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**EFFECTIVENESS OF LETTER SOUNDS IN  
CONNECTION TO BETTER ACADEMIC  
PERFORMANCE IN GATANGA DIVISION**

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## ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research was to seek for ways to enhance reading and writing from an early age through introduction of letter sounds from the age of four years. The schools studied are those that perform best as well as those that appear among the worst performing schools in Gatanga Division within Gatanga District. The challenged schools will borrow a leaf from those with encouraging academic performance. To collect the data I formulated questionnaires. The first questionnaire was to be filled in by English teachers from standard one to stands eight. The teachers were to identify the number of pupils who could read fluently and write well versus those who could not read and those who could not write well. The standard one teacher was to identify the number of pupils who could read three letter words and accompany words with pictures as they join standard one from nursery school. The E.C.D.E teachers were to indicate the ages they enroll in specific nursery school classes. They were also to comment about the difficulties they experience concerning reading and writing in those classes. (coon 2006:119) states that, recently psychologists have become interested in the socio-cultural theory of Russian scholar Vygotsky (1896-1934).His key insight is that children's thinking develops through dialogues with more capable persons. Interactions like this are most helpful when they take place within a child's zone of proximal development. Children working within this zone can make rapid progress if they receive sensitive guidance from a skilled partner. He also emphasized a process called scaffolding. A scaffold is a framework or temporary support. He believed that adults help children learn how to think by "scaffolding" or supporting their attempts to solve problems or discover principles. To be most effective scaffolding must be responsible to a child's needs. According to my findings pupils who are introduced to letter sounds from four years old are fluent in reading by the time they join standard one. This has been portrayed by Elimambo and Gichumbu primary schools. These two schools have displayed good performance from standard one to eight. Other schools improve performance as more learners gain reading and understanding skills especially in upper primary school. Writing skills improve with the age and depends on the guidance from the teacher.