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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**School Achievement, Perceptions of Ability, and Interest Change as Children Age**

Children in early grades may like a subject in which they don't feel very competent, or they may feel competent in a subject in spite of poor grades. But by the end of high school, children generally feel most interested in subjects in which they feel they are the strongest.

Those are the findings of a new study published in the March-April 2007 issue of the journal *Child Development*.

The study also found that boys are more likely than girls to have their interest and abilities match. For example, boys are more likely to get the best grades in the school subjects in which they are most interested, whereas girls may get good grades regardless of their interest level.

The researchers, from Humboldt University and the University of Michigan, examined the ties between achievement, ability perceptions, and interest by looking at a group of almost 1,000 children from first grade until they left high school. Each year, they asked how much the children were interested in doing math, English, music, sports, and science, and how well they thought they were doing in those subjects. In addition, they recorded the students' grades in those subjects and, for each child, computed the closeness of the match among the three school dimensions.

"The findings of the current study are interesting because they show how children become increasingly specialized in terms of their academic profiles, showing high levels of achievement, perceptions of ability, and interest in some subjects and low levels in others," said the study's lead author Jaap J.A. Denissen, formerly of Humboldt University, now a postdoctoral fellow at Utrecht University. "This specialization could be a good thing, as it allows children to focus their energy and become experts in a certain field. On the other hand, when the labor market requires flexibility, a more generalist approach may be more helpful. Our finding that boys are more likely to be specialists whereas females are more likely to be generalists may explain some of the sex differences in academic and vocational careers."

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Summarized from Child Development, Vol. 78, Issue 2, *I like to do it, I'm able and I know I am: Longitudinal Couplings between Domain-Specific Achievement, Self-Concept, and Interest* by Denissen, JJA (Humboldt University), and Zarrett, NR, and Eccles, JS (University of Michigan). Copyright 2007 The Society for Research in Child Development, Inc. All rights reserved.

