Investigating ABC Books and How to Make Them Better
Feedback to Participants

July 2011
Dear Parents,

Thank you once again for participating in our study. After our request went out 225 parents of children in Junior and Senior Kindergarten completed surveys. This allowed us to gain a good sense of parents’ goals for reading ABC books with their children and how appropriate they believed different ABC books page features to be for meeting some of these goals. We are happy to provide these results to you.

Parents’ goals for ABC Books

Overall, the goal of learning to read, including teaching children basic literacy skills (e.g. letter names and sounds) and monitoring their literacy skill development, was rated as most important to parents when reading ABC books with their children. The second most important goal was spending quality time and bonding with the child. Parents who read ABC books with their children more often rated these goals as more important than parents who read ABC books infrequently.

ABC Book Features

Three types of page features were examined in this study: the amount of text on the page, the complexity of the illustration, and whether the sound at the beginning of the word and object presented and the common sound of the letter presented matched (e.g. P is for phone is a mismatch, C is for cat is a match). Parents’ ratings indicated that pages with a little bit of text, simple illustrations, and a matching beginning sound were more appropriate for purposes related to learning to read than those with the opposite page features. These features which parents rated as more appropriate are in line with experts’ advice and previous research on alphabet books. However many pages in alphabet books on the market do not display these features. In contrast parents rated pages with a lot of text and complex illustrations as more appropriate for instilling the love of reading in their child. Therefore, depending on your purpose for reading the ABC book with your child, parents who are sensitive to these features may be inclined to select different formats of ABC books to match your goal.

Thank you once again for participating and if you have any further questions or comments please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,
Sarah Nowak, M.A. candidate  Dr. Mary Ann Evans, Ph.D, C.Psych.
s.nowak@psy.uoguelph.ca  evans@psy.uoguelph.ca
519-824-4120 x 53622  519-824-4120 x 53080