

## A strong correlation is found between the experiences, awareness, and knowledge of nursery rhymes of young children with disabilities and their development of literacy skills

*What does research tell us about nursery rhymes and the literacy development of children with disabilities?*

**W**hen it's time to rhyme, it's time well spent for children with disabilities and developmental delays.

A synthesis of findings from 13 studies of 155 children reveals that young children with disabilities gain important ground in early communication, language, and literacy learning through nursery rhyme experiences and knowledge. The strength of the positive literacy-learning outcomes was shown to be very similar for children with different kinds of disabilities.

Researchers at the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) at the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute evaluated the 13 studies by focusing on two types of nursery-rhyme measures—(1) knowledge of nursery rhymes, demonstrated by reciting rhymes or in some way requesting or indicating preference for nursery rhymes, and (2) experiences with nursery rhymes, based on parents' reports of their children's experiences with or preference for listening to nursery rhymes. These were correlated with measures of nonverbal communication and language outcomes and with measures of different kinds of pre-literacy abilities. Of the latter, several measures of phonological skills (rhyme production, alliteration, and phonemic awareness) and print-related skills (alphabet knowledge and print concepts) were included.

The findings provide clear evidence that the social routine of sharing nursery rhymes with young children with disabilities is a beneficial



**“...Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, bakers' man!”**

**Young children with disabilities benefit from having interesting and enjoyable experiences sharing nursery rhymes with parents, caregivers, and peers.**

practice for enhancing their early literacy, language, and communication development.

It's an easy activity to make part of a child's daily life. What could be more natural than reciting “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall/ Humpty Dumpty had a great fall...” as your child watches you crack eggs for breakfast, or “Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub...” during bath time, or “Twinkle, twinkle, little star...” as you look out a window together before tucking your child into bed? Take time to rhyme!

This *CELLnotes* summarizes findings reported in Dunst, C. J. & Gorman, E. (2011). Nursery rhymes and the early communication, language, and literacy development of young children with disabilities, *CELLreviews* 4(3), 1-11.

# Acting on the Evidence

Download free, two-page *CELL* practices guides in versions for parents or practitioners at [www.earlyliteracylearning.org](http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org)

Staff of CELL have created a number of practice guides especially for parents and early childhood practitioners to encourage putting this research evidence to use in home, community, and classroom settings. All of the two-page practice guides listed below are available for free download on the CELL project web site: [www.earlyliteracylearning.org](http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org). At this web address you can also find interactive posters called *CELLpops* and multimedia practice guides such as videos that illustrate practices supported by this research.



## Especially for PARENTS

### Infants:

Sure Winner Lap Games  
Baby's First Games  
Diaper Ch-Ch-Changes

### Toddlers:

Moovin' and Groovin' Nursery Rhymes  
Toddler Rhymes and Rhythm  
Toddlers' Finger Plays and Action Rhymes

### Preschoolers:

Fun Finger Games  
Wacky Word Games  
Sounds Like

## Especially for PRACTITIONERS

### Infants:

Infant Nursery Rhymes  
Infant Nursery Rhymes and Finger Plays  
Nursery Rhymes for Play and Learning

### Toddlers:

Finger Plays and Rhymes with a Punch  
Rhyming Games for Toddlers

### Preschoolers:

Sound Advice  
The First Letter Is . . .