

You put these thirty youngsters together with one teacher, and say to the teacher - "Now, what has to be done is you have to individualize the instruction for each of these children." That's a lot easier said than done. And the teacher who is without any special back-up or support help to aid her in this can be excused for saying - "This is a terrible burden to have me trying to deal with all of these severe problems along with a whole range of other things that are characteristics with which the children come into the class." So, the secret in a lot of respects is to provide back-up support for these teachers so they don't feel they're all alone, and don't know what to do. And if you can provide some psychologists and remedial specialists of various sorts, special education teachers, who can be a resource to the regular teacher, then the teacher feels that if she gets into a difficulty and doesn't know what to do, there is somebody to go to who will tell them what to do. This is very different from just being left out on your own, and saying -- "Good luck to you. We hope you can handle the difficult situation you have down there."

We still haven't solved the problem of providing services to the handicapped youngster in two major areas of the country. One is the rural area. And the other is the urban area. There the problems are so intense - and there are so many of them - that trying to get the level of resources in there to make an impact on the problem is a very serious matter, and I think in all fairness we really haven't solved that problem very often.

The place where the youngster really gets pretty adequate care right now is in your general suburban areas.

MERROW: Dr. James Gallagher talking with Reporter Gary Shivers from WUNC in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Gallagher says that adequate educational opportunities exist in many suburban areas, but two parents from Montgomery County, Maryland, one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, would disagree.

> PARENT: Ted is not disabled - he's a very disabling child. He's one that takes garage doors apart and bicycles apart, and this kind of thing. He's a very normal child, and, for all practical purposes, he is deaf.

BLAIR: Phyllis and Bill Warshau didn't know that their ten-year-old son was deaf until he was nearly two. Pediatricians and educators mislabeled Ted, and told his parents Ted had memory-retention problems, or, perhaps,"dyslexia." After they discovered Ted's deafness, they tried mainstreaming, keeping Ted in the public school system, but they felt he didn't learn adequately. Finally, the Warshaus reached a painful decision to send Ted away to a boarding school for the deaf in Frederick, Maryland. They talked with Reporter David Selvin.

PHYLLIS & BILL WARSHAU

BILL: He was nine when he started at the Maryland school, which was a very wrenching experience for both of us, because for the first two and a half months, he fought getting on the bus every Sunday evening at 5:30 and going back to school. And, while we packed his bag for the week, he used to unpack his bag; and he would hide, because he did not want to go back to school. He wanted to stay home or go to school and come home every night or every day, just like his brother and sister. He resisted that for some two months in his very first year out there -- two and a half months. Sometime after Thanksgiving, we noticed a marked change in him, that he did not resist as much. He started looking forward to going to school.

PHYLLIS: And this child has really blossomed in the two years that he's been there.

SELVIN: But up to this point, it seems that Ted's education was a series of very frustrating experiences.

PHYLLIS: It was, truly.

SELVIN: What's the lesson there?

PHYLLIS: We have to have our people who are advising parents have a better knowledge of what it is they're trying to accomplish and stop arguing about methodology between themselves, but I think that they really should listen to what a parent has to say. It has only been in recent years that they have felt that parents have any common sense at all. If we had had more direction to the program, we wouldn't have had so many years of frustration. Parents were still just as frustrated as their children in many ways, because they knew there had to be something more than a child graduating from school on a third-grade reading level, etc. We were aiming very high for our children. We have been put down many times for that, because I told one of the educators that I expected Ted to go to college, and she said, "Well, aren't you aiming very high?" - and - "You're going to be a terribly disappointed parent."

BILL: If you aim low, you may hit low. So, you aim for the highest level of achievement you can.

PHYLLIS: That's right.

SELVIN: Now, you as parents, obviously have more insight into Ted than, say, a teacher or a counselor. What kind of problems do you come across with other people? You mentioned before labeling Ted and, therefore, putting him at an automatic disadvantage.

PHYLLIS: We had been told that he had a memory-retention problem. We had been told that he might have "dyslexia," and we had been told that -- oh, I can't remember all the labels at this point -- but it's very frustrating to a parent to go into a hearing school and hear this new terminology that all the teachers are using, and come away from a conference and feel that you don't know a thing that has been said.

