

Supporting and extending research endeavors

Central to our college mission is our support of research in education. We are committed to extending our school partnerships to include collaborative research among faculty, faculty associates, and public school faculty. The College of Education has an impressive record for the acquisition of external grant funding, and is the largest grant-producing unit in the University, receiving \$6.4 million in the 2004 fiscal year.

This research report highlights several key research initiatives, including initiatives from College of Education centers.

The Special Education Assistive Technology (SEAT) Center focuses on teaching pre-service and practicing teachers the skills they need to meet the technology needs of people with disabilities through practical, performance-based instruction. Instruction provided at the center emphasizes developing competence in assistive technology that can improve the education and quality of life of those with special needs. The center supports publication of *Assistive Technology Outcomes and Benefits* and engages in outcomes-focused partnerships and research having national significance.

The Center for Reading and Literacy is implementing a federally funded program to develop and deliver an on-site elementary certification for bilingual paraprofessionals. With a focus on service, research, and teaching, the center responds to the needs of policy-makers, educators, parents, children, workers, employers, and scholars. The center supports publication of the *Journal of Reading Education* and hosts an annual literacy conference.

The Center for the Study of Education Policy conducts research and public service related to policies affecting PreK-16 education. During the past year, the center faculty and staff completed a major report, "Using Technology to Enhance School/Home Communication" for the Office of the Governor and the Illinois Century Network and designed new evaluation procedures for the Illinois Board of Higher Education to use in their Higher Education Cooperation Act Grant Program. The center received a \$600,000 grant from the Wallace Foundation to continue a second phase of its work on the State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP).

Other funds support research in the Autism Spectrum Institute, a statewide network for providing technical assistance and training for pre-service and practicing teachers in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

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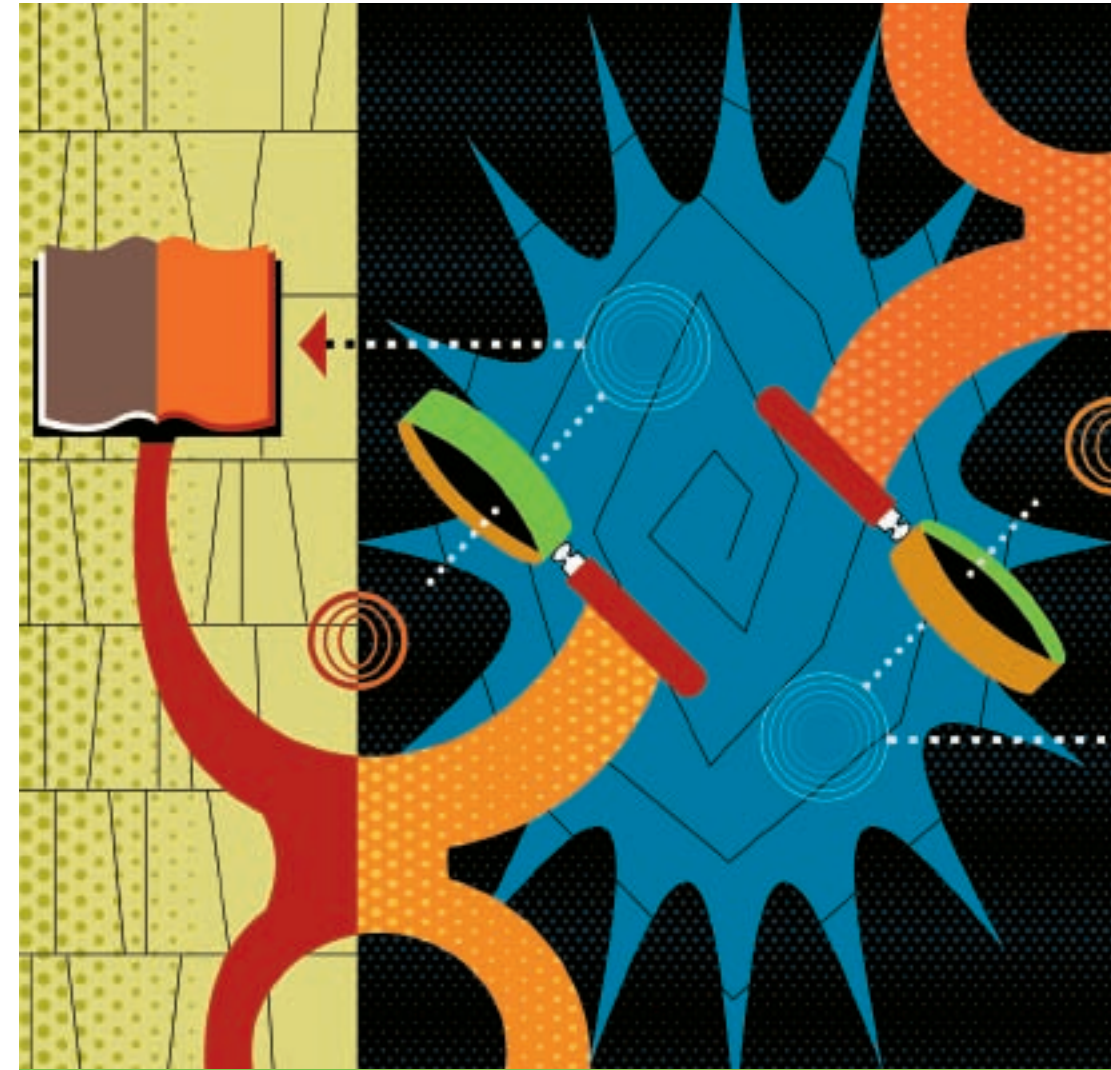
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ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY College of Education



