

learned that Mandy's presence had set a precedent; the following year the school had three children with special needs enrolled in regular classes.

NEW CITY, NEW CHALLENGES

When I arrived in New Brunswick, I was consumed with mixed emotions. I dreaded my new neighbours' reactions to our family; I feared that I would have to explain and fight all over again. It was difficult to have left everything that made me feel safe and secure: my family and my friends. I felt a tremendous burden on my shoulders. Everything had been going so great; and now I suddenly felt desperately alone!

But it was upon moving to New Brunswick that I learned there was a special word for my belief that Mandy should and could participate in regular classes with other neighbourhood children. The word is integration.

That September both kids started school — Mandy in regular kindergarten and Justin in Grade 5 at the same school. While things were off to a smooth start, I soon heard that there was to be a review of school policy regarding integration. A concerned teacher at the school convinced me that it was important that parents like myself become involved in the issue.

I began making phone calls to other parents who were considering integrating their children. I explained to them that I had recently moved from Ontario and, like them, had a child with special needs. I asked them if they knew that changes to school policy regarding integration of children with exceptional needs were under review. We talked about how important it was that we as parents contribute and voice our opinions and concerns. We agreed that we needed to meet each other and discuss the impending changes which would effect our lives.

Every person I called — which added up to ten families — came to a meeting at my home. We sat with cups of coffee and