When we went to Frederick, for example, there was a vast difference in their attitude. They asked us to describe our child, and I told them much the same as I did you earlier, that I feel he's a very normal child. He said, "Do you have any more to say about him?" I said, "Well, we have always felt that he's rather bright, but we've been told that he has this problem and this problem and this problem," and I said, "It might just be that we're wrong, but I just can't get over this mother instinct that he is a reasonably bright child." So, they put him through a battery of tests and so on and so forth; and they came back after we paced the floor for several hours -- they had had Ted most of the day. They said, "We have good news and bad news for you." And I thought, here it comes - we're going to have more labeling. But they didn't label Ted. They said the good news is that, "He is not a bright child -- he's a brilliant child." He has scored very high." Now, you and I know that one test is not conclusive, but at least, here was some encouragement to the parents. The bad news was the fact that he was a mere shell -- he did not have the language for a child of his age. He was a shell of a child, because he could not express himself. He did not have the means to say what he wanted to say.

Once he acquired these skills out there, he just blossomed. It's not the optimum arrangement for any child to live away from home, especially at that age. I know in some circles that's the thing to do -- the minute your child is born, you enroll him in boarding school, and so on, and so forth. But we don't feel that way about it. I think they miss a great deal from being away, but since he has to be away, because it's not available here in that concept that it is there, we feel that we have made the right decision, and it has certainly been beneficial to the entire family. We're a much more stable family than we were two years ago. It was very disrupting - having Ted so frustrated all the time, and the temper tantrums, and so on, which were nothing more than trying to be understood.

SELVIN: You were talking before about mainstreaming, and I'm wondering if the sort of attitude where you treat a child as you would any other child - the child with a form of disability - have you tried that? And what's your experience with that?

PHYLLIS: If you want to call it mainstreaming in the sense that we sent him to the local school, which is, I suppose, what you are referring to, we did do that at the kindergarten level, and Ted was treated more as a mascot than he was a student. They liked him. His social development was fine, but his educational development was just nil.

SELVIN: What kind of advice would you have for somebody who is in the same situation as you were about eight years ago?

PHYLLIS: I think that a parent must learn as much as he or she can in order to do the best by their individual child, no matter what that handicap may be. And I think that's what is so sad about many parents -- they find a situation and put their child in it, and hope for the best. And that's not necessarily the way it should be done. I think the educators have to be very aware of parents, and their feelings and their needs, too. And the parent groups have done a great deal to help correct that, and I think the schools are trying very hard to meet the needs of some of our parents today.

Before, we didn't know anything. It was -- we'll take care of your child -- leave the teaching to us -- you go home and tend to the washing and the ironing, and so on. And, aren't-you-lucky-you-have-a-place-for-your-child kind of attitude. Now, they are trying to fill the needs of the parents as well as the children, and I think that's what it should be.

SELVIN: Does it take a certain amount of courage, a certain amount of perserverence as parents?

PHYLLIS: Indeed it does. If someone had told me ten years ago that I would speak up to educators the way I have, I would have gone through this floor. But it does take a lot of courage, because you are not sure that you are right. You think, well, how can I be telling them that I feel it should be this way, or this is not right, and so on and so forth, when they have all the degrees and all the knowledge that they have. But, there is a mother's instinct, or a family instinct, that tells you there has to be something better than this, or there has to be another approach. And I think that's where it's important to take the time to listen. And I don't say that we're always right. Many times we make mistakes too, but I think they have to be just as open as we're trying to be.

BLAIR: Phyllis and Bill Warshau, talking with Reporter David Selvin. Teachers of the handicapped often find family frustrations affect the child's development as much as the school experience.

> **PARENT:** In the beginning, when parents have problems, they might come to this meeting crying, and everybody helps each other get through the times.

MERROW: That's another parent who participates in her deaf child's education. Rachel Kranz of station KSJN has this report from St. Paul, Minnesota.

> **TEACHER:** Going to take it home to show mama. It can fly-y-y-y. It can fly-y-y-y.
>
> **CHILD:** Fly-y-y-y.
>
> **TEACHER:** Fly-y-y-y -- what I'm trying to get from Dawn now is an imitational pattern in the inflection I'm using. She's not going to use the word, yet, meaningfully, but you notice how she tried to say fly.
>
> Okay, this is for mama.
>
> **CHILD:** Mama.

