Talented and gifted language arts/reading curriculum for a rural school, grades K-4: Goals, objectives, and suggested implementation

Susan L. Cathcart
University of Northern Iowa

Copyright ©1991 Susan L. Cathcart
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/2267

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.
Talented and gifted language arts/reading curriculum for a rural school, grades
K-4: Goals, objectives, and suggested implementation

Abstract
As a result of the new Iowa Standards (1988), it has become necessary for all schools in Iowa to
establish programs for gifted and talented students systemwide. This required the Missouri Valley, Iowa,
School District to develop an adequate and appropriate program to serve the needs of its identified gifted
students.
A TALENTED AND GIFTED
LANGUAGE ARTS/READING CURRICULUM
FOR A RURAL SCHOOL, GRADES K-4:
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

A Graduate Project
Submitted to the
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by
Susan L. Cathcart
July 1991
This Research Paper by: Susan L. Cathcart

Entitled: A TALENTED AND GIFTED LANGUAGE ARTS/READING CURRICULUM FOR A RURAL SCHOOL, GRADES K-4: GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

July 21, 1991
Date Approved

William Waack
Director of Research Paper

July 21, 1991
Date Approved

William Waack
Graduate Faculty Adviser

July 19, 1991
Date Approved

Marvin Heller
Graduate Faculty Reader

July 23, 1991
Date Approved

Peggy Ishler
Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT OF PURPOSE</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACTORS AFFECTING THE CURRICULUM OF THE MISSOURI VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Environment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Population and School Structure</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/Staff</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Philosophy</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa Code</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEEDS OF THE MISSOURI VALLEY SYSTEM</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs of Primary (Grades K-1)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs of Linn School (Grades 2-4)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Elementary Needs</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPLEMENTATION PLAN</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Study Skills</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Development</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Order Thinking Skills</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Thinking Techniques</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceleration and Enrichment</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROGRAM EVALUATION</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A .......................................................... 46
APPENDIX B .......................................................... 49
APPENDIX C .......................................................... 50
APPENDIX D .......................................................... 51
APPENDIX E .......................................................... 53
APPENDIX F .......................................................... 54
APPENDIX G .......................................................... 55
APPENDIX H .......................................................... 56
APPENDIX I .......................................................... 57

The school is divided into five separate and independent divisions: 

1. General Education Division
2. Vocational Education Division
3. Special Education Division
4. Adult Education Division
5. Enrichment Program Division

Each division has its own director responsible for overseeing the specific needs and goals of that division.
A Talented and Gifted Language Arts/Reading Curriculum for a Rural School, Grades K-4:
Goals, Objectives, and Suggested Implementation

As a result of the new Iowa Standards (1988), it has become necessary for all schools in Iowa to establish programs for gifted and talented students systemwide (K-12). This required the Missouri Valley, Iowa, School District to develop an adequate and appropriate program to serve the needs of its identified gifted students.

Missouri Valley is a small rural community with an estimated population of 3000 within commuting distance of Omaha/Council Bluffs. Many residents are employed in the Omaha metropolitan area. Others farm, or are employed by small businesses, the hospital, or the school. A sizable population receives some form of public support, resulting in a low socio-economic status for the community. The district has an enrollment of approximately 1,000 students. These students are divided among four attendance centers in the following divisions: K-1 (the Primary Building), 2-4 (Linn School), 5-8 (Middle School), and 9-12 (High School).
Limited funding, limited resources, limited personnel, and problems with scheduling, all factors mentioned by Yoder (1985) and Howley (1989) as being areas of concern to small, rural schools, necessitated the selection of only one content area as the basis of the gifted and talented program developed by the district. The school administration made the decision to adapt the language arts/reading program to meet the needs of the gifted and talented children because of the ease of implementation and the content interest of staff members responsible for the development and teaching of the K-8 gifted program. The decision also was made to staff the program by assigning one teacher to serve grades K-4 and another grades 5-8.

The teacher assigned to grades K-4 and the teacher assigned to grades 5-8 elected to develop a joint graduate project which would help to assure the development of an articulated curricular approach. One of the two teachers is this writer who concentrated on program development at grade levels K-4, while the writer of the companion paper, N. Patricia Long, concentrated on developing a program for grade levels 5-8.
Commonalities in the development of the project included an analysis of the factors affecting the gifted and talented curriculum at the different grade levels K-8 and the development of common goals and objectives for the program. Individual research on each grade level area was conducted and a procedure for curriculum development in the language arts/reading at the different grade levels was established and applied. Differences in cognitive development in children at different age levels necessitated such a division in the research and the application of that research by the project writers. Some differences also evolved in the implementation of the common goals and objectives of the program because of these developmental variances.

Statement of Purpose

This project fulfilled two purposes. The first purpose was to establish an articulated program for K-8 language arts/reading that would meet the needs of the identified gifted students of Missouri Valley School District in that subject content area. A second and primary purpose of the project was to develop program
goals and objectives along with suggestions for implementation.

