



Pupils Exceptional Teaching for Structured

Vera Bernard-Opitz

In 1989 children Vera Bernard-Opitz initiated the first Singaporean center for children with autism and coordinated this center for ten years. In the “STEP” Program (Structured Teaching for Exceptional Pupils) up to 100 children received behavioral training, combining Discrete Trial Teaching with the Natural Language Paradigm and Experience Based Learning. For higher-level children problem-solving strategies, “think aloud” programs and self-control methods were additional teaching strategies. Parents were involved in assessments and interventions and participated frequently in daily teaching sessions, regular parent training and parent evenings.



The first STEP children, their teachers and a parent



Distraction-free cubicles as well as group and play areas, a pool, computer-, music- and soft-play room with sensory effects (Snozelen room) were available. A STEP class prepared the children for integration and ongoing regular schooling. Close links to the Department of Social Work & Psychology of the National University of Singapore were established through the **Behavior Intervention Center for Children** headed by Vera Bernard-Opitz. Students were involved in training sessions at the site as well as in the home-environment.