Today, efforts to bring about basic structural changes in the fundamental operating mode of special education, to improve educational practice, and to operationalize a closer merger between general and special education are encompassed under a concept and practice variously termed *inclusion, inclusive schooling, inclusive education,* and, occasionally, *progressive inclusion.*

Development of the Inclusionary Movement

Over the past four decades, the gradual process of more and more children with exceptionalities receiving their special education while enrolled in general education classes and schools has been described in a number of ways. In the 1950s and 1960s, *integration* was the common term. It remains popular today.

Mainstreaming, often used as a synonym for integration, emerged in the 1970s. The basic goal of mainstreaming was the provision of free, appropriate education in the most suitable setting for all youngsters with exceptionalities. Philosophically, mainstreaming focused on the integration of children with exceptionalities with their non-disabled peers within the context of the neighbourhood school. As a process, mainstreaming provided services along a continuum—a range of educational options and support services such as the resource rooms described in Chapter 1. This range of available services allowed pupils to be integrated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in the manner best suited to their individual needs, supported by individual programming in the form of an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The next giant step was inclusion, or inclusive schooling, which connotes subtle but real differences from integration or mainstreaming. Advocates of inclusive schooling argue that the social-cultural realities of mainstreaming and integration are that one group is viewed as the "mainstream" and one group is not; hence, one group must "push in" to the activities and settings occupied by the other (Salisbury, 1991). In other words, integration and mainstreaming sought to change individuals to fit the existing system; inclusion seeks to change the system so that exclusion and marginalization are avoided.

Under the principles of inclusion, children do not push into the mainstream because the underlying supposition in inclusive programs is that all children will be based in the classrooms they would attend if they did not have a disability. Promoters insist that inclusive education is the most enlightened system since it alters classroom and school structures to allow all children to gain an education there.

Defining Inclusive Schooling

In the current climate, it is probably more apt to talk about inclusions rather than a single inclusion. The area is fluid and changing rapidly; there are many swings and surges in philosophy, inclusive schooling defies easy interpretation, definitions abound, and implementation sees a variety of models and programs. There is little debate about the "why" of inclusive schooling; many about the "how." People argue about who should be targeted for inclusion, the nature of the general educational provision, and the manner in which supports are provided.

To reconcile different interpretations, we define inclusion in this text broadly. We see inclusive education as

a system of equity for students with exceptionalities that expresses a commitment to educate each child to the maximum extent through placement, instruction, and support in the most heterogeneous and appropriate educational environment.

Each phrase in this conception of inclusive schooling is important:

- *Equity.* Equal opportunity implies equal educational rights for all children and youth. As Smith (1994) notes, "Young people with disabilities have an equal right to be in school and to have something meaningful happen once they are inside" (p. 7).
- *Heterogeneous.* Students of varied abilities and strengths will be in all classrooms. In such heterogeneous settings, the learning/teaching bond is forged in normalized ways instead of in segregated settings where a disability classification is the common denominator.
- *Placement.* The general classroom is the least restrictive environment. But each child should be treated individually, and a continuum of services is necessary to accommodate the diverse needs of students with exceptionalities. Location is not the key; the provision of supports and effective services and instruction is.

  The ultimate goal is integration in the general classroom with normally developing peers, but how much time in general classrooms is enough to be called inclusion? Usually, a minimum of 50 percent of the day is necessary, but each classroom is different (see Peters Goessling, 2000).
- *Supported.* The settings in which students are placed are strengthened and supported by an infusion of specially trained personnel and other appropriate supportive practices according to the individual needs of the child. Resources and supports include access to specialists, collaborative planning and decision making, appropriate environments and equipment, individual planning, and the availability of paraeducators.

Examining Inclusive Schooling

There is not an area in special education more difficult than inclusion. At the root of the difficulties is the fact that inclusion is both a philosophy and a practice. While the philosophy is well accepted, the major difficulties come with attempting to translate the principles into efficient school-based service delivery models. As Luport (1988) observes, "Although many Canadians agree with this goal in principle, few agree about how to achieve it" (p. 256).

