



## UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

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### **UNH'S INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY AWARDED U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GRANT TO CONDUCT EARLY LITERACY RESEARCH**

DURHAM – 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 in southern NH and approximately 200 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 versus rural settings?
- Are there differences in outcomes for children who attend half-day versus full-day classroom programming?

- Are there differences in implementation and outcomes between preschoolers who are learning English versus 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).

A total of seven grants were awarded under the Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Grants Program. Other grant recipients include University of California at Berkley, Purdue University, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of North Florida and Vanderbilt University.

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](http://www.iod.unh.edu).

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*The Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire, is a University Center for Excellence, established in 1987 with a mission to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities into their communities.*