

## THE IEP

Parent-teacher-administrator cooperation is important in the formulation of the curriculum or program for the pupil with a mental handicap. If a pupil with a mental handicap is forced to follow the same curriculum as pupils without a mental handicap he or she will fail. For the time being, the best vehicle for cooperation is the Individual Education Plan (IEP).

IEPs were originally introduced in the United States because teachers lacked experience in teaching exceptional pupils and it was deemed necessary to impose a mechanism to ensure parent involvement and teacher accountability. In that context, IEPs were a productive mechanism, and they can still be helpful. They provide a means of measuring what an exceptional pupil learns, making it more difficult to blame the pupil if things do not go well.

An IEP should be drawn up carefully and cooperatively but without becoming a major production. The regular classroom teacher may sometimes want to turn to a resource person for advice on the program and its implementation, and the parent may want to turn to another experienced parent. The pupil can often be involved. In exceptional cases, a psychologist or even a doctor may be involved.

The IEP is reviewed and revised cooperatively at regular intervals and should be treated as a guide, not a straitjacket. It also does not guarantee that all will suddenly be well; in fact, educational crimes have been committed against pupils in the name of IEPs.

An IEP is best viewed as a confidence-building mechanism for the parent, the teacher and the administrator, and the pupil. The parent and teacher must be honest and realistic. Parents can tell the teacher how the pupil learns best, what he is interested in, how he reacts in particular situations, how to avoid problems, and so on. If things go wrong or there is dissatisfaction, all concerned must avoid any temptation to blame someone, and instead concentrate on finding solutions