Figure 2-1 lays out the major philosophical strands of the inclusive movement and shows the processes needed for successful implementation. It also shows how both merge and

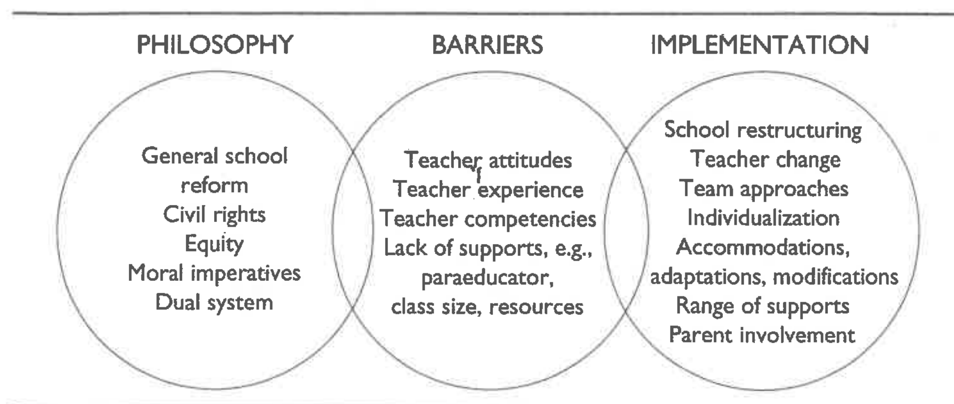


Figure 2-1
Principles of inclusion

collide with barriers in existing school systems. The major points are described below and further elucidated in the Debate box on page 45.

Philosophy of Inclusion

The concept that school systems should provide for students with a wide range of needs can be supported from a relatively coherent set of basic assumptions. Essentially, these intertwined assumptions are:

- *General school reform.* As mentioned earlier, reforms in special education echo the thrust toward inclusion in general education.
- *Civil rights.* Special education is intimately connected to common views of social justice. The provision of less restrictive, more natural integrated environments for students with disabilities is an outgrowth of a social philosophy about individual civil rights that is so critical in the United States. Proponents argue that special classes are discriminatory and unequal and in violation of the democratic ethos that allows equal access to education for all students. That is, removal from the mainstream of education is inherently restrictive and limiting, and the right to be educated with one's peers is a civil right (see Walmsley & Allington, 1995).
- *Equity.* Equity was discussed in our definition of inclusive schooling. It means that if all students are to gain the skills they need to meet the challenges of life then all must be assured the same opportunity to succeed in school regardless of differences in learning, behaviour, or other attributes.
- *Elimination of the dual system.* Inclusion as a merger of regular and special education was mentioned in the mid-1980s (e.g., Will, 1986). In 1987, writers (Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987) called for "the joining of demonstrably effective practices from special, compensatory, and general education to establish a general educational system that is more inclusive, and better serves all students, particularly those who require greater-than-usual educational support" (p. 394).
- *School restructuring.* Inclusive schooling is complex, involving not only students with special needs but also teachers, evaluation, and attitudes; indeed, it means restructuring of an entire school.

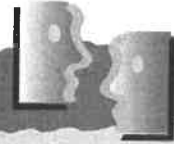
Operationalizing the Inclusive Philosophy

Inclusion is a radically different way of conceptualizing children and represents a fundamental change in who does what, to whom it is done, where it is done, and how resources support what is done. But many barriers continue to exist, and concerns over practical implications on a wide scale have resulted in much divisiveness among parents and educators over the merits of the inclusionary ideal (Palmer, Borthwick-Duffy, & Widaman, 1998).

Barriers to Successful Practice

Many contemporary educators hold that individuals with disabilities should be served whenever possible in general education classrooms in inclusive neighbourhood schools and community settings. But when implementation is broached, a consensus has not been reached, and there are often contradictions between espoused policy and actual practice. Some major barriers are outlined below.

A Matter of Debate



Inclusive Schooling

The inclusion of students who are exceptional within general education settings has been the dominant discourse among special educators for the past decade. No issue has both riven and riveted the profession of special education as has this issue. Certainly, no one wants special education to return to its pre-1980s state, yet a consensus cannot be reached about the most effective way to operationalize the philosophy. The literature is replete with arguments, some of them outlined below. These should not be considered as black and white, but rather as advocacy and cautions.

