

*that organizationally we've got to have them together. If there's a sense of education being integral and being for everybody, then those services have to be in the one department. (Porter, 1990)*

It is now recognized that learning problems are contextual. They exist within the context of the classroom where the curriculum design and the instructional strategies employed by the teacher influence the degree to which exceptional students can be effectively served. A commitment to integrated or inclusive education means teachers, schools, and the community commit themselves to resolving problems that arise in a way that respects the integrity of the school as an organization (Porter, 1986).

The traditional approach to special education encouraged the classroom teacher to refer any difficulties to experts who would diagnose, prescribe, and invariably provide alternate instruction for the student (Little, 1985). The message inherent was that regular class teachers were not qualified or competent to provide education to a student with a significant learning problem.

The past decade has seen an increasing number of school districts make a commitment to full integration for all students (Forest, 1984a; Forest, 1987). These range from several Catholic school districts in southern Ontario (Little, 1985), to French-language districts in Quebec (Frigon, 1988), to several public districts in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia (Porter, 1990). Many other school districts across Canada are moving toward more integrated approaches to special education.

One of the compelling features of the school districts that have moved toward an integrated approach on a systemic basis is what Sage (1989) has described as the relatively "primitive" level of development of their special services when they began to incorporate integration policy and practice. The term "primitive" is not used in a negative sense, but rather to