

## PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER'S ASSESSMENT OF A STUDENT'S COMPETENCE AS A PREDICTOR OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT THROUGHOUT PRIMARY SCHOOL

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In the Finnish school system, class teachers play a central role in assessing students' academic and work skills from an early age and in providing support at different stages during basic education. However, teacher assessment of students' competence and work skills in primary education, as well as the ability to predict students' academic performance based on this assessment, have been relatively little studied (Johnson-Fedoruk, 1991; Palardy, 1998; Tournaki, 2005; Zaher, 1996). Of particular interest in this study was to examine how teacher's assessments of students' abilities in the first, fourth, and sixth grades of primary school could predict their subsequent academic performance in school education. The research questions in the study were aimed at identifying the relationship between a teacher's assessment of a student's competence and their subsequent academic performance in school, as well as identifying the factors influencing a teacher's prediction of a student's future competence. It was hypothesized that a teacher's assessment of the student's competence could predict student success in subsequent learning and in secondary school. This paper reports on a longitudinal study. This study has been followed throughout the nine-year comprehensive school. The Finnish Learning to Learn tests were held on multiple occasions during the period of the study including 1st, 3rd-4th, 6th, 7th, and 9th grades. Grade point average (GPA) was calculated from teacher-reported school marks in key subjects in 4th and 6th grade. (Finnish language, mathematics, science, and the first foreign language.) In grade 9, pupils gave their own average grades in subjects. The teacher's assessment of a pupil's abilities was held at the beginning of school in 1st, 4th, and 6th grades. Teacher ratings of each (500) pupil's learning, school achievement, social skills, and behavior at school at the beginning of the 1st, 4th, and 6th grade. In our study, all pupils (52 % girls) were present throughout the nine-year follow-up. Our results indicate that there is a close connection between teacher assessment in the 1st, 4th, and 6th grades and student's performance results in 1st, 4th-6th and 9th grade and GPA in 4th-9th grade. The teacher's assessment of a pupil's abilities at the beginning of school allowed to identify factors affecting the forecast of successful pupil learning in school. Path modelling (CFI=1.000, TLI=1.013) confirmed these hypotheses, that there are relationships between teacher's assessment and performance in learning to learn throughout the 9 school years. The data obtained allows for adjusting the educational process in the future and improving the quality of student learning and support.