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Enrichment Materials in Reading Designed for the Gifted First Grade Child

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ENRICHMENT MATERIALS IN READING DESIGNED
FOR THE GIFTED FIRST GRADE CHILD

A Project
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
Virginia Ann Burke
December, 1978

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FOR THE GIFTED FIRST GRADE CHILD

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This project provides enrichment reading materials for the first grade child who is designated as gifted and is reading beyond the preprimer and primer levels at the beginning of the school year. The materials are divided into four areas; (1) word recognition, (2) comprehension, (3) vocabulary, and (4) study skills. In each of these areas, enrichment activities have been prepared with the most emphasis given to comprehension.

Although originally designed to be used independently, the materials can be used as skill teaching devices.

The difficulty of the materials varies; therefore, the materials have been sequenced according to difficulty.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Public school districts place emphasis, time, and money on helping the child who is reading below grade level. Virtually nothing is being done, however, to help the child who is reading above grade level. These "gifted" children are often bored, neglected, and made to work at a slower pace than necessary. "Durkin drew the conclusion that schools are not willing to abandon their old ways. Children who were reading when they entered first grade were still given preprimers." (15:70). This problem is especially acute in the first grade. Each year there are children entering the first grade who are reading two or three years beyond grade level. These children do not need most of the readiness and beginning reading skills taught in first grade. They quickly become bored and disillusioned with school. With the increased enrollment in preschools and the educational programs now broadcast on television, the number of these early readers is increasing.

In the past, three choices were available for the gifted reader in first grade. One choice was to advance the child a grade. This proved unsatisfactory because the child was socially at a disadvantage with older children

and did not have the skills necessary for subjects other than reading. A second alternative was to place the child through the average first grade curriculum with other children his own age. Unfortunately these gifted children were bored and disillusioned by this alternative. Lastly, the child was placed in an enriched classroom specially designed for gifted children. Although this was a satisfactory solution, it was jeopardized when levies failed and finances were low. Also, this singled out the gifted child and put him in a unique environment socially. Due to the foregoing reasons, the dilemma of the gifted first grade reader is a problem facing first grade teachers who are not trained to teach the gifted.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide enrichment materials in reading beyond the regular classroom material for the first grade student designated as gifted. Reading manuals offer ideas and lessons for enrichment, however, they are insufficient to meet the needs of the gifted. This project will attempt to meet more of these needs in the areas of word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary, and study skills.

The materials can be used independently or as a

teaching device. This allows the child to work on challenging materials while remaining with his peers in the first grade.

Scope and Limitations

Thirty-three folders of enrichment materials were prepared for the first grade student who is reading beyond the primer level and shows mental abilities above average when entering school.

These materials were designed to introduce, re-enforce, and expand skills in word recognition, comprehension, vocabulary, and study skills, with the largest number of materials in the area of comprehension. Because the skills taught in each of these areas overlap, certain skills are repeated under different topics.

The folders provide materials for the gifted child to use in the regular classroom independently, and for teachers to use as teaching devices that involve the gifted child.

The prepared materials are limited to teaching reading skills. They are not to be considered a complete program for gifted first grade children, but, rather as an initial attempt to meet some of their reading needs. The materials will be constantly in a state of amendment.

Definition of Terms

The Gifted Child. "... any child whose performance in a worthwhile type of human endeavor is consistently or repeatedly remarkable." (19:3). These children have an I.Q. of 130 or above and approximately two to four per cent of children are considered gifted (6:4).

Word Recognition. The identification of words through the use of phonics, sight vocabulary, structural analysis, and identification of small words within words.

Comprehension. The understanding of materials read. The different levels of understanding are the literal level, the interpretive level, analytical and critical levels, and the use of application. Methods used to reach these levels of comprehension are the following: reading for detail, finding the main idea of a selection, categorizing information, sequencing events, and contrasting and comparing. This is done with both written materials and pictures.

