

ADVOCACY

Although many of the segregated schools that existed across Canada in the early 1980s had been started by local chapters of the Canadian Association for Community Living (the national advocacy association for persons with mental handicaps) segregated schools and segregated classes no longer satisfy the aspirations of many families. Parent advocacy for integrated schooling has increased substantially in the years following adoption of the *Charter*, particularly by parents of children labelled mentally handicapped. CACL has advocated and promoted the right of every student to attend a regular class in a neighbourhood school. This policy has been formally supported by all of CACL's provincial and territorial affiliates (CACL, 1987).

While integration was not a matter of priority to most local or provincial associations in the early 1980s, at the national level, The Roeher Institute, sponsored by CACL, began to support parents as they struggled to articulate their concerns about their children's education. At the community, provincial and national levels, parents found solidarity and strength by banding together. As parent demand grew, The Institute and CACL identified and promoted positive examples of integration and facilitated training for educators to work in integrated settings. These courses led to the establishment of university affiliated programs that are currently providing teachers and school administrators with the attitudes and skills they need to meet increasing parent demand for integration. Since the early 1980s, The Institute and CACL have actively promoted integration through conferences and seminars, publications, video productions, and financial and consulting support for selected litigation.

CACL actively supported the development of an autonomous parent organization, the Integration Action Group, which now has a substantial membership in southern Ontario and a number of chapters in other provinces. By the mid-