

# “Going Together”: Developing a Student Booklet – A Tool for Building Parents-School Partnership in a Special Education Program

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The article is based on a clinical project, designed as part of the requirements for the Master's degree program at the Occupational Therapy Department, Faculty of Welfare and Health Sciences, University of Haifa. Family-centered practice currently holds a central position in the formulation of health services and special educational programs. This type of practice poses the challenge to create a partnership between the parents of a child with special needs and the professionals implementing the program. The intervention program described in this article was implemented in Tzohar Letohar, a special education school in Rechasim, Israel. Eight families of children ages 3-6 years with complex developmental disabilities participated. The professional staff included a special education teacher, teacher's assistants, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist and a speech and language therapist. The main goal was to construct family-school collaborations with regard to the decision-making process, which could promote the child's progress and parent's satisfaction from the service they receive. The intervention process consisted of : 1) The development of a booklet that includes a questionnaire aimed at gathering background information from the parents; an intervention goal form; and a form for tracking the child's progress; 2) the design of parent-professional meetings for planning an Individualized Education Program (IEP); 3) the formulation of follow-up meetings with the parents on the child's progress towards his/her IEP

goals throughout the year; and 4) the examination of parents' satisfaction level, using the MPOC-20 (Measure of Process Of Care). **Intervention program results:** The family-centered practice framework resulted in the increased involvement of the parents in the educational program's decision-making process. Most of the intervention goals of the students were achieved and the parents' level of satisfaction from the educational setting's service was given a high rating. These results support the implementation of a family-centered service approach within the special education services.