Developing a fascination for literacy: An examination of the literacy learning of an included student with autism
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Abstract

This study was a qualitative investigation into the literacy learning of a student diagnosed with autism and included in the general education classroom for literacy instruction. Participants in this case study included the student, his guardian, his aunt, and the educators who provided services to the student through the school district. Through interviews, classroom observations, and document review, this study examined the interrelationship of environment, instruction, and family support and their effect on the literacy learning of a student with autism included in a general education setting.

Findings indicate that the student was involved in a variety of literacy experiences throughout his schooling, including the same experiences as his nondisabled peers and supplemental experiences. Findings also indicate that the school district provided inclusive support to the student through district inclusion initiatives, an accepting school climate, appropriate resources, high expectations, and teacher support. The findings also recognize the challenges of teaching a student with autism because of the disability characteristics and the struggle to measure performance. Last, the findings show that the family provided support through high expectations, opportunities for language and literacy development, access to educational materials, and homework assistance.

Teaching implications from this study suggest that (a) educators should continue to focus on matching methods and materials to student needs and providing a variety of approaches; (b) educators need to consider providing developmentally appropriate literacy instruction to and having high expectations for children who appear not to have potential so that they may experience success; (c) schools need to embrace diversity and prepare for the success of all students; (d) all educators need to know about the characteristics of autism spectrum disorders so that they can plan instruction to meet student needs; (e) literacy educators need to look for ways to assess students and accept various ways of knowing; and (f) families and caretakers of children with disabilities need to provide them with the same literacy opportunities as typical children and to maintain high expectations for their literacy development.