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ABSTRACT
                A 3-year research project, employing qualitative
inquiry in a pair of preschool and primary grade classrooms (one
self-contained and one integrated at each level), was undertaken to
examine the literacy learning difficulties of school-aged children
with developmental disabilities. The multi-site case studies of the
first phase of the project used the constant comparative method of
data collection and analysis. Analysis of the first year of the
project reveals two primary themes: technology, and inclusion.
Technology facilitated literacy learning opportunities when: (1) it
was available; (2) teachers were competent users and programmers of
the devices; and (3) teachers had ample time to adapt mate_ials.
Inclusion facilitated learning when: peers had a clear understanding
of and experiences with their roles; and the individual needs of all
students were considered. The roles these factors, as well as others,
play in literacy experiences will be clarified as the project
continues. (RS)

Uses of Technology and Educational Media in Literacy

Instruction for Children with Developmental Disabilities

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Few children with developmental disabilities (DD) read

and write as well as their non-disabled age peers

(Koppenhaver & Yoder, 1992; Katims, 1991). Research into the

literacy learning difficulties of school-aged children with

DD suggests that: (1) difficulties are widespread across

disabilities; (2) assistive technology is widely viewed as

an important tool in accommodating learning differences in

individuals with disabilities; and (3) little is known about

the availability, quality, use, and effectiveness of

technology and educational materials in addressing

illiteracy among individuals with disabilities. A three-year

research project, employing qualitative inquiry in a pair of

preschool and primary grade classrooms (one self-contained

and one integrated at each level), was undertaken in order

to advance the knowledge in these areas.

The first phase of the project utilized qualitative
inquiry within a pair of preschool and primary classrooms
(one self-contained and one integrated at each level). A
socio-communicative model of language and literacy use
(Pappas, Kieffer, & Levstik, 1990) and a comprehensive model
of the study of classroom teaching (Duncan & Biddle, 1974)
serve as the frameworks driving this research.

The multi-site case studies were conducted using the
constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of data
collection and analysis. Constant comparison was selected
because of its generative approach to theory development.
The essential steps of the constant comparative method
include: collection of data; searching data for key issues
and recurrent events or activities on which to focus;
collection of data to provide diverse examples of the
categories of focus; developing written descriptions to
describe and account for the diverse examples; examining the
data and emerging model for basic social processes and
relationships and further refining the core categories
through sampling, coding, and writing (Glaser, 1978). While
the list above represents a list of steps to be carried out,
it is important to note that these steps occur in a

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recursive manner. Additionally, this is a method most
commonly used in multi-site participant observation studies
such as this one.

This three-year research project began in January, 1993
and is ongoing. Subjects during Year 1 were children with
DD, ages 3-9, their families, and the professionals (i.e.,
regular classroom teachers, special educators, therapists,
and other support personnel) who address their literacy-
learning needs. Each research site was visited one-to two
times per week over an eight-week period in the Spring and
Summer of 1993, resulting in between ten and fifteen two-
hour observations per site. Initially, classrooms were
visited for much of the school day and , as key literacy
events emerged, reduced to two hour visits during those key
event periods. Videotaping occurred at the sites
approximately once per week. Additionally, teachers, parent,
and support personnel were repeatedly interviewed both
informally and in streuctured interviews to provide
additional information which helped to confirm or disconfirm
emerging themes. Researchers engaged in a medium level of
particpant observation.

Analysis of this pilot data revealed two primary
themes: technology, and inclusion. Literacy learning

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opportunities of the children with DD were influenced by the
nature of these two factors. Technology served to facilitate
literacy learning opportunities when: (1) it was available;
(2) teachers were competent users and programmers of the
devices; and (3) teachers had ample time to adapt materials.
Inclusion served to facilitate literacy learning
opportunities when: (1) peers had a clear understanding of
and experience with their roles; and (2) the individual
needs of all students were considered. As this research
continues, we will attempt to further clarify the roles
these factors, as well as others, play in the literacy
experiences of children with develpmental disabilities.

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