Vocabulary. The collection of words used by an individual. Because a child's reading ability correlates directly with his vocabulary, it is necessary to increase that collection both in quantity and quality. This is done by the teaching of multiple meanings of words,

application, generalization, and precision of meaning.

Study Skills. The skills necessary to locate information and organize materials. Competency in map reading, categorizing, inference from pictures, using the table of contents, and early dictionary skills are skills necessary to accomplish this.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Figural believes the reason for the concern for the gifted is that investigators have found that in the classroom, the bright students receive the least instructional emphasis (6:144). A 1971 Office of Education Study showed that more than two million gifted children were languishing from lack of attention. Tomasson discovered few services for the gifted existed, and these programs were the first cut for lack of funds (18:688). Pines found that "Millions of children are being irreparably damaged by our failure to stimulate them intellectually during their crucial years from birth to six." According to Figural, millions of others are being held back from their true potential (6:47).

Another reason to be considered is that society needs trained manpower. The gifted, Henry feels, are not being sufficiently stimulated to fill this need (11:9, 15-16). Studies in one state indicated that fifty-five per cent of their gifted children were working below ability. Ming also found that in another state, eighteen per cent of dropouts were gifted children (14:34-35).

Henry revealed that Wolfe and the National Manpower Council discovered that forty-one per cent of children in the top one per cent of tested ability did not enter college or did not graduate. These gifted children were obviously not "taking care of themselves" (11:15-16).

One essential area needing revision in order to help stimulate the gifted is the area of beginning reading. Tomasson found state surveys that indicating half of the gifted learn to read before entering school (18:689). Fliegler states these children often learn to read without formal or informal help (7:218). According to Durkin, "If children are to learn to read at an earlier age, there seems little doubt that methods and materials different from those commonly used in the first grade should be employed." (5:133).

To prepare a reading program for the gifted child it is necessary to identify the gifted and his needs. Henry states that ideally this is done while the child is in preschool or kindergarden. Two methods of identifying the gifted child are commonly used.

At an advanced level, the first method of identification is by using standardized tests' results. General Intelligence Tests, Differential Aptitude Tests, Individual Intelligence Tests, Achievement Tests, and Personality Tests are just a few of the many standardized tests available (11:166-167).

The second method of identifying the gifted child is by teacher or parent observations. The gifted child has many of the following qualities as listed by DeBoer. He learns rapidly and easily, uses a great deal of common sense and practical knowledge, and has good reasoning power. In addition, he retains with little drill and is knowledgeable about areas which are unfamiliar to most children. Also, the teacher will note that the child has a large vocabulary, is curious, alert, and reading one to two years beyond children of his age (4:340-344). Figural suggests additional characteristics to look for are the use of original ideas, good listening skills, and wide interests. A child with several of the above characteristics will most likely be gifted (6:146).

After the gifted child has been identified, there are three choices as to what to do with him in lieu of forcing the child to read below his ability.

The first alternative is to advance the child by allowing him to skip a grade. Fliegler found this an unsatisfactory choice because the child missed the skills taught in the grade skipped. Also, skipping can cause cultural and social isolation which is detrimental, especially to the gifted child (7:225).

A second choice is to place the child in a special group or class designed specifically for the gifted.

Tomasson feels that although better than grade skipping, the chance of cultural isolation still exists. Unfortunately too, these programs are the first ones cut when funds are low (18-690).

DeBoer suggests a third alternative: to keep the child with his peers at grade level and offer him an enriched program. This is the most satisfactory solution financially, as well as the best one for the child (4:313). To do this, it is necessary to prepare enriched materials that fit into the normal curriculum to insure that the child does not feel left out or isolated.

Because the program for the gifted reader should supplement, and even replace part, or all, of the basal, Witty feels it is vital that there is an early assessment of reading skills. Often the gifted reader has trouble or is weak in an area (19:24-25). An Individualized Reading Inventory, Woodcock, or Fountain Valley Tests are all possible means of assessment.

Harris gives some overall objectives for teaching reading to the gifted child. They are: (1) help the child learn to read to learn, and to guide the study of literature, (2) to develop experiences which will help the child integrate language skills and understandings, and (3) to develop mutually reinforcing experiences in reading and writing (10:422).