Research report

SEPTEMBER 2005

Gladly we learn and teach

Illinois State University was founded in 1857 as the first public university in the state. This University has a rich heritage as the state's leader in all facets of education—from classroom instruction to educational administration and statewide policy setting. Illinois State, a charter member of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, is among the largest teacher preparation institutions in the nation. The University enrolls more than 3,000 students in 37 accredited teacher education programs: all teacher education students pass the basic skills and content area tests, and 95 percent are employed immediately after graduation. Illinois State University is among the upper-third of 188 schools that grant doctoral degrees in education, according to *U.S. News and World Report*. At the core of the College of Education's work is the initial preparation of teachers, with a comprehensive offering of degree and certification programs operated year-round at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The college's mission is clear: **We will provide state and national leadership in teacher and administrator education, education research, and education policy.** Now, as always, we remain committed to preparing future leaders in the grand enterprise of education.

Latest research

Creating Technology Toolkit for Students with Mental Retardation: A Systematic Approach

Content

Phil Parette and Brian Wojcik with the Special Education Assistive Technology Center at Illinois State University provide a systematic method for creating a technology toolkit for use with students with mental retardation.

Context

The purpose of the study was to identify the utility of various technology tools for inclusion in an assistive technology (AT) toolkit for teachers. Participants in Phase One ($n=10$) included professionals who were nominated by local special education directors and teachers in an urban school district in central Illinois. The participants included seven teachers, two speech-language pathologists, and one occupational therapist. Participants for Phase Two ($n=43$) had experience working with students with mental retardation and were recruited from local school districts and Illinois State University graduate classes.

Methodology and Results

A modified Q-sort methodology was used in this study, employing a two-phase process to identify key AT devices for inclusion in the toolkit. In Phase One, participants made suggestions regarding tools they found very effective in working with students with mental retardation in the school setting. Tools identified by participants were aggregated by categories and a second survey instrument containing the aggregated tools was sent back to the participants for review and suggestions that might be included in each category. The final list contained 77 tools that the participants thought were useful in working with students with mental retardation. In Phase Two, participants ranked each of the 77 tools with regard to relative utility. Means were then calculated for each of the 77 items and placed into quintiles from high utility to low utility. Results indicated that tools in four categories were considered to be of greatest utility: (a) communication, (b) computer access, (c) access to print, and (d) behavioral regulation. Categories viewed as having least utility included tools for (a) mobility and positioning, (b) recreation, and (c) aids for daily living.