TEACHER: For mama.

CHILD: Mama.

TEACHER: You're going to take it home to mama -- he can fly.

KRANZ: Harriet Caplan is trying to teach partially deaf children to talk, but Caplan doesn't just teach children. She also shows parents how they can teach their children.

Having a handicapped child can be a frightening experience for many parents, and besides passing on a few teaching techniques, the program tries to help the parents cope with their own feelings.

HARRIET CAPLAN

CAPLAN: There are many ways parents can react. They can absolutely hide in the corner and refuse to do anything about it. They can hand it over to someone else and say, "Here you do it -- I don't know anything about this." Or, they proceed to do something once they have gone through a grief cycle about helping their child, and they usually feel very close to that child.

We don't gear all of our training and all of our input to strictly the child's learning. We do a lot of counseling and a lot of advising in terms of emotions and so on. Parents are so anxious to do something, and to overcome this problem -- we have highly motivated parents for the most part. Sometimes it becomes overwhelming, and there are parents who will say to us, "I just can't -- I have to back off." And we will begin to realize, although the child may be capable of moving faster, mother just can't move that fast. She has a home -she has a family- she has four other little children.

But within the context, the program is built around the fact that language can be learned on the run. Hearing-impaired children can learn language much as normal children do, and they do that by dragging along next to mama and hanging onto her ankles while she's washing the dishes, and helping while she's dusting and cleaning. So, it's the everyday use of language that is modeled appropriately for that child, and the imitation and the repetition that help the child to learn.

These kids are learning to say, "Come mama, I want some, it's mine, move over, stop it"-- words that are functional in their environment and words that they need to use. They have begun to realize that what comes out of mama's mouth and goes into their ear, whatever it is that they hear, means something. And that if they do it, it will move their world for them. If they say to mama, jump, she's going to get off her chair and jump. It makes things happen for them.

KRANZ: What kinds of things do parents do?

CAPLAN: It's very easy to say to a kid, "Sit over there, now, I'm going to make the bed." These mamas are saying, "I'm going to pull the sheet -- help me -- we'll make it smooth -- pull, pull, let's pull the sheet." And it's going to take her three times as long to make a bed, but the whole time she's doing it, she's feeding in language: "Here's the pillow -- it's a pillow -- feel it -- it's soft -- tell me, it's soft." Maybe she does that everyday for weeks and weeks and weeks. Pretty soon, he knows what soft is. And I think the parents' feeling is a very positive one. These parents have gone just to all ends. They have traveled a great deal. They share a great deal of their feelings. Nobody knows -- you know, it's a beautiful thing to see a parent who can finally come and say, "Johnny said, 'come' today." Well, you know, her next door neighbor loves her dearly, but her kid's the same age, and he's been saying come for months now. So, when she says to them, "Johnny said 'come,'" it doesn't mean anything. It does, when she comes here, and there are other parents who are going through the same thing who know what she has gone through to get that word out of him. It means something, and this also becomes a kind of a place where they can come to stamp their feet or to cry or to yell or to say "I'm devastated" - whatever, without being judged, because we're all working for the good of the child.

And I think they sense that, and they know that the major responsibility is theirs. We can give them a direction in which to go. We can give them some ideas of things to tackle. We can give them some techniques and some games, but the actual, everyday, ongoing work is theirs.

KRANZ: Family-oriented special education takes more time than a normal school program would. And, then, there are the parent group meetings, which many working parents have to take time off to come to, but the parents say it's definitely worth the time.

> PARENT: I've only been coming to meetings a few times, and I said to my friend, "It's almost like coming to group therapy." It's nice to know that there are other people here that have the same problems and to see what they go through, what we should look forward to, and what we're going to be facing in a few years, but I think the people here are really special people. I really like it, and I can see where it has to change our family life, because he will need special things throughout life, and the school system here is telling us what to look forward to, what he's going to need in the future, and it's getting us ready. So, I can't say enough about it.