Arguments for inclusion	Cautions about inclusions
Inclusion is simply the best way to educate all students with disabilities; all those with identified exceptionalities should be educated in the classrooms they would attend if not disabled.	Research does not support the contention that all students can be merged and taught successfully in general classes, and many disagree that regular educators can assume responsibility for special programming for all students with disabilities (e.g., Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995 a, b).
The general classroom is appropriate for every child, regardless of degree and type of disability. We no longer need an array or continuum of placement options, as inclusion is a viable contrast to a continuum.	We do not need a retreat from the principles that support a continuum, but a thoughtful deployment of the ideas (Marston, 1996). Rather than following the traditional tendency in special education to focus on restructuring the instructional setting, we need to emphasize interventions applicable to varied settings.
Educational equity demands equal educational treatment and equal opportunity to learn with one's peers.	Equity does not mean the same treatment for all; it means equitable treatment despite individual differences and treatment that takes into consideration such differences. To place all students in general education is to deny students' unique characteristics as well as the right to an individual program.
All children can be taught successfully in regular classrooms. The means that have always produced effective instruction and management work well in integrated settings (Weber, 1994).	Enthusiasts have advocated for radical changes in teacher responsibility without showing that regular educators can actually support these changes (Minke, Bear, Deiner, & Griffin, 1996). Gerber (1988) theorized that given a class in which students' learning needs vary and instructional resources are limited, teachers cannot optimally match their instruction to

Arguments for inclusion	Cautions about inclusions
	meet the unique characteristics of all students. Inclusion requires extensive retraining of both regular and special education teachers in teaching, teacher problem solving, and curricula frameworks. But training all teachers to be able to meet the needs of all students with disabilities is simply impossible from a practical standpoint (Palmer, Fuller, Arora, & Nelson, 2001).
General classroom teachers can teach all children, and minor adjustments need to be made to accommodate special learners. The same sort of generic teaching skills, attitudes, and beliefs will be effective regardless of students' characteristics.	General classrooms are not organized in ways that sustain direct attention to a few students. The planning frame of most teachers is the whole class; they teach to single large groups and incorporate little or no differentiation based on student need (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1995 b). Many students with disabilities do not respond to traditional teaching techniques used in general education, such as recitation, lecturing, rote learning, and so on (Boyle & Yeager, 1997).
Learning, on-task behaviour, communication, and social interactions improve in integrated settings.	Despite the increasing frequency of inclusive placements, positive outcomes for students with disabilities have not been consistently associated with inclusive reforms. Outcomes appear to be most problematic for students with mild disabilities (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999).
Inclusive schools provide a real-life environment for learning where all students are provided meaningful curriculum.	If it is the function of schools to help individuals meet their needs and prepare them to lead productive and rewarding lives, then skills should be taught in the environment where they are most likely to occur—the community, home, or work setting. Students who are severely or profoundly disabled are best served in settings in which their cognitive development and social limitations can be addressed more intensively.
Many teachers express support for the principles of inclusion.	Many teachers prefer the current system and are satisfied with the pull-out model. The majority of teachers in one study (Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991) perceived special education classrooms as more effective and more preferred than general classrooms for students with mild disabilities.

