

Chapter 2

Inclusive Education as Social Policy

by Diane Richler

The pressure to provide education for children with mental handicaps began a half century ago when concerned parents banded together because they wanted their children with mental handicaps to remain at home, to be educated in the community and to be kept out of institutions. From the creation of special educational classes for a few children grew a vision of inclusion for all individuals who have been called mentally handicapped, in all aspects of community life. This vision included full participation in regular classes in neighbourhood schools. That effort has converged, both in its goals and in its vision of the rights of all people, with two broader societal trends. One is the movement towards the equality of all citizens, which is creating awareness of a new Canadian society — one that embraces diversity in all aspects of life. The other is the trend for educational reform which is causing both the public-at-large and educators to reformulate the educational system.