> PARENT: We have a hearing-impaired child -- he hasn't really heard nothing, and he can't understand nothing. So, it's helped us as far as what to say to him and what to talk to him about all the time, because we can't just ask him a question, out of the blue. If he's never heard the answer, he doesn't know what to answer. Everybody thinks their child is different, when it turns out it's just a stage of life -- the terrible two's, you know. It's a great help, especially when you get all the parents involved. You've got to have the parents involved -- they're the ones who are with the child most of the time. It's a great relief knowing that other people have the same problems and you're not alone. If you have a problem and you don't know how to solve it, you can just talk to any of the other parents here, and you'll have your problem solved just like that.

KRANZ: The family-oriented program was almost cut this year. The Minneapolis School System was tightening its budget and tried to reduce the program's funds, but when it looked like the school system's cut was going to cause another cut in state money, parents lobbied successfully to save the program. Why did they go to so much trouble? Well, the parents say that they just couldn't do without the program, because where else would they find so many people who know what it's like to have a handicapped child. I'm Rachel Kranz.

> PARENT: A lot of people, you know, will say they know how you feel that you've got a hearing-impaired kid. Well, they just don't, unless they have had one, because they have been hearing all their life, and everybody they have been in contact with has been hearing all their life. And, suddenly, when you come in contact with somebody who doesn't hear, well, you just don't know what it's like. So, if you went around for a day with your ears plugged in, you'd be lost. It's a great help -- it's really helped us a great deal.
>
> TEACHER: Take it home -- take it home to show mama.

(MUSIC)

BLAIR: We've heard arguments for and against mainstreaming, but, in fact, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act mandates that this be done whenever possible. The primary author of PL 94-142 is Fred Weintraub, Washington lobbyist for the Council for Exceptional Children. Weintraub describes the law to John.

FRED WEINTRAUB

WEINTRAUB: I like to think of the law as really being two laws. One, it is just as you describe it -- a civil rights law for handicapped children -- in that it says that by September 1, 1978, all handicapped children of school age shall receive free appropriate public education. It also says that children ages 3 to 5, the preschool kids, shall also receive that, as long as such provision wouldn't be in conflict with state policies.

MERROW: Is this the same thing for 18 to 21?

WEINTRAUB: Yes -- as of September 1, 1980, there's a delay provision for those kids, but, in a sense, it finally brings an end to the practice that has gone on a long time.

MERROW: What practice is that?

WEINTRAUB: Which is that handicapped children -- our figures tell us that approximately one million handicapped children receive no educational opportunity whatsoever.

MERROW: That's out of roughly eight million handicapped children?

WEINTRAUB: Right -- of the rest of the eight million, almost half of them are not receiving any special programs that they need in order to profit from the education. So, that finally, after numerous court cases that have said these children have a right to an education, and after laws have said they have a right to an education, the federal government has, in a sense, set a national standard.

Now, in addition, the law provides for procedural protection for the kids, so that in the decisions that are made in their lives, and in the kinds of programs that are provided there's protection for their families, so the children aren't inappropriately placed, or sent away to institutions when they don't need to be sent away. So, there is due process protection for the families. There are provisions which prevent discriminatory testing of children -- provisions to protect confidentiality -- if you know a handicapped child, you know that they have folders that are massive and all kinds of people dealing with them. And their records need to be confidential and protected in order to protect parents' and children's rights in that regard.

So, the bill addresses those things, and it's a protection bill for children. On the other hand, there's a full recognition, that in order to serve all of these children, it's going to cost money. And, so, the federal government has said that on the one hand, we want to protect the children and make sure that they get the services. On the other hand, we want to provide financial assistance to state and local governments to help them do it. So, the act provides an escalating formula that, if it is to be funded, would provide potentially in the billions of dollars of federal aid.

MERROW: You say if it is to be funded -- explain that.

WEINTRAUB: Well, I guess the listeners would have to understand the difference between authorization and appropriation. Someone once described an authorization as "I promised my wife a mink coat, but I never appropriate the money." So, too, in federal law. The Congress sets authorizations, which is how much money we think is needed. And, then, it's up to the appropriations committees and the President, etc., to determine how much money. The thing that's exciting to me is that last year the federal government was providing about $50 million for aiding states and local communities. That amount jumped to a hundred million dollars. The Congress and the President passed -- and the President just signed -- for next year $200 million. We're now in the appropriations committees, and the appropriations committees have already recommended well over $300 million, so, at least, so far in terms of meeting the escalating obligations--the financial obligations of the Act--the Congress is right on target. And, again, it's a long way to go until we hit the billions of dollars, but we're at least pleased that there is that direct movement taking place.

