



A Survey of Intermediate Grade Children's Knowledge about the Writing Process

Laura Lantz and Anthony D. Koutsoftas
Seton Hall University



Introduction

Sample

Procedures

Discussion

• Written expression is an important and complex academic and linguistic outcome for children in school; thus, writing is an important consideration for clinical interventions. In order to support children in learning to write, it is important to ascertain if children understand writing as a process that includes planning, translating, and revising (Hayes & Berninger, 2014) and the skills needed for each of these writing process components.

• Prior research has demonstrated that children's knowledge about how to write has direct implications on their writing development, predicts writing performance, and predicts academic success across curricular domains (Berninger & Richards, 2012; Saddler & Graham, 2006).

• Current research suggests a shift from traditional, natural learning approaches for teaching writing, to using meta-cognitive approaches with explicit teaching of self-regulated strategy development (SRSD; Graham & Harris, 2012; De La Paz & Graham, 2002) which directly requires children's knowledge of writing to support instruction.

• In the current study, survey research addresses the need to further our understanding of children's knowledge of writing by asking open ended questions about writing processes (Hayes & Berninger, 2014; Hayes & Flower, 1980). Open ended responses allowed for children to show what they know about writing and provide insight for where explicit, meta-cognitive instruction on writing processes might be warranted.

• The purpose of this study was to better understand what intermediate grade children think and know about writing processes by asking them open ended questions housed within well accepted theoretical frameworks of writing. The following **research questions** were addressed:

- 1) How do sixth grade children describe the role of planning and revising as part of the writing process?
- 2) What do sixth grade children cite as is the source of their ideas for writing?
- 3) What do sixth grade children understand as the important or key components of writing processes?

Table 1.
Descriptive Information **N = 182**

Female : Male	107 : 78
Mean age in years	11.60 (.56)
Mean years of Mother's Ed	14.21 (1.86)
Group Reading and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE; Williams 2001)	
Vocabulary Score	110.45 (14.02)
Comprehension Composite	108.62 (11.15)
Total Test Score	110.23 (12.87)

