

**INFORMATION PROCESSING STRATEGY**  
**APPLICATION:**  
**A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF TYPICALLY**  
**DEVELOPING PRESCHOOL AND SCHOOL AGED**  
**CHILDREN**

BY  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Readiness for the move to formal schooling, commonly referred to as ‘school readiness’, is one of the most important milestones in a young child’s life and also in the life of their family, preschool and community. Formal school comprises between ten to thirteen years in most westernised countries and it is important that young children are ready for the transition from the nurtured, supportive environment that encompasses either home life or preschool, to that of formal school. This study investigates the information processing strategy application capacities of a small cohort of typically developing preschool and school aged Australian children as they moved through their preschool years into the first year of formal schooling. Research suggests that readiness for school is demonstrated not only by what tasks children can do, but also how well they can process information in situations of social and academic learning (Scrimsher, College & Tudge, 2003).

‘School readiness’ is not a new concept but is becoming an increasingly important focus for parents, teachers and health professionals involved in young preschool aged children preparing for the move to formal schooling. Traditional areas of school readiness, such as fine motor skills, social skills and pre-academic abilities provide important information about a child’s ultimate readiness for formal schooling but don’t necessarily highlight specific weaknesses that may later translate to more general difficulties once a child is in formal schooling. In order to help young children meet the challenges of their future at school with success they need to be prepared to start formal schooling.

This longitudinal study followed 32 typically developing preschool aged children over a period of 30 months as they moved from preschool to the end of their first year at formal school. A criterion referenced occupational therapy assessment, the Perceive,

Recall, Plan and Perform System of Task Analysis (Chapparo & Ranka, 1997) was the primary tool used to evaluate the cognitive information processing strategy application abilities of the participants. It measures the task related parameters of attention, sensory processing, memory, planning and organisation, and performance monitoring.

The results of the study demonstrated that the assessment of information processing strategy application did provide insight into the ultimate school readiness of the study participants. Those participants with consistently effective strategy application abilities transitioned well into formal schooling, whilst those who demonstrated inefficient strategy application experienced difficulty with the transition to formal schooling and the ongoing demands of classroom work and routine.

The PRPP System proved to be a reliable tool for assessing information processing strategy application in this population and also emerged as having some predictive use in determining school readiness and the successful transition into a school student role. The findings from the study are supported by information processing theory and descriptions of typical cognitive development seen during the preschool and early school years. The uniqueness of this research was the focus on strategy application as an indicator of school readiness and longitudinal student performance being investigated from an information processing strategy application perspective.

## DECLARATION

I, Kirsty Susan Stewart, declare that the work contained within this thesis is my own and has not been submitted to any other university or institution as a part or whole requirement for any higher degree.

I, Kirsty Susan Stewart, declare that I was the principal researcher for all the work included in this thesis.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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