MERROW: Will it cost billions of dollars to provide a free and appropriate education for handicapped kids, Fred?

WEINTRAUB: I don't know, John. The figures vary. We have some people who do studies that tell us that it may cost another four billion dollars to serve all of the kids. Most of those studies are based upon some assumptions that I think we feel, perhaps, are not true. And that is, in order to bring the rest of the kids in, it's going to mean simply duplicating what's been done.

And I think you know, that if you have a program in a community and you have all the administrative structures and all the people, and you're serving fifty kids, to serve another fifty doesn't necessarily cost you twice as much as the first fifty cost you.

MERROW: What kind of handicaps are you talking about?

WEINTRAUB: Children who are mentally retarded, physically handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, deaf, blind, and children with specific learning disabilities, who by reason thereof, require special education and related services. Now, that last clause is the most important to me. Does it mean that a child in a wheel chair or a child with one arm is a handicapped child under this Act? No -- only if their handicap requires or results in them having a learning problem that requires some special intervention. We know that many handicapped children can go to school just like any other child, and if, for example, we eliminate the steps so that the kid in a wheel chair can get into school, he may not need any special education.

MERROW: Does the bill speak to that very question, though, of school architecture?

WEINTRAUB: That's right -- the bill says we have to eliminate the architectural barriers and, in fact, provide some financial incentives to do that. And, also, I think an important thing for the listeners to understand is that sometimes handicapped children only need special education for a short period in their life. If you take a blind child -- if he can get an education which teaches him mobility, teaches him how to get around, teaches him Braille, and teaches him the skills he needs to communicate -- what we find with a heavy dose of early education, is that many blind kids are able to go to school by second, third, or fourth grade, just like any other kid, with very minor help. But, if we don't help, the future costs to society are massive, in terms of welfare support, in terms of institutionalization, and in terms of a whole variety of things.

MERROW: That handicapped child, that blind child, might not need special education services during the last six or eight years of school?

WEINTRAUB: Exactly -- and that's what we need people to understand better -- that, if we don't invest in educating these children and people say it's too costly, we pay for it later. Take a retarded kid, for example, and you don't help the child. You don't provide the education skills, and the result is institutionalization. The cost to society may be a couple of hundred thousand dollars to support that individual in an institution, where the cost of providing the education may be thirty or forty thousand dollars over the child's life. And, then, that child becomes a taxpayer and brings returns to society. I know I live out in a community that tends to build two-lane highways now, and years later, has to build another two lanes, and it doubles the cost. But it's easier to only pay for the two lanes now. But, yet, many of the problems of our society come back to haunt us, unless we deal with them up front.

MERROW: Fred, it strikes me, then, that if the federal government is going to provide some money to educate handicapped kids, you are in a sense, then, creating an incentive for a school system to find handicapped children where they may not exist, in order to get the federal money. There must be an upper limit on the number of handicapped kids a school can claim to have.

WEINTRAUB: That's right. The law specifically says that a school district may not count more than 12 percent of its school-age population.

MERROW: What does the bill say, Fred, about mainstreaming -- the notion that handicapped children should be educated insofar as possible with children who are not handicapped?

WEINTRAUB: The bill uses a concept that I like better than the word mainstreaming. It's a concept called "least restrictive alternative," which really says that handicapped children should be placed in regular classrooms with supportive help, unless that's not the appropriate program for the child. And, then, children can be placed in special classes, special schools, or whatever may be necessary. The reason I like that better than the notion of mainstreaming is that mainstreaming is often misinterpreted to mean that we're going to take all handicapped children and, as someone described, "dump" them back into regular classes.

MERROW: Does a state have to participate in PL 94-142?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, there is absolutely no requirement in any federal law that says a state has to accept federal money. There are penalties for failure to participate. That's what I'm saying -- the penalties are the loss of federal money -- not just the federal money under this act, but federal monies under a whole range of acts.

MERROW: Now, let's suppose allegedly there's some rebellion brewing out there in some of the states. Let's say one of those states declines to participate, to try to qualify for money under PL 94-142. What would happen then?

