

**This is a part of the Indiana Disability History Project series:  
From Segregation to Integration, Oral History about the Education of  
Children with Disabilities.\***

- **Lesson 1: Children with Disabilities in the Age of Institutions**
- **Lesson 2: Educating Children with Disabilities without Public Schools**
- **Lesson 3: Students with Disabilities in Segregated Public Education (1960s and 1970s)**
- **Lesson 4: The Integration of Students with Disabilities into Classrooms (1970s– 2000s)**

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# Students with Disabilities in Segregated Public Education (1960s and 1970s)



INDIANA INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY AND COMMUNITY  
**CENTER FOR HEALTH EQUITY**



**GOVERNOR'S  
COUNCIL FOR  
PEOPLE WITH  
DISABILITIES**



Indiana  
**DISABILITY  
HISTORY**  
Project

## Opening: The Wheelchair Warrior



I have cerebral palsy and when I came out here, we came out here for medical reasons

▶ ▶| 🔊 0:08 / 0:38



<https://bit.ly/2Q1BG00>

# The Wheelchair Warrior (Andrea Pepler-Murray)

## Guiding Question

Andrea has a condition that affects her muscles and she wore braces on her legs as a child. Growing up in the 1960s, she was put in a special education class.

- **What was Andrea's experience in her special education classroom?**

## Things to Know

- Children with disabilities who went to public school in the 1960s were usually placed in a separate class with other children who had disabilities of all kinds. They experienced segregated education.
- The word "retarded" is no longer used to describe people who have learning challenges. Instead we say someone "has an intellectual disability."
- Cerebral palsy is a permanent condition that appears early in life and may make it hard for a person to control their movement and keep their balance.



## The Wheelchair Warrior (Andrea Pepler-Murray)



I was able to take an art class. They put me in an art class in regular public school.

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<https://bit.ly/3hbHuky>

# I've Come a Long Way (Beverly Rackley)

## Guiding Question

Beverly attended a school that was only for children with disabilities. She and her parents wanted her to go to a school where there were also students without disabilities. It was very difficult to find a school that would accept her.

- **What was Beverly's experience in her special education classrooms?**

## Things to Know

- Until the middle of the 1970s, there was no United States law that said children with disabilities must be allowed to go to public school.
- Before Beverly was old enough to go to school, doctors told Beverly's mother that she should put her daughter in an institution, away from her home and family.
- If they did go to school, it was not uncommon for children with disabilities to ride a bus to a school far from their own community.



# I've Come a Long Way (Beverly Rackley)

My doctor wouldn't let me go to school until I was seven years old because I was so weak

0:02 / 3:53



<https://bit.ly/3iRmb8q>

## Guiding Question

Darcus wanted the opportunity to learn and work.

- **What are some things that her teachers told her she could not do?**

## Things to Know

- When they finished high school, students with intellectual disabilities were often sent to sheltered workshops. This made it unlikely they would find a job or continue their education.
- As an adult, Darcus Nims founded an advocacy organization of people with intellectual disabilities, Self-Advocates of Indiana.
- Self-advocates have worked to get people to stop using hurtful words about them, such as the "R" word.





## Nobody Asked Me (Darcus Nims)



I wanted to learn how to count and stuff,  
add and stuff like my sisters did then when

<https://bit.ly/2QbXiI5>

## Discussion/Debrief

The Wheelchair Warrior with **Andrea Pepler-Murray**:

- **What happened that caused Andrea to get a better education?**
- **Andrea's abilities were underestimated because of her appearance. Have you ever seen that happen to someone?**

I've Come a Long Way with **Beverly Rackley**:

- **How could Beverly's schools have been prepared for children with medical disabilities such as the kidney condition Beverly had?**

Nobody Asked Me with **Darcus Nims**:

- **What kinds of barriers did Darcus face in her educational experience?**



# Glossary

- **Advocacy:** acting to increase the rights of people with disabilities and improve their lives
- **Barrier:** a problem faced by students with disabilities that keeps them from getting a good education, such as a building with no access for wheelchairs, negative attitudes of students or teachers, or lack of supports needed to succeed in the classroom
- **Cerebral palsy:** a permanent condition that appears early in life and may make it hard for a person to control their movement and keep their balance
- **Institution:** a large facility where people with disabilities live and receive care, often in a confined setting and without their consent
- **Intellectual disability:** a lifelong condition related to thinking that can cause a person to develop and learn more slowly or differently
- **Self-Advocates of Indiana:** a statewide organization of people with intellectual disabilities speaking up for the right to be fully included in their communities
- **Segregation:** the practice of keeping people of different races, religions, abilities, etc., separate from others
- **Sheltered workshop:** a segregated facility employing adults with disabilities at very low wages