Some major curriculum writers in the field of gifted education (Fisher, 1989; and Van Tassel-Baska, Feldhusen, Seeley, Wheatley, Silverman & Foster, 1988) state that a minimum of three years is necessary to develop articulated, comprehensive curriculum. Therefore, the result of this collaborative project is limited to the development of program goals and objectives upon which a scope and sequence and curriculum outline subsequently will be built.

Factors Affecting the Curriculum of the Missouri Valley School District

Several factors influenced the direction the development of the curriculum would take. These factors included the rural environment of the district, the student population, the school structure, the existing staff, the philosophy of the school district, and state standards as set by the Iowa Code. Each of these factors is discussed in this section.

Rural Environment

The fact that Missouri Valley is a rural community might not seem to be a factor affecting the curriculum.
However, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that a rural community has special problems. Spicker, Southern, and Davis (1987) have delineated some of these problems. The most obvious one is a lower tax base which results in a lower per pupil expenditure than in a larger city. There is less money for special support staff such as counselors, curriculum directors, and psychologists. It stands to reason that because of the small population, there also are fewer gifted students. The small numbers of gifted students make special expenditures seem to be frivolous in light of the other pressing financial needs of a small system. Another problem is the feeling of separateness that a small community strives to maintain. Local control is felt to be a guarded right, so sharing of staff members with other small communities meets with some resistance.

Student Population and School Structure

Elementary students in Missouri Valley have been divided into two attendance centers. The kindergarten and first grade attend school at the Primary Building. Second through fourth grades attend Linn School. Each age group has different needs.
At the K-1 level, gifted students are often difficult to identify. Children entering school do so with a wide variety of backgrounds. Some may have had a wealth of experiences with print in the form of books and magazines and extensive opportunities for language development resulting in a broad speaking and writing vocabulary. They also may enter school for the first time as readers. Others may have had only a television set for interaction and exposure to the world around them with little exposure to reading materials or intellectual stimulation, thus delaying their reading achievement (Cushenbery, 1987).

Testing is not always reliable at this age. Some test results may be unreliable due to the child's lack of tools to express what he or she can do. Motor development, auditory acuity and discrimination, and visual acuity and discrimination also have an impact on a child's readiness to read (Cushenbery, 1987). Too, children's physical abilities may impede the expression of cognitive ability (Robinson, 1986). In addition, brain development is incomplete at this age. The corpus callosum is not complete until after seven years of age (Burke, 1989). Some children do not reach seven
years of age until after first grade; therefore, some
cognitive functions may be impossible for them to
perform in the early primary years.

Parke and Nesse (1988) identified characteristics
of able learners at this young age. They include a
faster rate of learning, a heightened sensitivity to
the environment, a good memory, and a longer attention
span than their age mates. The gifted child also is
advanced verbally, but at this young age the verbal
ability is far advanced over the written ability.
Thus, the child at the K-1 level will need additional
help recording responses (Barbe, 1974).

Karges-Bone (1989) found that no state requires
special curriculum or programs for the gifted child
from ages three through five. Martinson (1968)
suggests that inappropriate expectations can be just as
damaging when materials and activities are too easy as
when they are too difficult. There also may be
adjustment problems when the gifted kindergartner has
expectations that are not met and has not the skills to
express the problem. These findings suggest that the
primary level is in need of programming.
At grade levels 2-4, some of the early differences have been eliminated by the common experiences of the classroom, but children at this age level still have not had very many life experiences upon which to base higher order thinking skills. Some of the more complex thought processes, like synthesis and evaluation, are impossible to accomplish without a knowledge base.

Betts and Nelhart (1986) state that children at the early elementary level have the characteristic of not having mastered the skills necessary to direct their own learning. Students need to be provided with these skills.

Faculty/Staff

Due to the small size of the school district, there are only three classroom teachers at each grade level, K-4. There are several special staff members. At the Primary Building there is a half time remedial reading teacher, a part time physical education teacher, and a part time music teacher. At Linn School there is a special education teacher, a learning disabilities teacher, a remedial reading teacher, a half-time physical education teacher, a half-time music teacher, a part-time art teacher, and a library aide.
Classrooms are basically self contained, with some cross-room ability grouping for reading and mathematics. This arrangement is in clear view the main Board Philosophy:

One important factor affecting curriculum is the philosophy of the Missouri Valley Board of Education which states that all children in the district should be provided with equal educational opportunities that will enable each child to develop mentally, physically, socially, culturally and morally to the fullest of his/her potential.

Results of informal needs assessments conducted by the writers indicated that the most able learners in the district required additional challenge and support to meet their educational needs. This led to the formation of a district TAG committee and to the development of this project.

Iowa Code

Another factor influencing the curriculum is the Iowa Code definition of giftedness (Section 442.33) which states in part: "Gifted and talented children are children who require appropriate instruction and educational services commensurate with their abilities"
and needs beyond those provided by the regular school program." From this statement, It is clear that the gifted and talented curriculum should be differentiated from the regular curriculum and that special provisions must be made. At the same time, the Iowa Code is general enough to allow for individual schools to develop their own implementation procedures. This is especially good news for the small rural school because of limited funding and staff.

