

# Chapter 5

## Principles of Change: A Parent's Perspective on the Education System

*by David Jory*

In his last year at school, Grade 12, our son, John, who has Down Syndrome, was fully integrated for the first time into regular classrooms. He spent only two hours a week outside the regular class when he practised reading and speaking with a teacher. He also attended job sites under a work-study program. Parents should note that it is important to have a definition of integration which permits and encourages things like work-study programs; some definitions I have heard would prevent them if taken literally. In fact, John had a better time in Grade 12 than did his older sister or younger brother. This was not an accident; it came about in part because of a great deal of learning on our — his parents' — part and on the part of some teachers and administrators, to whom we pay tribute. What we learned made us seriously question much of the ideology and many of the theories upon which the special education system is based.

When we began to think about the kind of education our child with Down Syndrome needed, it was 1978, when the jargon we now use was unknown in New Brunswick. As we felt that what was going on wasn't appropriate, we had to learn to