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UNH's Institute on Disability Awarded U.S. Dept. of Education Grant for Early Literacy Research

By [Julie Moser](#)
Institute on Disability
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August 2, 2002

DURHAM, N.H. -- The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire will begin work on a four-year project to conduct research on the effectiveness of early literacy preschool curricula for young children living in New Hampshire.

Dr. Jan Nisbet, director of the Institute on Disability, explained that the project, "Granite Ladders: An Experimental Evaluation of an Early Literacy Curriculum for New Hampshire's Preschoolers," is made possible by a \$1.3 million grant over four years from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Instruction.

The institute will work in collaboration with Southern New Hampshire Services' Head Start program and the approximately 500 preschoolers who attend classrooms in Manchester, Nashua and four rural towns. The Granite Ladders project will implement Ladders to Literacy, an early literacy preschool curriculum, and use a randomized design to study the curriculum's effects.

Ladders to Literacy is an experimental curriculum designed to enhance preschoolers' print and book awareness, awareness of the difference between phonemes and words, and oral language knowledge. Four UNH graduate assistants will support the project.

Under the direction of Project Director Jeff Priest, Ph.D., and Project Coordinator Leigh Zoellick, M.Ed., Granite Ladders will address research questions including:

- Are there differences in implementation and outcomes between preschoolers with and without disabilities?
- Are there differences in outcomes for children from urban vs. rural settings?
- Are there differences in outcomes for children who attend half-day vs. full-day classroom programming?
- Are there differences in implementation and outcomes between preschoolers who are learning English vs. English-fluent preschoolers?

The Granite Ladders project was designed to continue the focus on literacy outcomes for children living in poverty, recognized by Congress with the passage of the Head Start Act Amendments of 1998 (P.L. 105-285).

The Institute on Disability's mission is to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities into their communities. The institute offers workshops and training sessions, participates in grant-funded model demonstration projects, conducts research, and engages in collaborative partnerships with other statewide organizations that are committed to improving the lives of persons with disabilities and their families.

For more information, visit the Institute on Disability's Web site at www.iod.unh.edu.

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