Needs of the Missouri Valley System

McLeod and Cropley (1989) state that gifted programs must be developed within the framework of existing legislation and resources. The philosophy of the Missouri Valley Board of Education and the Iowa Code have given direction to the development of the gifted program for Missouri Valley Community Schools because the system did not provide for the differentiated curriculum necessary to meet the needs of its identified students. Allowable growth funding has provided the means to develop the program. With direction and means provided, it has been possible to follow the first step in curriculum
development suggested by the Iowa Language Arts Curriculum Guide (1986): the use of a plan. The first step in the plan was to examine existing staff and the possibilities of reassignment to cover the new program. The second step was to examine the specific needs of gifted children at different age levels. The following sections discuss the different needs of gifted children and the assignment of staff at the two attendance centers: Primary Building (K-1) and Linn School (2-4).

**Needs of Primary (Grades K-1)**

The special characteristics of the children at the Primary Building (Grades K-1) indicated a need for a developmental enrichment program in which all children could take part in activities designed to identify any qualities of giftedness. Cushenbery (1987) notes that children at this level have uneven development due to environment, motor development, and auditory and visual development. He suggests planned playground activities for large motor development and handwriting activities and craft projects for fine motor development. The latter may easily be coordinated with language arts/reading activities. Such enrichment of the
regular curriculum can help to emphasize and illuminate a wider range of talents and abilities (Karges-Bone, 1989).

On the basis of these findings, the district's TAG committee decided to have one of the first grade teachers develop large group activities for all the first graders once per month. Products from these activities would be saved for review at the end of first grade. Kindergarten teachers would each implement developmental activities in their own rooms, noting any special products in files for the first grade teacher the next year.

In addition to products, Cushenbery (1987) recommends keeping record sheets on the students with simple notations about each child's behavior patterns, reactions to particular situations, and general work habits. Notations are made only when a particularly interesting observation needs to be recorded. Such additional information, he believes, helps with the identification process and also with further programming for the child's needs.
At Linn School (Grades 2-4), the TAG Committee decided to have the remedial reading teacher reassigned to a fourth grade room for 90 minutes each day to teach spelling and one regular reading group. This made it possible for the fourth grade teacher to have the time to work with the second through fourth graders identified as gifted readers. These classes would meet in the library.

Davis and Rimm (1985) have stated that this type of homogenous grouping is beneficial for two reasons. One is that the students will benefit academically from having the challenge of students with like abilities in the same group. The other is that these students benefit socially from being able to interact with students who will accept and encourage them.

**Common Elementary Needs**

After identifying those needs that were peculiar to each attendance center, common needs were considered to aid in the development of a planned, comprehensive, and articulated curriculum for grades K-4 based on the needs of the students, the latest literature, and the resources available. For example, C. June Maker (1982)
defines the gathering of resources and the collecting of information. These include the consideration of models available, their philosophies, goals, strengths, and weaknesses. The teacher and his or her philosophies, personality, skills, and prior experiences also must be considered. In addition, the district administration, parents, system, and structure affect choices included in a program for talented and gifted students. Finally, the student's common characteristics must be considered in the decision making process for the program design. All of these must be integrated into a program that fits the school's needs.

Analyzing current curriculum models to determine which would work for Missouri Valley constituted the next step in the process. Such curriculum models can be placed into two categories: process models and content specific models (Passow, 1986). Most theorists agree on what the curriculum should include. Thinking skills, abstract concepts, advanced level content, interdisciplinary studies, and a blending of content, process, and product all are named by the various models (Renzulli, 1988).
All process models need to be applied to content. Van Tassel-Baska (1986) describes three models: the content model, which basically accelerates an individual through a subject area; the process/product model, which focuses on the inquiry-based process of problem solving through independent or collaborative study; and the epistemological (concept) model, which focuses on the student's understanding of systems of knowledge and is organized by ideas and themes rather than content or process. The content specific models, such as the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY) (Stanley & Benbow, 1986), are limited in application. There is no one criterion for a gifted student.

After analyzing the various models, taking into account the limited funds and staff in Missouri Valley, it became clear that no one model would work for this system. Each approach or model responds to the different needs of gifted learners (Van Tassel-Baska, 1986). What was needed was a unique program tailored to Missouri Valley's special needs.

A problem facing the development of curriculum for the gifted is a lack of a research base upon which to
build it. Most of the literature on curriculum design for the gifted learner is theory. Van Tassel-Baska and Campbell (1988) state that the uniqueness of identified children requires an environment that is essentially different from the regular school curriculum. These students need to be able to have the time and space to pursue independent interests and have the opportunity to use their intuitive ability. Betts and Neihart (1986) echo this idea of independent study in their theories of self-directed learning. McLeod and Cropley (1989) endorse self-directed learning and add that these students should be involved with self-evaluation. Lapan (1989) lists as one criterion for a gifted program the opportunity for independent thought and action.