WEINTRAUB: Well, one, if the state declined to participate, it would certainly not receive the monies provided under this act and not receive monies provided under several other acts that are specified in the law. If, however, the state, in addition to not wanting to participate, refuses to educate its handicapped children, it would then be in violation of section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act.

MERROW: That would be a question to be decided by litigation.

WEINTRAUB: Right, and I would imagine that parents of handicapped children and other interested people would take that state to court under that act, or at least go the Office of Civil Rights which administers that program, and probably take the issue to court. And if the court said, yes, that discrimination does exist, just as it does with school desegregation, with women's rights, and a whole range of other things, then, that state or school district could be subject to loss of all of its federal monies. And I think that's reasonable -- the federal government cannot, because, again, we're dealing with constitutional rights, support a place or program that violates peoples' basic human rights.

MERROW: For the past several years, there's been a trend toward equalizing in school finance toward ending what some people see as real discrimination on the basis of what district a kid lives in, whether a kid lives in a rich district or a poor district. One objection to this legislation is that it's a non-equalizing bill, that it gives money to anyone who is eligible, regardless of how much money that school district has to begin with.

WEINTRAUB: I would share that concern, and many of us agonized very much over that. We would hope that the federal government in coming years would take up the whole big issue of school finance. We've reached the point in which the local taxpayer simply can't support any more state governments in trouble. Somehow, federal government, state government, and local government have got to sit down and develop a national plan that's not a national takeover, but a national plan that all can agree to for equalization of education finance.

And when that's accomplished, when we can come up with a formula or a way of doing that, that's politically feasible, and that everybody can agree to, then, I'd be the first to want to amend this act to make it that way. The problem was that those of us interested in the handicapped, very honestly, weren't bright enough to be able to figure out how to come up with a school equalization formula when nobody else in the whole area of education has been able to figure it out either. I guess when they can figure it out, we'll be willing to accept it.

MERROW: Frederick Weintraub, Associate Executive Director of the Council for Exceptional Children, and, also, one of the chief architects of PL 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: There's a lot of controversy surrounding PL 94-142. It has been described in the latest skirmish in the battle for civil rights, but on the other hand, rebellion is brewing at the state level. Next week, we'll hear from politicians and educators in Minnesota who are angry about what they might characterize as "federal meddling."

BLAIR: Meddling, money, and mainstreaming -- those are the major objections to PL 94-142. Most of the federal money will go directly to local school boards, not to state government. And, finally, many states feel the law over-emphasizes the concept of mainstreaming. John spoke with John Callahan of the National Conference of State Legislators while Callahan was waiting to testify before a Congressional committee in Washington.

JOHN CALLAHAN

CALLAHAN: If you have a situation, either at the federal or the state level, where special interest groups write legislation, for example, this really dilutes the political accountability in these bills, because they may write the bill, but they don't have to pay the taxes for the bill, they don't have to be accountable for the government, they don't have to settle the court suits, and what have you. And I think the situation that concerns state legislators, for example, is that we have a lot of mandates in this bill, some of which may be desirable, some of which may be premature, and some of which may not work at all. And until we begin to separate those things out and move in a deliberate fashion in this handicap issue, we're just going to have chaos at the state and local level.

MERROW: Let me be the devil's advocate here and speak for the other side. The argument would be that this bill was four years in the making -- where were you folks during the four years? If you object to a special interest group writing the bill, where were you in the four years in which testimony was being heard and in which people were being asked to testify and being asked for their opinions?

CALLAHAN: Well, first of all, states have to serve more than just the handicapped child, as you know. They pour a lot of money into basic education which benefits the handicapped child and they have to deal with voc ed, etc., so you can't expect the states to single-mindedly concentrate on special ed the way the interest groups do.

The other thing the states were doing, of course, was funding special education at their own level. And, as you no doubt realize, the feds still put up very little money, in the aggregate, for special ed. Probably 95 percent of all special ed money comes from the state and local government. So, you might say what we were doing is we were picking up the bills and developing the programs while we were having this federal legislation written on for 94-142. I guess I'd like to reiterate -- I think 94-142 is, in its basic form, or its basic intent, probably not a bad bill; but there are certainly undesirable features in the bill which have to be modified or curtailed, so that we don't have, for example, a backlash against the handicapped.

