



Question

Does parental reading promote literacy skills of children with autism?

Application

Funding proposal to an autism society for family book-gifts program

Literature Search

ERIC KW=autis* and KW=read* and KW=child*
PsychInfoKW=autis* and KW=read* and KW=child*
Medlineautis* AND read* AND child*

37 articles identified and imported to RefWorks™

SPOTLIGHTS on most relevant articles = 4

SUMMARY OF SPOTLIGHTS

The capacity for literacy development of autistic individuals is often underestimated

Access to print materials and shared reading time are seen to be an important step in encouraging emergent literacy amongst children with autism.

The literacy development of children with autism can be enhanced by the same factors that promote literacy learning in their non-disabled peers.

The aim of improving the literacy skills of children with autism is a worthwhile goal, one for which the proposed book gift program provides the means necessary to attain.

#4 Mirenda, P. (2003). "He's not really a reader...": Perspectives on supporting literacy development in individuals with autism. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 23(4), 271-282.

Abstract Although many individuals with autism are able to demonstrate skills that are directly related to literacy, they are often seen as "too cognitively impaired" or "not ready for" instruction in this important area. This article provides suggestions for strategies that can be used to promote literacy learning across the five stages of word reading development described by Ehri. Examples of the experiences of people with autism who have become successful readers are included to illustrate the importance of promoting literacy development for all learners.

Relevance Summary

Considering both recent evidence on autism and literacy, as well as the personal experiences of autistic individuals, this article suggests that autistic persons are too quickly written off as incapable of literacy skill development. The author proposes that this is due, in part, to outdated theories of literacy instruction that create the impression that autistic individuals lack necessary pre-literacy skills, and further, to the effect of lowered literacy expectations created through an over-emphasis on functional reading instruction. A more balanced literacy instruction strategy is promoted as a solution to this situation.

In promoting a balanced approach to literacy instruction for autistic persons, the article states that recent research indicates factors in successful literacy learning may be more similar for disabled and non-disabled learners than once thought. Of particular note is the suggestion that access to print materials (considered a valuable step in the literacy development of non-disabled children) can also be of significant value to literacy development in autistic children. Overall, a home environment rich in literacy learning opportunities is seen as important for learners of all abilities.

The article concludes with a reaffirmation of the importance of literacy as a goal for autistic individuals, and provides a few basic recommendations for teachers and parents interested in supporting autistic literacy development.

Key Quotes

"Recent research concerning the factors related to successful literacy learning suggests that learners with and without disabilities may be more similar than previously thought." (p. 275)

"Home environments that are rich in communication, that support children to develop effective and efficient communication skills, that provide access to print materials, and that include models of functional literacy use appear to facilitate early literacy learning in all children." (p. 275)

"Fortunately for those who support students with autism, repeated reading of familiar books is not only acceptable in [the third of Ehri's five phases of word reading development]it is actually encouraged to build fluency, as long as students do not rely on memory alone to read but also pay sufficient attention to the text." (p. 278)



Research Works! for child literacy is funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the University of Waterloo. The Review of Evidence was conducted in partnership with the Canadian Centre for Knowledge Mobilisation..