Hilton states that when guiding the study of literature, it is necessary that the child learns to find main ideas, locate proof for answers, locate main characters, and be able to communicate this orally and in written form (12:1).

After these basic skills have been mastered, Dawson suggests that the teacher then give attention to the quantitative aspects of studying literature. The child needs to learn to trace patterns in a story situation, discover generalizations, read and follow themes, cultivate a social point of view, and share his ideas with others (3:118).

Batchelor feels that critical reading is an area that must not be neglected. The child should ask himself why he is reading a given story, why did the author write it, and should he check other sources (2:35). This is especially important because gifted children are generally avid readers.

Witty recommends building vocabulary through the use of such books as Laird's Tree of Language, Krauss's Pop Up Sound Alikes, and Rand's Sparkle and Spin: A Book About Words (19:32). Gifted children are interested in words and their origins and, therefore, enjoy these books.

It is essential that a good library be available

to the gifted student. Batchelor states it should include books on many different subject areas which are written above grade level. The child needs to be encouraged to develop a personal library and to share his reading with the class either by reading aloud, dramatics, or oral expression (2:41).

A child who is not working up to his potential is a concern in the classroom. Usually this is the slow learner, however, there are gifted children who are not working up to potential. There are special programs designed to help the slow learner, but little or nothing for the gifted child. Once the gifted child has been identified, the most satisfactory solution to this problem is to have the child remain at grade level and receive instruction through supplementary enrichment materials.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Research has shown that the gifted first grade child requires a more challenging reading program than the one offered by the traditional first grade curriculum. The four areas of reading that need enrichment are: (1) word recognition, (2) comprehension, (3) vocabulary, and (4) study skills. Because comprehension is the most important of the four areas, and the ultimate goal of reading, more emphasis and materials are needed in this area.

As the research suggests, this project provides enrichment materials for the gifted first grade child in each of the four areas mentioned above. To provide for easy identification of the four areas by the teacher and student, a different color folder was selected for each. Word recognition activities are in orange folders, comprehension materials are in light orange or pumpkin folders, green folders contain activities for vocabulary enrichment, and study skills were placed in yellow folders.

Enrichment materials were gathered from a variety

of sources. Class notes, workbooks, teachers, idea files, and the newspaper were useful in supplying materials and ideas for this project. The ideas for lessons were then organized under each of the four topics. Many activities fit into more than one of these areas; therefore, there is repetition between the four groups. The lessons that were not appropriate for a gifted first grade student were eliminated or simplified. Also, the materials selected were the ones that provided for student involvement in the lesson.

Thirty-three folders were prepared. There are nine folders for word recognition, eleven for comprehension, five for vocabulary, and eight study skills folders. Comprehension being the most important of the three areas, received the most emphasis.

The folders were prepared so that each one contained all the materials necessary to perform the activities. Directions for the activities were included in each folder. The folders were prepared to be self-correcting in instances where correction is necessary. This allows the student to work on the materials independently or with another child.

After the materials were completed, they were sequenced for difficulty. The folders containing the simplest directions and skills were labeled A. The

folders that expanded these skills and offered more difficult ones, as well as more difficult reading, were labeled B. The most challenging materials, containing complex directions and reading materials at a higher grade level, were indicated by the letter C. A larger number of folders were prepared for the A group than for the B group. There are more B folders than C folders. This allows the child to practice using the folders and become familiar with the format before encountering difficult materials.

After completion, the materials were presented to a gifted first grade student who has been identified by her teacher. At this time she is being considered for advancement to the second grade before completing the first grade. The gifted student used the folders that were appropriate for her level at this time in each of the four areas. She worked both independently and with some teacher direction.

The following problems were noted. There were words used in the directions that she was unfamiliar with, such as alphabetical order. Although she could read the directions, there were skills she had not been introduced to, such as map skills. She needed teacher direction with the more difficult materials. There were not enough A folders for her to use independently.