MERROW: What are the undesirable features?

CALLAHAN: Two or three things -- one is this feature in the bill where the money is passed through to local agencies, irrespective of whether they're rich or poor, or what have you. Secondly, the mandate for free and appropriate public education at this point in the bill is a very ill-defined one. I think, as you're well aware, the whole issue centers on mainstreaming. In any case, the intent is clear — the sponsors of the bill are concerned about mainstreaming, and I think the answers are not yet out on mainstreaming. We don't know how costly it is, we don't know how effective it is educationally, and I think we've got to move very deliberately on that issue, both on the educational and fiscal side. Or otherwise, there will be a backlash against special education at the state and local level.

MERROW: Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think the bill calls for the least restrictive alternative and does not mandate mainstreaming.

CALLAHAN: I'd say it's a code word for mainstreaming. Least restrictive environment means the goal is for mainstreaming. Now, we did some work on this in Maryland at the state level, and the effort there is, of course, to really get to mainstreaming, but get to it in a very gradual way.

MERROW: You mentioned that your objection was that this bill was written by special interest groups. Isn't that, in fact, the way of the world? I mean, that's the way Congress works. Strip mining legislation was written by the special interest groups. Pollution legislation is written by the special interest groups. Why shouldn't the special education bill?

CALLAHAN: But when a special interest group so dominates the particular political process that it writes the bill to meet its particular agenda, and not the agenda of the public at large -- the parent of the normal child, the normal child, the taxpayer, etc.— you're creating a disservice. You're creating a balance in the political process which will be corrected at a later date, and this is why I mention this backlash. I think, unless special education begins to compete in a very responsible way with the disadvantaged and the normal child and tries to fit its program in with the overall education, they're saying they're above the fray, and they're more important than anyone else. That just doesn't wash.

MERROW: John Callahan of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

(MUSIC -- "Human Feeling")

MERROW: The political debate goes on and on, and we mustn't lose sight of the fact that we're talking about people. Fifteen-year-old Carla Jackson has a spinal condition which severely limits her mobility. She talked about it with Reporter Tim Cox.

CARLA JACKSON

JACKSON: I'd rather be called handicapped than crippled, because handicap would be, you know, kind of a nicer name than cripple. I'm not ashamed of it, you know. It's just like being normal, and not an inner feeling that I have of being handicapped. Well, at one time I couldn't deal with it, but my mother helped me to get out of it. So, it doesn't bother me anymore. I used to cry over it. People, you know, would look at me and ask me questions. So, now, I deal with what they want to know and just let it be.

COX: What are the things you're most concerned about in your life?

JACKSON: My education and what I'm going to do for the future, and all.

COX: What kind of plans do you have about what you're going to be when you grow up?

JACKSON: I haven't really decided, because, at first, I had my heart set on being a lawyer, but I made some research of it, and it's going to take me about two or three years to go into training for that. So, I have second thoughts on doing that.

COX: What grade are you in now?

JACKSON: Eighth, passing to the ninth. Most of my friends are handicapped, and, like, we have discussions on how people feel. You know, for instance, if we were in a new neighborhood and had just moved and, you know, like the neighbors would look at us, and, you know, gossip about us. That's what I don't like, because, you know, I feel that, if you have something to say or ask me, just go on and ask me - just don't gossip to anybody else about me, because, you know, they don't know until they ask.

COX: Do you feel like society is becoming more sensitive to the needs of handicapped people?

JACKSON: Yes, I do, because they're just getting to realize that we are living, too, you know. It was about a month ago when they started having these special seats on the bus for handicapped children.

(MUSIC -- "Human Feeling")

MERROW: Carla Jackson, talking to Reporter Tim Cox. Educators and politicians are trying to help the handicapped, but often, the handicapped are very good at helping themselves, and one another.

> **MAN:** My basic feeling is that, if you can take ten children which are trainable mentally retarded, and out of that, you can pull one up, I think whatever the program is worth, that it's worth that one.

MERROW: Bob Douglas, a man handicapped by multiple sclerosis, teaches handicapped children to ride horses. The riding lessons help build better coordination, and Douglas tells Tom Steward that riding builds something else even more important.