Other authors stress the need for higher order thinking skills (Davis, 1989; Fisher, 1989; Lapan, 1989; Martinson, 1968; Renzulli, 1988; Smith, 1974; Witty, 1974), advanced level content or some form of acceleration (Lapan, 1989; Martinson, 1968; Ondo & Session, 1989; Renzulli, 1988; Strickland, 1974), and products or projects (Davis, 1989; Renzulli, 1988).
It would appear, then, that all the previously mentioned design components should be included in a program for the gifted reader. As previously stated, the Missouri Valley School students who attend the Primary Building (K-1) will participate in large group, developmental activities which will serve two purposes: providing experiences which will help to identify talented and gifted students in the area of language arts/reading; and providing opportunities for enrichment of the regular curriculum.

The Missouri Valley School students who have been identified in the specific ability area of language arts/reading in grades 2-8 will meet one class period per day five days per week. The language arts/reading program will replace the regular program. The program will accelerate children through the basal reading material, enrich, and provide opportunities for independent study.

Goals

Given appropriate ability level materials, the goals of the program, in addition to the goals of the regular reading/language arts curriculum, follow:
A. Each student will show development as an independent, self-directed learner.
B. Each student will be presented with opportunities to develop growth in the affective domain.
C. Each student will be able to utilize higher level cognitive thinking skills.
D. Each student will improve in his or her ability to use creative thinking techniques.
E. Each student will be given the opportunity to participate in accelerated and enrichment activities in the areas of language arts/reading.

(See Appendix A)

Implementing a program to meet these general processes or qualities requires more specific planning to match these qualities with the content of a language arts/reading curriculum. Gallagher (1985) sees the language arts as primarily a skills-development area that focuses on four broad skills: writing; reading; speaking; and listening. McLeod and Cropley (1989) also mention providing opportunities for writing.

To clarify how the levels K-1 (at Primary Building) and 2-4 (at Linn School) of this district will attempt to achieve these five goals for the
Identified gifted reader, each goal will be listed, discussed, and elaborated upon at each building level, along with perceived problems in implementation.

**Independent Study Skills (Goal A)**

Lapan (1989) has included time for independent thought and action in her list of criteria for a gifted program. Therefore, to help our language arts/reading students at the K-4 grade levels to become life-long learners, the development of independent study skills is a goal.

**Primary Building (Grades K-1)**

Independent study skills will be introduced at the Primary level. No central library exists, but there are some sets of beginner's encyclopedias in cases in the hallway and some picture dictionaries in the classrooms. Each classroom also has a limited library of picture books. No card catalog or higher level resource books for the gifted learner are in an easily accessible place. Resource materials are the responsibility of each teacher to order from the AEA as they are needed in particular subjects. Research will be limited to the materials at hand. Developmental activities at the Primary Building will
be chosen to provide opportunities to develop skills of self-directed learning appropriate to the level of the children. Here are some of these guidelines for developing independent study skills at Linn School (Grades 2-4):

These students need to be able to access and manage information (Kessig & Zsiray, 1989). Children will be taught information retrieving skills, which are essential to becoming life-long learners, and information recording skills such as note taking, outlining, and keyboarding (Barbe, 1974).

The objective of independent study skills will be easier to meet at Linn School because the language arts/reading classes will be held in the library. This will enable students to select and use materials appropriate to complete independent projects.

Affective Development (Goal B)

The affective development of gifted children has been largely ignored through the years in light of their increased academic needs. However, this is an area that deserves to be acknowledged and developed, not just for its own sake, but for the complete development of the individual, since emotions interact with the learning process (Van Tassel-Baska et al., ...
include provisions for opportunities to integrate cognitive, emotional, and social areas as one of their guidelines for developing self-directed learners. Witty (1974) suggests that interest inventories, given at the beginning of the year, should prove helpful in setting up small groups throughout the year. Small groupings will aid in the development of social skills such as leadership, cooperation, and the awareness and appreciation of strengths and abilities of themselves and others. Robinson (1986) recommends using creative dramatics to foster affective and social development. The language arts/reading curriculum is an ideal place to apply these suggestions by using the stories or poems that are a part of this content area.

**Primary Building (Grades K-1)**

Children entering kindergarten display a wide variety of emotional structures, from a sense of cheerfulness and stability to immature tendencies such as temper tantrums or other anti-social behavior (Cushenbery, 1987). The gifted child is not different. Therefore, activities to develop the affective area for all children are appropriate here. One way in which
the affective development of young children can be achieved is to offer simple choices in the curriculum. Students gain a sense of autonomy when given a set of options to choose from (Parke & Ness, 1988). This can be as simple as choosing to play with blocks or do puzzles, or as complex as choosing how to report on a picture book. All children at the Primary Building will be given options as part of the developmental curriculum.

The curriculum at this level should also include units on the development of self-concept (Van Tassel-Baska et al., 1988). A negative self-image can be damaging to a student's cognitive development and achievement.

