

# Support for everyone: Experiences of occupational therapists delivering a new model of school-based service

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## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Recognizing the evidence base behind moving away from one-to-one direct service delivery model towards a classroom-based approach, this interview based study captured the experiences of occupational therapists as they progressed through this transition.

## SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Seven occupational therapists in Ontario, Canada were interviewed to capture their experiences as they transitioned from providing one-to-one direct services to a more collaborative classroom based service. Partnering for Change (P4C) (Missiuna et al., 2012) provided the model for change focusing on building capacity through collaboration and coaching in context.

## METHOD

Qualitative research methods were used to explore the perspectives of occupational therapists as they implemented a .

## FINDINGS

Five major themes were identified through analysis of the interview transcripts: year of growth, becoming a community, the key ingredients of P4C, a balancing act, and providing services that make an impact.

## A YEAR OF GROWTH

Occupational therapists described their professional growth:

- Role change – Redefining Value of Service
- Gaining confidence in partnerships
- Changing perspectives on an appropriate plan of care in school.

## BECOMING A COMMUNITY

Therapists described the opportunity of becoming a part of a larger school community and the increase in opportunity for peer collaboration/mentoring. Stronger connections were established with teachers, staff, children, and families.

## THE KEY INGREDIENTS OF P4C

Take time to cultivate strong relationships  
Break away from consultant to in-class team partner  
A 3-way partnership develops between the therapist, the teacher, and the child.  
Support is provided for everyone.  
An opportunity for consistent and responsive services.

## A BALANCING ACT

Therapists continually needed to balance the transition to a new model with the expectations of others for the previous model.

## DISCUSSION

Necessary factors for success included:

- Dedicated time to build relationships
- Consistent presence in the school
- Consistent and reliable service delivery

Benefits included;

- A sense of belonging and community amongst therapists and with teachers.
- Increased reward for therapists seeing an increase in impact for children and teachers.