

Center for Early Literacy Learning

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I'm starting to get the feel of it!

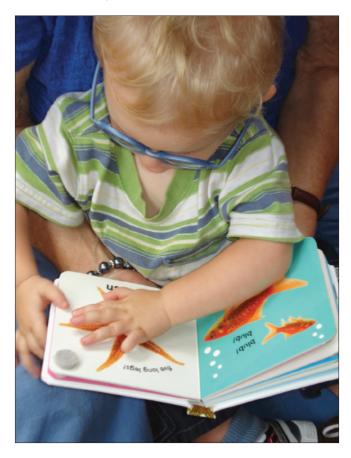
What does research tell us about tactile and object exploration among young children with visual impairments

The early years before Braille reading is introduced are a time when young children with visual impairments can begin to develop abilities related to touch that will prepare them to learn this skill successfully.

Researchers at the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) were interested in how variations in surface and object textures and other features might relate to young children's engagement in touching, exploring, and using their hands and bodies to interact with their world. Their objective was to test the long-held belief that tactile and object exploration and the ability to detect differences in surfaces or objects are important experiences leading to readiness to learn to read Braille.

The researchers examined nine studies including 82 preschool children with visual impairments. A focus of each study was use of the sense of touch for exploration of surfaces and materials that varied in texture or handling qualities and a child's ability to differentiate among them. The assumption was that the children would engage in more exploratory behavior with objects and surfaces that provided more interesting, varied shapes and textures. The types of exploratory behaviors examined included shaking objects to produce sound, manually exploring novel objects, and dropping or rotating objects of different shapes. The types of tactile exploratory behavior included things such as touching sandpaper, exploring gradient textured surfaces, and examining surface differences.

The CELL analysis found that the children



engaged in more exploration with objects and surfaces that offered more complex textures and more responsive feedback (such as sound) to a child's action. The findings provide support for the belief that the kinds of materials provided young children with visual impairments matter in terms of object and surface exploration. This is considered an important part of early literacy development for young children who are to be future Braille readers.

This *CELLnotes* summarizes findings reported in Dunst, C. J., & Gorman, E. (2011). Tactile and object exploration among young children with visual impairments. *CELLreviews* 4(2), 1-15.

Acting on the Evidence

Download free, two-page *CELLpractices* guides in versions for parents or practitioners at 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**. 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:

Finger Drawing Mark My Word The Magic Touch

Toddlers:

All...Write
Art of Writing

Preschoolers:

I See Signs Get Write On It Art of Writing

Especially for PRACTITIONERS

Infants:

Infant Scribbling Activities Let Little Fingers Do the Drawing

Toddlers:

Writing the World Writing Through Art

Preschoolers:

A Place for Writing Starting Write