

explain what we wanted in ways the people in the system would understand and respect. We also learned that, rather than trying to do it all alone, parents are much better off combining our efforts with a group of people with similar ideas. Our parents' group was helped by staff at the national office of what are now the Canadian Association for Community Living and The Roeher Institute. They explained concepts, provided information and helped us organize our ideas.

Rosi, my wife, and I realized that five simple principles would lead to the kind of education system we wanted:

1. adapt the system and the curriculum to the pupil;
2. educate all pupils together in the same class;
3. make the school system accountable to the pupils;
4. recognize that the real expert on a pupil is usually his or her parent(s);
5. for the pupil with a mental handicap, make the transition to the real world of work gradual, beginning years before the pupil leaves school.

FROM SYSTEM-CENTRED TO PUPIL-CENTRED EDUCATION

Rosi and I were disappointed to find that these simple principles were not generally accepted in the education system, and even when they were accepted in theory they were not put wholeheartedly into practice. In fact, we found our principles to be threatening to some people in the education system. This was because most school systems are "system-centred"; the needs and convenience of teachers and administrators generally take precedence over the needs of pupils. The reasons are sometimes beyond the control of the teachers and administrators, such as a lack of money and resources resulting in oversized classes. Teachers and administrators will say that their systems are pupil-centred, but if parents look closely they will see that they are mainly