McLeod and Cropley (1989) and Van Tassel-Baska et al. (1988) mention using small groups or pairs to complete work. This interaction fulfills the need for the development of social skills. Parke and Ness (1988) also refer to the need for interaction with other children as part of a curriculum for young children. Time should be given for play, exploration and manipulation.
Linn School (Grades 2-4)

Provisions for meeting the affective needs of identified gifted children will be made during the language arts/reading group. Activities will explore topics such as self-awareness, social skills, and cooperation as opposed to competition. As at Primary Building, pairs and small cooperative group instruction will be used at this building to meet the goals and objectives of affective development.

Higher Order Thinking Skills (Goal C)

Tomorrow's leaders need to be able to think critically and creatively. Higher thought processes should be emphasized in class (Lapan, 1989). However, students need to be made aware of the purpose of the exercises and told when they are doing a creative exercise (Davis, 1989). Activities at both buildings will be designed to include the skills of differentiation of fact and opinion, classification of information, and cause and effect.

Primary Building (Grades K-1)

To meet this goal at the Primary Building it will be necessary to provide experiences for the children so they can apply the thinking skills. The problem at
this level is, quite simply, that the children have not lived long enough to gather much information. Activities will need to be developed with that in mind.

Linn School (Grades 2-4)

There has been much discussion through the years over the way higher order thinking skills should be taught. Some believe that they should be taught in isolation and others believe they must be tied to content. It seems that a compromise must be reached. Both approaches should be used.

Starting in second grade, children will be taught specific skills and then given practice using these skills (Davis, 1989). In addition to previously mentioned thinking skills, Linn School students will have opportunities to write questions and make statements at the levels of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Creative Thinking Techniques (Goal D)

Closely related to higher order thinking skills, creative thinking is another important ingredient in a successful program for the gifted. The language arts/reading area is particularly suited to the development of creative thinking because of the
opportunities to examine stories, characters and their motives, settings, and then to create new stories, characters, settings. Polette (1981) has compiled a list of picture books with suggestions of activities to develop creative thinking and the skills of fluency, flexibility, and originality. This would prove valuable to the small school as no special materials need to be purchased.

Two skills included in the language arts are writing and speaking, both areas in which students can be creative. The opportunity for divergent thought and action is an important ingredient of a gifted program (Lapan, 1989). Betts and Neihart (1986) list the concept of ownership as one criteria to become a life-long learner. Participating in activities which require creativity provides this ownership.

The areas of higher order thinking skills and creative thinking skills come together in problem solving. Students need the opportunity for divergent thought and action (Lapan, 1989). Polette (1981) has compiled a list of picture books to stimulate critical thinking skills which include planning, forecasting, problem solving, and decision-making. She has found
picture books to be valuable from kindergarten through middle school.

Given the emphasis of the program on higher order thinking skills and creativity, provisions will be made for students at both attendance centers to engage in real life problem solving. Situations from their day to day life and topics suggested by their interest inventories will provide material for real problems to be discussed, brainstormed, and solved in class.

**Primary Building (Grades K-1)**

In this writer’s experience, children have had more opportunities to be creative in kindergarten and first grade than at any other grade levels. But with the rising concern over basic skills, time for these opportunities has been cut back. Parke and Ness (1988) have stated that time needs to be provided the young child for simple play, exploration, and manipulation. Young children need the time for these experiences to acquire creative thinking skills, problem solving skills, and social skills.

All children in the Primary Building are already receiving numerous opportunities for creative thinking through writing. Story writing is an important part of
each day. The children keep story folders and take them home quarterly. They also have the chance to share their stories orally with the rest of the class. This practice will continue with special attention given to saving pieces of writing for future identification of talented and gifted students.

**Linn School (Grades 2-4)**

As at the Primary Building, the Linn School students have the opportunity to write creatively. The gifted curriculum will continue this tradition and expand it to include poetry and plays. It will also provide time for the students to read or perform their creations.

**Acceleration and Enrichment (Goal E)**

No program would be complete without a provision for acceleration. There always will be part of the general curriculum which is not needed by one or more of the students. In language arts/reading it may be that they can already read the basal readers or write their own stories. An objective of this curriculum will be to offer advanced or enriched content that builds on that which is already known and goes beyond.
the basal reader. This can be implemented in many ways.

Howley (1989) found that in small schools the method chosen for acceleration did not affect achievement. He concluded that this was especially good news for small schools because they work with limited choices. The easiest way to provide for acceleration is to pre-test the children and then teach to the deficiencies. If there are no deficiencies, then the teacher is free to accelerate to the next level of instruction. This flexible pacing provides the best match between student and instruction (Ondo & Session, 1989). McLeod and Cropley (1989) encourage the use of a diagnostic teaching approach: test, analyze mistakes, and teach for mastery in those areas. What results is an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Both Primary Building and Linn School will pre-test the students using the unit tests from the basal reading program to advance them through the material in the least amount of time. Children will be allowed to advance grade level in the reading material but stay with their age mates in the regular classroom. The extra time generated because of acceleration will
enable the talented and gifted reading classes to have more time for enrichment activities. Enrichment activities will produce the products that are an objective of the curriculum. It is in this phase of the curriculum that individual talents and abilities can be correlated with other subject areas and freely expressed in the child's own medium. Cushenbery (1987) states that many young, able readers are very interested in computers and audiovisual equipment. Therefore, these tools will be made available along with the traditional paper, paste, paint, markers, and other necessary materials. The time to do in-depth studies is part of the list of guidelines for developing self-directed learners by Betts and Nelhart (1986). Lapan (1989) also states the need for the opportunity for independent thought and action. Primary Building (Grades K-1) At this level, there is already in place an independent reading option for those students who have mastered the skills of their reading group. In keeping with the developmental curriculum which is available to all, any child is free to participate as much as he or
she pleases. Children's books have been chosen and activities developed to go with them. Children work at their own pace and select the books they wish to read. Other developmental activities will be provided that are open ended in nature, allowing the potentially gifted child the opportunity to go into as much depth as he or she desires.

