

Training Student Teachers to Work in Partnership with Parents of Students with Special Needs

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Abstract : The aim of this research was to examine the efficacy of the first course in Israel, whose objective is to train student teachers in the special education department to work cooperatively with parents of children with special needs. Studies often highlight the importance of cooperation between teachers and parents of students with special needs. Israel's Special Education Law defines parents as complete partners, and the Ministry of Education encourages and even requires that partnership be present. Yet this partnership is difficult to achieve many kindergarten teachers, and teachers have a lot of difficulties establishing and managing a pattern of cooperation with their students' parents. Often we see different perspectives on the child's development and needs, distrust, lack of appreciation, and communication difficulties on both sides - parents & teachers. The course describes a method of instilling the need for cooperation at an early stage of teacher training-in the teacher training program. 22 students in the special education program for early childhood education in the fourth year of learning took part in the course. The fourth-year is the experiential training year and the first time that students have worked in a school. The course consisted of 14 sessions. Seven parents of students with different disabilities participated at 6 of the sessions. The changes in the students' attitudes towards partnership and their ability to manage this partnership were carried out by examining the reports written by the students before the meetings with the parents and the reflections they wrote after each meeting with the parents and at the end of the course. Three themes emerged from the narrative analysis, corresponding to the three preconditions for joint activities with parents – Approach, Attitude, Appropriate Atmosphere, according to the Four A's Model. The findings showed that a course combining meetings with parents of children with special needs offers many benefits for teacher training. The course raised student awareness of the question partnership, changed students' approaches and attitudes towards the parents, stressed the importance of partnership, and provided students with tools for working with parents through the school. Based on the findings of this study, courses in this format can be applied in order to cooperate between teachers and parents, for example, parents of gifted children with special needs.

Keywords : Partnership with parents in special education, parents of children with disabilities, parents of children with special needs, parents' involvement in special education

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