



# Aston Literacy Project

Phase 1: Autumn 2011

**Thank you for your support and involvement in this project.  
We hope you will find this summary of our findings interesting.**

**We will be presenting our results at the Scientific Studies of Reading conference in Montreal this July.  
[www.triplesr.org](http://www.triplesr.org)**

Phase 1 of ALP took place during the Autumn of 2011 and involved approximately 800 Reception children. The main purpose of phase 1 was to establish which skills were associated with letter knowledge. Letter knowledge is the earliest step in the development of reading.

The children appeared to really enjoy taking part and our research assistants were made to feel very welcome by the school staff. All schools have agreed to participate in the follow-up this summer.

The sample as a whole was representative of the UK population. The average standard score for Maths was approximately 100 which is the national average.

Since the children were very young, we did not expect them to be able to read at this stage (most children, as expected, were not able to read any words in standardised tests of reading). However, we found that children did well on our test of letter sound knowledge. They knew on average 13 letter sounds at the beginning of Reception.

In our initial analyses, we found that these 3 skills appear to be the most important for letter knowledge:

- isolating phonemes (e.g. the first sound in *san* is *s*),
- associating a visual stimulus with a verbal stimulus (e.g. *g* corresponds with the left alien on the screen)
- repeating these sounds by pressing the aliens, (e.g. *g*, *p*, *k* = left, right then center alien).

These 3 measures accounted for 50% of the variance in letter knowledge. In other words, children who were better at these tasks tended to know more letter sounds.

Finally, we found that the ability to remember speech sounds (nonwords and phonemes) was more important for letter knowledge than the ability to remember non-speech sounds (tones/noises).

We will continue to follow up these children as they develop in their reading. In the longer term, we hope that our findings will help to identify young children who may go on to develop reading difficulties.

Thank you for participating in our study. We look forward to working with you again this summer. In the meantime, may we wish you all happy reading!

**We will be giving a poster presentation about ALP at the Institute of Education in London at the end of May.  
[www.earli22neuroeducation.com](http://www.earli22neuroeducation.com)**

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**OR visit  
[www.aston.ac.uk/alp](http://www.aston.ac.uk/alp)**