Significance

With the growth of AT in recent years, coupled with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandate that AT must be considered when developing individual education programs, there has been increased need for interdisciplinary teams to conduct AT evaluations and make decisions about AT solutions. An AT toolkit, once developed and assembled using such a systematic approach described in this article, may be implemented by education professionals and used as a guide to assist in making decisions about AT.

Source

Parette, H. P., & Wojcik, B. W. (2004). Creating a technology toolkit for students with mental retardation: A systematic approach. *Journal of Special Education Technology*, 19 (4), 23–31.

Bilingual Reading from a Dual Coding Perspective

Content

Fabiola Ehlers-Zavala expands previous reading research based on dual coding theory. This study describes the affective responses of readers in transitional bilingual classrooms and provides recommendations for teachers of reading in bilingual classrooms.

Context

Sixty-seven fourth graders, native speakers of Spanish, participated in this study. Participants were enrolled in a transitional bilingual education program. There were 31 participants in the experimental group and 36 participants in the control group.

Methodology and Results

Materials for the study were prepared in both English and Spanish. Students self-selected to work in English or in Spanish. Data were collected over the course of two weeks. Materials consisted of a booklet containing either an illustrated or a non-illustrated text (depending on the condition) and the same text segmented into 12 paragraphs. A scale followed each segment and participants rated the segment according to the level of affect each segment evoked. Affect levels were presented on a five-point rating scale (1=no emotions to 5=high levels of emotions). Participants supported their ratings with open-ended responses. The students in the experimental group were instructed on how to explore their own affective responses to written texts during reading. The training consisted of three stages: awareness, practice, and assessment. Results showed that students in the experimental group reported significantly higher levels ($p<.05$) of emotional responses ($M=3.4$, $SD=1.05$) than those in the control group ($M=2.53$, $SD=.90$). An analysis of the open-ended responses indicated that students in the experimental group were more likely to provide emotional accounts to a story and describe a specific type of emotion.

Significance

Sustained reflective practices on the exploration of affect need to play a key role in the repertoire of reading strategies taught and modeled by reading teachers of bilingual students. Texts are mediated by the emotions we feel and engaging students in the alignment of their verbal and non-verbal responses to text is essential to developing effective readers.

Source

Ehlers-Zavala, F. (2005). Bilingual reading from a dual coding perspective. In J. Cohen, K.T. McAlister, K. Rolstad, & J. MacSwan, *ISB4: Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism* (pp. 656–662). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.

Welcome to Our World: Parent Perceptions of Interactions between Parents of Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Education Professionals

Content

The research team examined the perceptions of parents of young children with ASD to develop recommendations for education professionals.

Context

Four families volunteered at a parent support group meeting to participate in this study. Among other criteria, each family had a child with ASD enrolled in the public school system at the preschool or primary level. All families in this study were middle-class professionals. Three of the four mothers were not employed outside the home. The children ranged in age from six to eight years, with two children in preschool and two children in elementary school at the time of the initial interviews. Although the children attended four different schools, the schools were located in the same school district in a Midwestern town.

Methodology and Results

Data were collected through multiple interviews, observations, and documentation. A cross-case analysis method was used to analyze the data. Findings were confirmed using methods of triangulation, respondent validation, and member checking. The findings indicated that the interaction between parents and educators is a dynamic and complex process. Three major themes emerged that were of prime importance to the development of parent-friendly strategies.

Significance

Several recommendations were developed for professionals working with parents of children with ASD. Educators should (1) assist parents in obtaining a diagnosis by listening to parental concerns and avoiding the “wait-and-see” method to see if the child will outgrow developmental, behavioral, communication, or social concerns; (2) meet the need for parental self-education by providing training that will help parents understand ASD and special education services; (3) provide a smooth transition from early childhood programs to special education services; (4) institute procedural changes that assist parents in participating in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process; (5) foster communication with parents by recognizing and valuing parental expertise, by participating in parent support groups, and by providing regular communication to parents; and (6) recognize that every interaction has the potential to either enhance or reduce parents’ trust.

Source

Stoner, J. B., Bock, S. J., Thompson, J. R., Angell, M. E., Heyl, B. S., & Crowley, E. P. (2005). Welcome to our world: Parent perceptions of interactions between parents of young children with ASD and education professionals. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 20, 39–51.