All the children at the Primary Building will be involved in the making of products as part of the developmental curriculum. These products can then be evaluated as part of the identification process for the formal Linn School program.

**Linn School (Grades 2-4)**

With the availability of a library, self-selection of advanced level reading books presents no problem. However, it has been suggested that interest inventories are valuable in guiding children's choices (Witty, 1974). Cushenbery (1987, p. 11) has provided an excellent reading interest inventory that is suitable for children K-4 (see Appendix B). The interest inventory will serve as a guide to help the gifted child choose topics that can be used for independent study. Instructional reading level will
also be used to guide them in their choices. Other sources which should not be overlooked are current events in magazines and newspapers, biographies, and the classics of literature (Kessig & Zsiray, 1989).

Projects will strive to be multi-dimensional. Root-Bernstein (1987) completed a historical study of many famous scientists and found an interesting trend. Many people who were known only for their contributions to mathematics and science had a background in the arts. The ability to find patterns, make patterns, make analogies, think kinesthetically, visualize, and abstract became essential skills in the field of mathematics and science. Because of this, students will be provided time to plan and carry out projects that may use as many mediums as they feel they need. Because the computer will more than likely be the choice of some, keyboarding will be an ongoing activity in the program at Linn School.

Bryant (1989) purposely integrated several areas in a science unit on machines. The unit lasted roughly two weeks, each day providing a different emphasis. Different days were spent reading, writing, doing research, utilizing small motor skills by building
machines, and reading biographies of authors. The programming at Linn School also will use the unit approach. The use of a unit planning worksheet will ensure that all targeted skills are included (see Appendix C).

Program Evaluation

Carter (1986) states that not much curriculum is evaluated using outcome objectives and theorizes that one reason is because a standard research design would necessitate the use of a control group of gifted students who would be deprived of special curriculum. This would be an unpopular move. He evaluated curriculum with a new research design. This design divided the gifted population into two groups who would receive the same instruction at different times (one being the control group), and a regular population treatment group. If a difference is found between the two groups of gifted, then the curriculum works. If there is a difference between the gifted treatment group and the regular treatment group, then the curriculum is differentiated and appropriate to include in a program for gifted students.
Unfortunately for curriculum planners, most evaluation is based on opinion or attitudes (Carter, 1986; Feldhusen, 1985). Part of the reason that evaluation is so nebulous is suggested by Borland (1989). He offers four widely held definitions of evaluation (judgment, related to objectives, information gathering, and a means of program improvement), and goes on to say that these can be combined for the best results. Evaluation plans, other than those that are experimental studies, consist of checklists or surveys. While these plans do evaluate the perceived success of the programs, much research is needed to determine the success of programs based on outcome objectives which are appropriate for the gifted learner.

However, any program designed to challenge the gifted student should evaluate in an ongoing and systematic manner the scope, content, and management of specific programs of study. Certain factors are considered in choosing methods of evaluation:

1. It should measure how effectively the objectives of the program are being fulfilled.
2. The evaluation process should discover unplanned and unexpected consequences that result from particular program practices. It should be concerned with:

3. The method of evaluation should provide continuous feedback at intermediate stages throughout the course of the program.

4. The evaluation process should identify areas of success which can be used to effectively judge alternative courses of action for the program.

To meet the above criteria, the evaluation procedure in the Missouri Valley School District will consist of five questionnaires to be completed by parents, administrators/school board, Challenge teachers, Challenge students, and classroom teachers (see Appendixes D, E, F, G, and H). The five questionnaires each will address a different aspect of the program. The parents will evaluate how the program meets the needs of their child in the areas of identification and services. The parent will also assess the opportunities available for communication and input. The administrator/school board questionnaire will evaluate the budgetary items, the facilities, and the organization of the program. The
Challenge teacher evaluation will directly address to what extent each of the five goals of the program are met. The student evaluation will be concerned with accountability and opportunities available for personal growth.

Where applicable, the questions on the evaluation forms are keyed to the five program goals. Those evaluation questions not specifically addressing program goals are included to provide additional information to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the total program. For example, the student is asked to give some personal reactions to the program. In the classroom teacher questionnaire such factors as identification, inservice, use of human and material resources, and staff directly responsible for the Challenge Program will be evaluated. Use of these five questionnaires will give a total picture of the effectiveness of the program.

