

Topic: **Build skills to promote child development and learning and lead to life and school success.**

Dynia, J. M., Lawton, K., Logan, J. A. R., & Justice, L. M. (2014). Comparing emergent-literacy skills and home-literacy environment of children with autism and their peers. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 34*(3), 142-153. doi 10.1177/0271121414536784

## Context

An increase of recent research has led to growing knowledge and understanding of how to meet the needs of young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD); however, there is still much to learn about ASD and how to best support children's academic success, specifically reading achievement. For young children with ASD, the importance of increasing emergent-literacy skills is highly associated with future reading achievement and, therefore, needs more empirical studies that investigate skills and strategies related to early reading success.

## Purpose of the Article

The aim of this article was to focus on emergent-literacy skills of alphabet knowledge, print-concept knowledge, definitional vocabulary, and phonological awareness of children with ASD. More specifically, the researchers sought to contribute to the understanding of children with ASD by examining their emergent-literacy skills when compared to their peers who are typically developing.

Additionally, the research team compared the association between children's emergent-literacy skills and their home-literacy environment. The study included 35 children with ASD and 35 children who were typically developing; all participants were part of a larger study of book-reading practices in early childhood special education (ECSE) classrooms. A number of measures were used to assess children's emergent-literacy skills in the classroom and in the home.

## Results

The researchers reported three main findings: (a) children with ASD scored significantly higher on

measures of alphabet knowledge and significantly lower on measures of print-concept knowledge; (b) different patterns emerged for print interest and the home-literacy environment for both children with ASD and those who were typically developing; and, (c) print interest and frequency of shared book reading were significantly related to children's alphabet knowledge scores when language ability was controlled.

This study was one of the first to suggest that young children with ASD and children who are typically developing have significant differences in emergent-literacy skills (e.g., alphabet knowledge, print-concept knowledge) and their print interests. Additional research is warranted to address the gaps in the reading literature concerning young children with ASD.

## How to Use this Article

### For Instructors

This article and brief could be used to discuss varying needs of children with differing abilities with specific attention to early literacy and how to plan differentiated instruction. This article offers specific information related to the differences and patterns in emergent-literacy skills of children with ASD and those children that are typically developing.

### For Practitioners

This article and brief can be used to inform literacy practices and further expand understanding of differences and patterns of literacy skills for young children with ASD.

### About *Research-to-Practice Briefs*

*Research-to-Practice Briefs* provide summaries of key studies that inform practice related to early childhood special education. The series is designed specifically to support community college faculty who prepare candidates to work with children with special needs in the early childhood setting.

### 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.

### Contact the ACCEPT Project

p: 704-687-8859

f: 704-687-3493

e: [info@acceptproject.org](mailto:info@acceptproject.org)

w: [www.acceptproject.org](http://www.acceptproject.org)

This brief was prepared by Kristi Godfrey-Hurrell.