

### ***Assessments of Exceptional Students***

Our five simple principles also call into question the assessment procedures on which special education feeds. The people doing assessments in the school system often function as gatekeepers; in most schools, a child assessed as having a mental handicap is turned away at the front door of the education system.

Our son has proved wrong every such assessment he has ever had. But why did he have to? The gatekeepers turned him away from the regular school system and it took him twelve years to fully fight his way back in.

While in-class assessments in the regular classroom setting can be useful in determining appropriate work levels, assessments which claim to predict in detail what a pupil will or will not be able to learn are dangerous. They, and the rejection which follows them, have a devastating effect on the self-esteem of the pupil. Segregators do not seem to understand or care.

Assessments associated with "placements" are almost invariably designed to find out what the child cannot do, rather than what he can do. Assessments are almost invariably used against the child. Since the only acceptable placement is in the regular classroom, predictive assessments have no function and no ethical, educational or legal justification.

Some people who argue for assessments say that exceptional pupils must be divided up into sub-categories such as mentally retarded, physically disabled or with behaviour problems. This is equivalent to setting up a category of immigrant pupils and sub-dividing them into Christian black-skinned, Christian brown-skinned, Moslem brown-skinned, and so on. School systems should be sensitive to the education needs of pupils as *individuals*, not as *groups*. Our son is more like his brother and sister than like other children with Down Syndrome. There are no special teaching techniques that apply only to pupils with Down Syndrome.