

Topic: **Develop and use instructional strategies to meet the needs of individual learners.**

Baroody, A. E., & Diamond, K. E. (2012). Links among home literacy environment, literacy interest, and emergent literacy skills in preschoolers at risk for reading difficulties. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 32*(2), 78-87. DOI: 10.1177/0271121410392803

## Context

Learning to read is an important skill in early elementary grades, and children from poor families and families in which English is not the first language often enter school with lower levels of achievement on early literacy skills compared to their peers. Classroom-based interventions have been found to be beneficial in assisting early childhood professionals in promoting young children's early literacy skills. However, little research has focused on the impact that individual characteristics, such as children's interest, and context variables, such as home literacy experiences, may have on the development of the skills necessary for early literacy success.

## Purpose of the Article

The intent of this study was to extend previous research on the association of children's interest in literacy, literacy experiences at home, and emergent literacy skills using a child-report measure of literacy interest.

## Method

As part of a larger kindergarten readiness study, researchers individually assessed participating children on emergent literacy skills and literacy interest. Further, researchers asked participating children's parents to complete questionnaires focused on family characteristics and the home literacy environment. A total of four measures were used to gather data on: (a) children's code-related skills (letter-word knowledge and alphabet knowledge); (b) children's oral language skills (children's receptive language); (c) children's interest in literacy activities; and, (d) families' active and passive home literacy environments. A total of 80 children between the ages of 4 and 5 years enrolled in three Head Start early childhood programs and two local

child care centers serving low-income families were included in the analysis.

## Results

After multiple analyses, the authors found a relationship among children's reports of literacy interest and children's letter-word identifications scores and children's alphabet knowledge. The researchers found no association between the home literacy environment and letter-word identification scores. Further, patterns among child-reported interest and code-related skills differed based on children's receptive language scores. This study revealed that children with developmentally appropriate skills in receptive language who are interested in literacy activities such as reading and writing may have better alphabet knowledge scores than children with below average age-level receptive language scores.

## Discussion

This research provided evidence for the importance that certain child characteristics (i.e., child interest and receptive language skills) have on the development of early literacy skills. As such, children with poorer language skills may have a more difficult time engaging in and understanding instructions in classroom literacy activities. Researchers suggest that further investigation is needed to better understand the role that preschool children's literacy interest plays in emergent literacy. Additionally, preschool instruction should include developmentally appropriate activities to support children's acquisition of literacy skills while enhancing children's interest and enjoyment of literacy activities in both the home and school.

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### About the ACCEPT Project

The ACCEPT (Advancing Community College Efforts in Paraprofessional Training) Project is a federally-funded cooperative agreement between the U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte College of Education. The focus of this effort is the inclusion of special education content in the coursework and experiences provided within the associate degree program in early childhood education at targeted state-supported community colleges in North Carolina.

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