Results of the five questionnaires will be transferred to separate building level matrices based on one suggested by Maker (1982) and displayed in Appendix I. Responses will be numbered and tallied on the matrices. Such comparisons will enable the
teachers to identify easily the strengths and weaknesses of the program across the grade levels. In addition, on-going evaluation procedures throughout the school year will include formal and informal conferences among the Challenge teachers and classroom teachers, parents, and students. This information will be used to make necessary changes in the program, either immediately or for the following school year.

Summary

This writer and the writer of the companion paper, N. Patricia Long, established commonalities for the total K-8 program, researched specific grade levels, and developed program goals and objectives in the area of language arts/reading for talented and gifted students. The long-term result should be an articulated and comprehensive program K-8, providing a differentiated curriculum for talented and gifted students in the Missouri Valley School District. To achieve full implementation, further work needs to be done in the development of curriculum. Specific units, based on the goals and objectives of the program, need to be designed. To provide continuity throughout the grade levels K-8, the two writers will need to
collaborate further in determining the scope and sequence of the content presented at each grade level.
References


*A guide to curriculum development in language arts* (1986). Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Department of Education.


Creative reading for gifted learners: A design for excellence (pp. 8-24). Newark, Delaware:

International Reading Association, Inc.

## Appendix A

### Goals and Program Objectives

A. Each student will become an independent, self-directed learner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>K-1</th>
<th>2-4</th>
<th>5-8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The student will demonstrate individual interest and abilities through the completion and evaluation of learning styles inventories, interest finding and focusing instruments, etc.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The student will participate in general awareness exploratory activities at an accelerated level with a willingness for in-depth work.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The student will use multiple written and nonwritten sources on his or her own.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The student will demonstrate the ability to extract pertinent information needed for projects.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The student will show an understanding of the ingredients of independent self-directed learning and enrichment.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The student will demonstrate the ability to exercise higher level thinking and writing skills.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The student will demonstrate task commitment by following through on long and short range goals.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The student will demonstrate increased ability to research and organize projects on self-selected topics and will evaluate their independent projects.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Each student will be presented with opportunities to develop growth in the affective domain.

1. The student will demonstrate the ability to work positively in peer groups. X X X
2. The student will demonstrate continued improvement in his/her ability to be self-reliant in resource finding. X X
3. The student will demonstrate an awareness of his/her individual strengths, interests, and abilities. X X X
4. The student will demonstrate an awareness of the strengths, interests, and abilities of others. X X X
5. The student will demonstrate increased capacity for leadership. X X X

C. Each student will be able to utilize higher level cognitive thinking skills.

1. The student will be able to differentiate between fact opinion. X X X
2. The student will be able to classify information in logical categories. X X X
3. The student will be able to see the relationship between cause and effect. X X X
4. The student will be able to write questions and make statements using increasingly higher levels of thinking. X X
D. Each student will improve in his or her ability to use creative thinking techniques.

1. The student will be able to solve problems using the creative thinking skills of fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. X X X

2. The student will show flexibility of ideas and/or solutions. X X X

3. The student will be able to recognize the possibility of more than one suitable answer to a question or problem. X X X

E. Each student will be given the opportunity to participate in accelerated and enrichment activities in the areas of language arts/reading.

1. The student will move at his or her own pace. X X X

2. The student will become involved in accelerated content topics/subjects earlier than usual and will explore those not normally studied in the regular classroom. X X X

3. The student will recognize the different enrichment types and purposes and understand why they are appropriate. X X
Appendix B
Reading Interest Inventory

1. Name________________________ Grade__________

   School ____________________

2. Where do you secure most of the books you read for pleasure?
   City library____ Friends____ Bookstores____
   School library____ Home library____ Other____

3. Approximately how many books have you read during the past year?____________________

4. Give the titles of three or four books you have read.
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

5. Do you have any hobbies?_____ If so, what are they?
   __________________________________________

6. How many hours a week do you watch TV?_______ Name two or three TV shows you like best.
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

7. Have you visited any countries beside the United States?_______ If so, what are they?
   __________________________________________

8. Do you read the newspaper on a regular basis?_______
   If you do, what is the name of the newspaper?_______

9. Which of the following sections of the newspaper do you generally read?
   _____ A. Sports  _____ D. Feature Stories
   _____ B. Comics  _____ E. Want Ads
   _____ C. Editorials  _____ F. Other

10. If you had at least an hour of free time for reading each day, what kinds of reading material would you likely select?
    __________________________________________
    Why?______________________________________

Cushenbery (1987, p.11)
| **Appendix C**  
| **Unit Planning Worksheet** |
| **UNIT PLANNING WORKSHEET FOR:** |
| **Goals and Objectives:** |
| Affective Development (Goal B): |
| Thinking Skills, Creative Activities, Problem Solving (Goals C,D): |
| Study Skills, Research Skills, Library Skills (Goal A): |
| Products, Reports, Presentations (Goals A,E): |
| Field Trips, Speakers, Etc. (Goal E): |
| **Materials:** |
Appendix D