Coding System

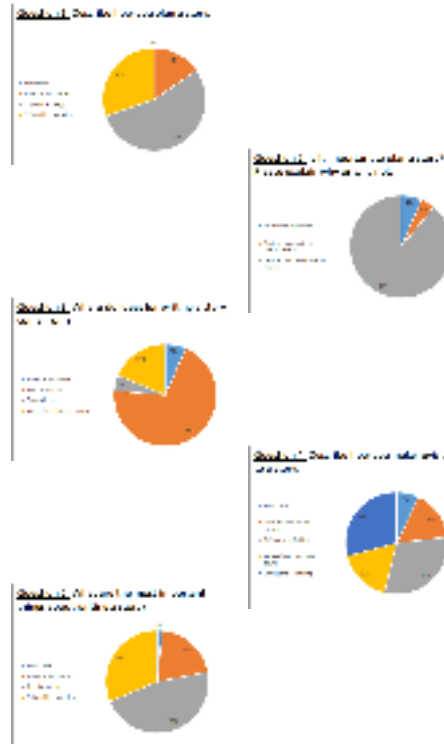
Questions 1: How do you plan a story?			
Score	Descriptor	Criteria	Examples
0	No/Incomplete	- Incomplete, irrelevant answer - No answer	"You have to think of one."
1	Non-specific strategy	- Relevant answer, no specific strategy	"I just think and what comes up in my mind"
2	1 Specific strategy	- Reference to skill associated with theoretically accepted models of the writing process (Hayes & Berninger, 2014; Hayes & Flower, 1980)	"You plan a story by using a thinking map like a flow map which is a flow map and a tree map." "I use a flow chart. It helps me organize."
3	2+ Specific strategies (relevant)	- Task Environment (Topic, prompt) - Writing Process Components (planning, translating, revising) - Organization, Idea Generation - Reference to a teacher taught strategy (e.g., flow map, bubble map, or other specific strategy)	"I plan a story by deciding what my topic is. I usually make a bubble map." "First, I just think of my favorite topic and then make a bubble map."
Questions 2: Is it important to plan a story before embarking on a piece?			
Score	Descriptor	Criteria	Examples
0	No/It is not important	- Explicitly states writing is not important - Incomplete, irrelevant answer - No answer	"No. Because it takes too long and there's no point of it." "Not really, because I think it is easier to write as you go along."
1	Not important, non-specific reason	- Affirmative response with no reason provided - Reference to a non-specific reason	"I think it is important because you could be talking about butterflies then go on to birds." "It is important to plan a story but at the same time you should not plan too much."
2	Yes, it is important + specific reason	- Affirmative response with a specific and/or relevant reason provided	"Yes, so you know what you will do and not write off topic." "No, because it will be out of order and hard to understand."
Questions 3: Where do ideas for writing a story come from?			
Score	Descriptor	Criteria	Examples
0	Non-specific source	- No specific reference to an internal or external source - Incomplete, irrelevant answer - No answer	"I HATE writing about things that really happened to me or in my pastime. I love writing about Make-believe!"
1	Internal source	- Reference to internal source including, but not limited to: imagination; Brain/Mind/Own mind; Own experience	"My ideas come from real life things that has happened in my life or just make things up that pop in my mind." "Your ideas come from your imagination."
2	External source	- Reference to external source including, but not limited to: Writing Prompt/Topic, Teacher, Parents, Books/Movies, School subject/content	"Ideas come from a prompt or from anywhere. I would look at a stapler and write about it." "The ideas come from the topic."
3	Internal and External source	- Reference to both an internal and an external source as described above	"Ideas for writing a story come from your imagination, life, dreams, or your teacher will give you a topic." "Ideas for writing a story come from your brain or a writing prompt."
Questions 4: How do you revise to a story?			
Score	Descriptor	Criteria	Examples
0	No/Incomplete	- No Answer - Incomplete, irrelevant answer - Incomplete, relevant answer with no example and no reference to a specific strategy	"By (in my mind) making a movie of the story is just words." "Don't know what revisions is"
1	Relevant answer; no example	- Relevant answer with no exemplar or reference to a specific strategy	"I just check it two times to look and make sure it sounds right." "When you make revisions you find what makes sense and what doesn't. Then you organize it."
2	Reference to Editing	- Reference to improving translation components of the writing process including: Productivity, Complexity, Accuracy, Mechanics	"You see if you have spelled something wrong or put the wrong punctuation in"
3	Read/heard (self, peer, adult)	- Reference to improving writing by reading the story or having a peer or adult read the story	"I read it to myself out loud." "Have someone else read it"
4	Editing and rereading	- Reference to both editing and reading as strategies for improving written product	"I make 2 or 3 people read it then I read it. Next I edit and edit my mistakes."
Questions 5: What are the most important things about writing a story?			
Score	Descriptor	Criteria	Examples
0	No/Incomplete	- No Answer - Incomplete, irrelevant answer - Incomplete, relevant answer with no example and no reference to a specific strategy	"knowing what to do" "you're ideas and your confidence"
1	Non-specific strategy	- Relevant answer with related but no reference to a specific strategy, examples include: Make sense, Be creative, know what is going to happen	"That you express yourself and be creative" "Making sure it makes sense"
2	Specific strategy	- Reference to skill associated with theoretically accepted models of the writing process (Hayes & Berninger, 2014; Hayes & Flower, 1980)	"Correct spelling, capitalization, punctuation" "To plan to make things in order"
3	2+ Specific strategies	- Task environment/audience - Organization, Idea generation - Story structure - Productivity/complexity, accuracy mechanics - Planning, translating, revising	"I think the most important things to writing a story are staying on topic, making it organized, and keeping it interesting." "The most important things about writing a story are the transitions, word choice, and your topic."

• Children from 11 different sixth grade classrooms provided written responses to 5 open-ended survey questions about the writing process. The sample included only children with Typical Development as indicated by parent and teacher questionnaire.

• A coding system was developed to categorize and consolidate responses across questions in a manner that could be interpreted clinically.

• Inter-rater agreement for coding of 20% of samples (n = 36) was as follows: Q1 = 92%; Q2 = 89%; Q3 = 81%; Q4 = 86%; Q5 = 86%; and considered good.

Results



• This study examined what intermediate grade children think and know about writing processes and provides insights on how to provide meta-cognitive instruction as part of written language interventions.

• Children in this study viewed planning as a prewriting task, and demonstrated knowledge about advanced planning strategies such as *idea generation* consistent with theoretical models of writing (Hayes & Berninger, 2014; Hayes & Flower, 1980).

• Most of the children surveyed viewed revising as an important task, but focused solely on either reading or editing writing for superficial features (grammar, spelling). Notably, peer-reading/editing is a well documented strategy in the research literature (Graham & Perin, 2007).

• Clinical implications for working with children on writing include providing meta-cognitive instruction about writing processes to improve their knowledge and understanding of how writing processes interact and support the final writing sample.

• For example, if a child approaches the writing process in a linear manner, where their revising process is utilized for editing accuracy and mechanics once they are finished composing their work, they can be taught specific strategies for revising their work beyond simple editing. These include monitoring and transforming their composition as they write to improve what they have written, and to write more effectively by organizing and generating ideas in a non-linear manner that suits their conceptualization and operationalization of writing processes (Harris & Graham, 2012).

• This analysis demonstrates the validity and reliability of the coding system used, which can now be applied to a diverse set of learners including those who struggle with writing, have a learning disability, or are English language learners.

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- Correspondence about this project should be directed to anthony.koutsoftas@shu.edu

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