BOB DOUGLAS

DOUGLAS: Basically, the self-confidence which most of these kids lack can be found with that thousand pound animal. The problem that you run into is that educators are geared in one sense on a narrow track. So, to involve a new program, and especially using horses, is sort of off the beaten track.

TEACHER: My name is Delores Washington Adair, and I'm a teacher at the Mamie Dee Lee School for Retarded Children in Northeast Washington, D.C. At my school, we have children from ages 6 to 21, and we thought the younger children would be more interested in the program. So, we chose 13 children, children who were very withdrawn, and we thought that because they had dogs and a liking for different animals, that the horse-riding program would benefit them.

STEWARD: Did you have any trouble getting any of them up on a horse the first time?

ADAIR: Oh, yes, we did. We had three children with tears -- and now one of them is so happy to come on Tuesday, that he's the first one to say, "Is today Tuesday, the horse-riding day?"

STEWARD: Which horse are you going to ride?

CHILD: Parfait.

STEWARD: Have you ridden him before?

CHILD: No.

CHILD: Jigsaw.

STEWARD: Are you a good rider?

CHILD: Yep.

STEWARD: How do you know?

CHILD: I know it. Guess who's coming?

STEWARD: Who?

CHILD: My brother.

STEWARD: Is he going to see you ride today?

CHILD: I hope so. I told my father, my mother, my sister, Susie Debbie, and, then, that's all.

STEWARD: Most of the children riding the morning I visited the horse center were already old hands, including Lemuel Jackson. Frances Jackson watched her retarded son from near the stable, alongside two other sons.

Does he talk about it, about riding?

JACKSON: Yes, he's very pleased with it. He wanted us to come out and see him ride.

STEWARD: And he's getting on the horse, isn't he?

JACKSON: Right.

STEWARD: Is he going to stay there?

JACKSON: I hope so.

STEWARD: What do you think he gets out of this?

JACKSON: His confidence -- he has a fear of height. They had a little trouble with him at first, but since he's been riding, he doesn't have as much fear.

INSTRUCTOR: Keep your horse at least one horse length away from the other horse. Okay, now, when you get ready to stop him, you have to pull the reins back to your stomach.

DOUGLAS: We've had kids -- in fact, a child who was in here earlier, who is autistic. His first sentence was spoken at the horse center, not to me, or not to one of the other instructors, but it was spoken to a horse. And that's the name of the game.

MERROW: Bob Douglas, Instructor for the Handicapped at the Rock Creek Horse Center in Washington, D.C., speaking with Reporter Tom Steward.

(MUSIC)

BLAIR: Many issues surround education for the handicapped -- civil rights, state rights versus federal interference, and money - or the lack of it. Next week we'll continue our report by focusing on one state -- some children, parents, and angry officials in Minnesota.

YETA GALIBER: It's really not easy to fight this system because I feel that this system programs people to fail.

WOMAN: It's really amazing how much affection you can have between the non-handicapped and the handicapped youngster.

JOHN BOBO: You see it in the face. You know that they feel uncomfortable.

LAURA RAUSHER: Normal kids don't learn to accept the children, and the kids who are handicapped don't learn to live with the so-called "normal" children.

JOHN BOBO: They shove us aside in the corner, and they don't have to be reminded that these things exist.

JOHN CALLAHAN: They're saying they're above the fray, and they're more important than anyone else. That just doesn't wash.

JOHN BOBO: They say, "Hey, oh, I'm sorry. You're an amputee." They don't say, "Hey, what are your views on this or that?"

(MUSIC)

BLAIR: Material for this program came from David Freudberg of station WGBH in Boston; Gary Shivers of station WUNC in Chapel Hill, North Carolina; and Rachel Kranz of KSJN in St. Paul, Minnesota.

MERROW: If you'd like a transcript of this two-part series, send 50 cents to National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. Ask for Programs No. 36 and 37. The two cassettes are available for $8.00. Before we give that address again, we'd like to ask you to help us improve OPTIONS IN EDUCATION. We'll send a questionnaire to everyone who writes us, so that we can hear your views about education and this series. Write us. Our address again: National Public Radio - Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

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BLAIR: This program is produced by Jo Ellyn Rackleff. The Executive Producer is John Merrow. For OPTIONS IN EDUCATION, I'm Wendy Blair.

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