Challenge Teacher Classroom Evaluation Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Great Amount</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To what extent do you allow opportunities to deal with real world opportunities? (A,B,E)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To what extent do you teach skills of critical thinking (i.e. studying facts and basing decisions on those facts)? (C,D)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To what extent do you teach research skills? (A,E)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To what extent do you teach skills of creative thinking (i.e. brainstorming, webbing, synetics)? (D)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To what extent do you teach problem solving skills? (D)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. To what extent do you teach the skills of decision making? (A,B,C, D,E)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. To what extent do you allow opportunities to explore new areas of learning within your classroom? (A,E)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. To what extent are your classes allowed to study an area of interest, going farther and faster than usual? (A)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. To what extent do you allow students to work individually or with a group to produce a finished product? (A,B,E)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. To what extent do you give students opportunities to participate in activities which call for creating, analyzing, and evaluating? (C>D)

11. To what extent do you provide students opportunities to help them get to know themselves better and to express their emotions?

12. To what extent do you allow your students to have experience in accepting leadership? (B)
Appendix E

**Student Evaluation of the Challenge Program**

To help us assess our educational program, please indicate in the columns below your reactions to the following questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Amount</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. I learn about subjects and ideas that are new to me. (E)
2. I have opportunities for thinking in group discussions. (B,C,D)
3. I learn to select and pursue topics of interest to me. (A,B)
4. The reference materials that we use are varied and of good quality. (A)
5. I am held accountable for my work. (A)
6. The things I study are challenging and hard enough. (C,D)
7. I am allowed to express my feelings and emotions. (B)
8. I am asked to make decisions and thoughtful judgments. (A,C,D)

9. What I liked best about the Challenge Program was...

10. What I would like to see added to the program is........ because...

11. What I feel should be excluded from the program is...... because...

12. Some consequences of being in the Challenge Program are...

Thank you. Your opinions and feelings are very helpful.

Note: Program Goals measured are noted.
**Appendix F**

**Parent Evaluation of the Challenge Program**

To help us assess our educational program, please indicate in the columns below, your opinion of how these needs are being met in children’s classrooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Great Amount</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Are you aware of the identification process used by your school?

2. Are there ample resources made available, both human and material?

3. Have you had the opportunity to attend a meeting this year concerning the challenge program?

4. To what extent is your child allowed to develop critical thinking ability? (C)

5. To what extent is your child given opportunities to think creatively? (D)

6. To what extent is your child given opportunities to make things, experiment and use new ideas? (E)

7. To what extent is your child given opportunities to understand himself or herself? (B)

8. To what extent is your child allowed experience in accepting responsibility? (A, B)

9. Are you given an opportunity to make suggestions?

Thank you, your opinions and feelings are very helpful.
Appendix G

Administrator/School Board Evaluation of the Challenge Program

Please indicate your reaction to the following questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Great Amount</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Does your school have a written philosophy for gifted education?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Are there written program goals for gifted education?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Is there a defined curriculum for gifted education?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Is the gifted education continuous K-12?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Is the amount of service to gifted students appropriate?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Are the kinds of experiences provided the gifted students appropriate?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Are facilities adequate in each building for your type of program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Are curriculum materials adequate?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Is there sufficient number of teachers to serve the number of students?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Is there a written budget that funds the challenge program?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Is there an identification procedure?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you. Your opinions and feelings are valuable and helpful.
## Appendix H

### Classroom Teacher Evaluation of the Challenge Program

Please rate your feelings concerning the following questions in an effort to evaluate our Challenge Program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Great Amount</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The identification procedures are valid and effective.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Inservice provided to enhance your skills in providing for the gifted students in your classroom is adequate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Human and material resources are being used effectively.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The staff is familiar with the nature of the gifted program.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Staff who are directly responsible for the gifted students are adequately prepared.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Adequate number of staff are available to meet student needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sufficient amount of time and materials are provided in order to meet the students' needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. To help provide for gifted students, I would like...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Some consequences of the Challenge Program are...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you. Your opinions and feelings are valuable and helpful.
## Appendix I

### INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>CHALLENGE TEACHERS</th>
<th>CHALLENGE STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1, 6, 9, 11, 12</td>
<td>2, 3, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2, 6, 10</td>
<td>2, 6, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>2, 4, 5, 6, 10</td>
<td>2, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
<td>1, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MODIFICATIONS NEEDED

- 4 = Great Amount
- 3 = Some
- 2 = Little
- 1 = None
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM COMPONENTS</th>
<th>PARENTS</th>
<th>ADMINISTRATOR</th>
<th>SCHOOL BOARD</th>
<th>CLASSROOM</th>
<th>TEACHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question #’s</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals and Objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #’s</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities! available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #’s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>3, 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials and funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #’s</td>
<td>3, 9</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>2, 4, 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question #’s</td>
<td>3, 9</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>2, 4, 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MODIFICATIONS NEEDED

4 = Great Amount
3 = Some
2 = Little
1 = None

Adapted from matrix by C. June Maker (1982)