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Children's Perceptions of Their Writing:  
The Knowledge, Strategies, Attributions, and Attitudes Children Bring to  
Writing

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## **Abstract**

*Writing is a significant cognitive, educational, personal, and social activity. Children's perceptions of their writing impact significantly on their learning, and are clearly influenced by the instructional programmes and environments they encounter. Children's development as writers during their middle primary school years (years four to six) is significantly under-researched. Four key areas of children's perceptions are of interest to this study: knowledge, strategies, attributions, and attitudes. Consequently, this study seeks to understand children's perceptions of their writing, and the contexts within which these perceptions are developed.*

*A six week ethnographic case study was undertaken, involving eight children and two teachers in one school. The data collection methods of participant observation, interviews, 'think alouds', and document analysis were used to gain a rich understanding of children's perceptions. Data was analysed and validated using qualitative methods.*

*The findings show that children hold diverse and idiosyncratic global perceptions. Children demonstrate a range of knowledge and strategies that they bring to their writing. They are able to describe both common and novel attributions for their successes and failures. Children's attitudes are predictably diverse, and show a strong link with classroom programmes and environments.*

*While children's perceptions are clearly influenced by the classroom programme and environment, this alone does not account for the uniqueness of children's perceptions. While the two teachers in this study offered different instructional experiences, both see metacognition and self-management as having an important role in children's learning. These findings suggest that knowledge and strategy use are of equal importance to*

*middle primary children. Instructional practices loosely based on a cognitive apprenticeship model may be effective in making writing a knowledgeable, strategic, social, and authentic activity. The current curriculum inadequately conceptualises genre and pays only minimal attention to children's development of genre knowledge.*

*This study recommends that longitudinal research into the development of writing expertise in the middle primary years is needed.*

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