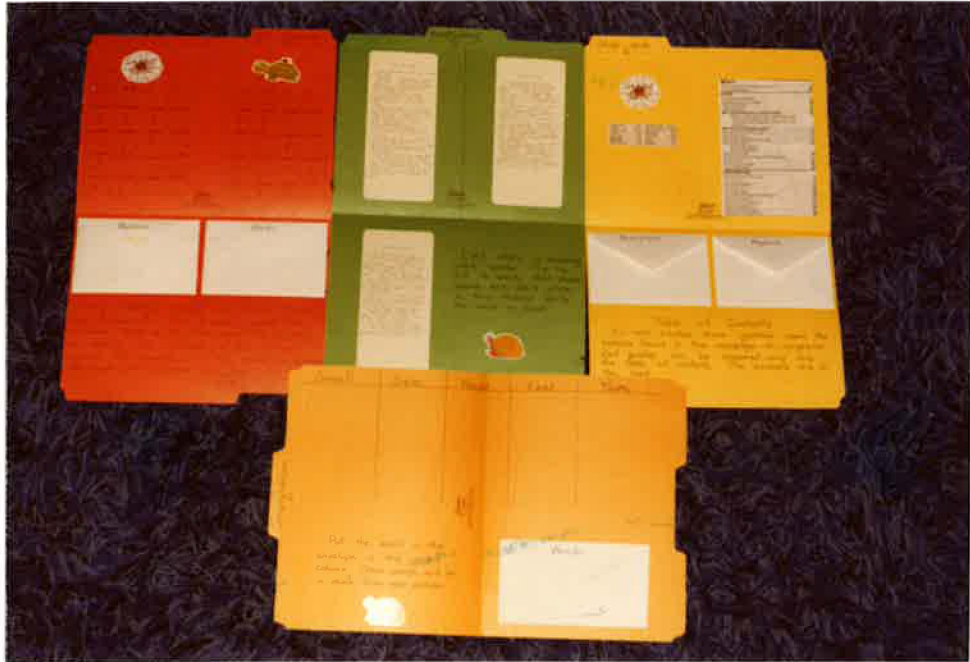
In order to remediate these problems, more A level folders were prepared. These folders repeated skills taught in B and C folders, but used them in a simplified lesson. This was done to acquaint the child with the skill at an easier level. Although helpful, this cannot eliminate the need for teacher direction when new skills are introduced. The folders offer a means to introduce and practice these skills with teacher assistance.



THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE "A" FOLDERS



THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE "B" FOLDERS



THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE "C" FOLDERS

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Research has shown that gifted children are not being motivated, especially in the first grade where they are made to read and work below their ability. Although the materials prepared provide substantial learning opportunities for the gifted first grade child, they are insufficient to meet all of that child's needs, especially in areas other than reading. It is recommended that the reading materials be constantly amended, and that additional enrichment materials in basic writing, spelling, and creative writing be prepared and introduced to augment the child's total development.

The materials prepared are an initial effort to meet the needs of the gifted first grade child. Constant amendment is necessary to provide learning opportunities that meet the needs of the individual child. It is recommended that after identification, an assessment be made of the child's strengths and weaknesses, as is done with the slow learner. From this assessment, the teacher can determine areas where the child needs instruction and/or practice, and if necessary, prepare additional

folders to meet those needs.

The enrichment materials were originally prepared to be used individually by the gifted first grade child. After the materials were used by such a child, it was noted that teacher direction was needed when a new skill was introduced. Because the materials vary in difficulty, they do provide lessons the child can work on independently, as well as others that will require teacher direction. Teacher direction is necessary when a new skill is taught and also when unfamiliar vocabulary is used in the direction. The folders have been sequenced according to difficulty; therefore, the folders marked A can be used independently, while B and C folders will require teacher assistance upon occasion.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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COURSES PRESENTED FOR THE MASTER'S DEGREE

Course Number	Course Title	Number of Credits	Instructor	Quarter Completed
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