Arguments for inclusion	**Cautions about inclusions**
Inclusion brings greater collaboration between special and general teachers.	Often, general and special education personnel are not motivated or prepared to participate in collaborative planning and instruction (Gersten, 1990). Many teachers feel that the hardest part of inclusion is planning with another person (Roach, 1995).
Students with disabilities are offered increased opportunities for interactions with non-disabled peers and are provided age-appropriate models for behaviour and communication.	Evidence shows that children who are disabled are often perceived in negative and prejudiced ways by their non-disabled peers; integration may even increase prejudice, stereotyping, and rejection.
Students with and without disabilities have opportunities for interactions. Children's positive attitudes are developed through direct and indirect experiences (Favazza & Odom, 1997). Some studies show that normally developing children in inclusive classrooms are more accepting of human differences, show less discomfort interacting with people who have disabilities, and have practical ideas regarding ways to include children with special needs in activities (Diamond & Carpenter, 2000).	Inclusion assumes that students with disabilities will be better accepted, have more friends, and feel better about themselves. There is little empirical data for this assumption. Mere physical presence in a class does not seem to enhance social competence (Leffert & Siperstein, 1996). For example, the social outcomes of placing students with mental retardation in regular classrooms have been disappointing. Often these children occupy a marginal position in the social network of the class (see Siperstein & Leffert, 1997).
Students with exceptionalities who more fully participate in general education programs will develop more positive perceptions of themselves. They will not suffer the social stigma of special classes or resource rooms, which can affect their behaviour, self-concept, and learning.	The research evidence on stigma is inconclusive. It is suggested that receiving pull-out services has a positive effect, if any, on self-esteem (see Hallahan, Kauffman, & Lloyd, 1999). Pulling students aside for special instruction in the general class can be more stigmatizing than pull-out models. A study of elementary children showed that 44 percent did not like services in the general classroom (Whinnery, King, Evans, & Gable, 1995).
Students who are exceptional are provided opportunities for normal lifestyles, friendships, and peer interactions.	Social interaction is undeniably important to children with disabilities, but it is not the only variable related to success. We cannot play down the importance of academic and functional skills in favour of vague notions of friendship (see Sasso, 2001).

- *Teacher attitudes.* Much recent work on school change emphasizes the key role of the individual teacher. It stresses that teachers' beliefs are powerful and enduring and act as filters on teachers' construction of philosophy and beliefs.

  Many teachers support the philosophy of inclusion. A national study of 1492 Canadian teachers found that more than two-thirds of teachers believe that inclusion is academically beneficial to children with special needs and their peers in regular classrooms, and 90 percent of teachers cite social benefits (Galt, 1997; "Resistance...," 1997). Nevertheless, support is tempered: teachers also articulate the weaknesses in the shifting propositions, identify critical problems in implementation, and show a persistent uneasiness about the practice. One survey of teachers (D'Alonzo, Giordano, & Vanleuven, 1997) found skepticism and mixed opinion about the potential benefits and an overwhelming expectation that problems would be inherent in a unified system of education.

- *Lack of skills.* Perhaps the most commonly cited source of teacher resistance is a lack of skills necessary to teach students with disabilities (Minke, Bear, Deiner, & Griffin, 1996). Lacking the required skills, teachers are often unwilling to make the pilgrimage toward meeting the needs of special learners.

  Special educators may also lack skills. In a recent survey by the Governmental Relations Committee of the Canadian Council for Exceptional Children, only 3 of the reporting 10 provinces and territories noted that special education teachers need a certificate indicating their qualifications in the field (Kasko, 2000).

- *Conflicting principles.* Inclusion is not the only principle driving contemporary education. The values of inclusion may come into conflict with other values teachers hold dear, such as achievement and merit, and also with the dual restraints of heightened responsibilities and accountability. Hence, whether inclusion is right or wrong, effective or ineffective, may not be as moot as how it merges with other principles.

- *Lack of supports.* For a substantial number of educators, the controlling factors are concerns about workload and supports. Implicitly, inclusion demands that supports be brought to the classroom to the child, not that the child be removed to the supports. Supports for children are varied, such as adaptive equipment and speech therapy. Supports for teachers include additional personnel assistance, such as a paraeducator or daily contact with special education teachers for collaborative teaming and teaching and shared planning; planning time; and small class sizes. But at the moment there is too often an inadequate technology of inclusion. The best intentions are dragged down by large class sizes, inadequate teacher training, and lack of outside support for classroom teachers.

- *Outside forces.* The resolution of special education and inclusive education for learners with special needs will not emerge in a social vacuum; rather, it depends upon an interplay of interests, politics, economics, and so on.

- *Research evidence.* Many disagreements about the progress of inclusion hinge on the lack of empirical research. There is not yet a solid research base to show the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of any type of inclusive model. As well, we still have little information about how students with disabilities are progressing compared to general norms or how educational reforms are affecting them. So far, there are no comprehensive data available on special education students' academic gains, graduation rates, preparation for post-secondary schooling or work, or involvement in community living.