

Memories of the Malcolm Price Laboratory School

Language Arts Department:

Junior High and Senior High School 1969-1999

By

Dr. Judy M. Beckman

INTRODUCTION

I joined a team of language arts junior high and secondary school teachers in the fall of 1969. These are my memories of what we taught, how we taught it, and why.

The faculty included Howard VanderBeek, Kenneth Butzier, Marjorie Fink Vargas, and me. Dr. VanderBeek chaired the Language Arts Department. He brought a rich trove of experience and fine leadership to the Department. The three other faculty members had studied with Dr. VanderBeek at one time or another, some as student teachers, others as members of the National Summer Institutes. He had hired all of them with the approval of Dr. Ross Nielsen, Head of the Department of Teaching, and Dr. James W. Maucker, President of the (then titled) Iowa State Teachers College.

FACULTY

Department Head

Dr. VanderBeek served in the United States Navy from 1942 to 1946 in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theatres. He commanded one of the LLC's (Lead Landing Craft) that led the Armada to the Utah beach assault during D-Day. His lead boat, scouting the landing point, was the only one of its' kind which was not sunk.

He received his B.A. degree from the University of Iowa in 1938, and then earned both an M.A. in 1948 and a Ph.D. in 1952 from Columbia University in New York City. His focus was linguistics and literature. He served as a Professor of English Education at Iowa State Teachers College (now UNI) from 1948 until 1983. During summers he taught at the University of Colorado. He wrote a book called Aboard the LCC 60 about his war experiences. He also authored two editions of Guide to Modern English, a five-volume text book series for Scott Foresman Publishing Company.

Dr. VanderBeek chaired the Department, taught twelfth grade language arts classes, and the language arts workshop until 1983 when he retired. He and his faculty were also involved with teaching in other ISTC/SCI/UNI departments and serving as consultants to Iowa schools. These

responsibilities were expectations of Iowa State Teachers College (SCI and UNI) professors who taught at the Malcolm Price Laboratory School.

During the summers of 1974, 1975 and 1976, Dr. VanderBeek, Judy Beckman, and Judy Finkelstein offered Creative Language Arts Workshops for teachers in the state. The focus was on helping teachers develop materials and strategies for teaching that would accomplish their goals and objectives in ways they had not previously thought of using. These workshops were very popular and had to be capped at fifty participants. Judy Beckman worked with the upper elementary and junior-high school teachers. Judy Finkelstein guided the pre-school through third grade teachers, and Dr. VanderBeek led the high school teachers for the three-week duration of the workshops. Two sessions were offered each summer during June and July.

Junior High/Secondary Faculty 1969.

Kenneth Butzier taught ninth and tenth grade language arts; the drama class; and directed the 9-12 drama events and co-directed the variety shows, Madrigal Dinners, and musicals with Dr. Les Hale. He supervised student teachers and supervised student senior projects during his entire career at the Laboratory School. Butzier graduated from Iowa State Teachers College in 1953. He student taught with Dr. VanderBeek at the Laboratory School when it was located on the main campus in the building now known as Sabin Hall. He received his master's degree in speech from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and did post graduate work at the University of Northern Colorado. The Iowa High School Speech Association gave Butzier its highest award: that of Outstanding Teacher of Speech and Drama in 1978. The auditorium at Malcolm Price Laboratory School was named the Kenneth G. Butzier Auditorium in his honor in 1986. Also in that year he was inducted into the Iowa High School Speech Coaches Hall of Fame. After the Lab School was torn down in 2012, the Lobby at the Strayer Wood Theater on the UNI campus was named in his honor.

Marjorie Fink Vargas taught at the Laboratory School after being hired by Dr. VanderBeek in 1964. She took her undergraduate B.S. degree in English and her Master of Fine Arts degree in Linguistics from the University of Wisconsin. She taught tenth and eleventh grade language arts, photography, and guided the production of the NU Panther Yearbook each year. She also supervised students in publishing the creative writing magazine for over 40 years and sponsored senior Lab School students who took a semester senior project in writing. She supervised student teachers, edited faculty and student publications, and was a writer for the Waterloo Courier as well as a book reviewer and columnist for the Des Moines Register. She also authored Louder Than Words: A Guide to Non-verbal Language.

I came to the Laboratory School in 1969, the year after I completed the B.A. degree in English from SCI. I earned the M.A. degree in Secondary Reading in 1973, and was awarded a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in English Curriculum in 1995. I taught seventh and eighth grades, the tenth and twelfth grade Student Planned and Evaluated Learning, SPEL Program, and the English Language Arts Workshop. I costumed plays and musicals for Kenneth Butzier and Les Hale and supervised senior students who took a semester's credit in costuming. The students designed and created the costumes for the Spoon River Anthology, Fiddler on the Roof, and Mary Queen of Scotts.

In 1973, I was given the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Outstanding Teacher Award. The State of Iowa Board of Education named me one of the Outstanding Teachers in the 1989-90 Iowa Teacher of the Year Program. I served as President of the Iowa Council of Teachers of English, and also as Membership chair. I co-chaired the Beginning Reading Conference with Dr. Finkelstein, begun in 1969. I reviewed books and co-wrote a column for the National Council of Teachers of English called "Books and the Teenage Reader," as well as a monthly column of teacher suggestions for the Iowa Council of Teachers of English state NEWSLETTER. I served as chair of the National Council of Teachers of English Middle School Association and chaired the 1987 national convention program in Cincinnati, Ohio, as well as those which followed from 1988-1991.

In addition to teaching responsibilities for the Laboratory School, I taught university courses in secondary reading, remedial reading, reading in the language arts, and other classes through the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. I also taught a correspondence course in adolescent literature and writing for many years for the English Department through the Office of Extension directed by Jim Bodensteiner. When studying for my doctorate at the University of Minnesota, I taught methods in English language arts and a course in adolescent literature on the Minneapolis campus.

I served as chair of the MPLS Language Arts Department following Dr. VanderBeek's retirement from 1983-1995. I served as Elementary Principal for two years, from 1995-1997. I then returned to my secondary appointment as Language Arts Chair for two years from 1997-1999. From the fall of 1999 until 2006 I joined the Department of Student Field Experiences as a coordinator for the Janesville, Shell Rock, and Waverly, sites. In 2006 I retired and in 2007 I received Outstanding Emeritus recognition.

THE JUNIOR HIGH/SECONDARY STUDENTS

Most of the students entered the junior high seventh and eighth grades from the sixth grade of the Malcolm Price Laboratory School elementary program. However, at that level an agreement with the Cedar Falls Public Schools allowed students who lived outside the geographic Lab School attendance zone to enroll in our program.

The majority of the students continued on to ninth through twelfth grades. Dr. VanderBeek and his fellow language arts faculty knew that even though students were placed in seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades, they brought with them maturity and skill levels that ranged from fourth grade through the sophomore year in college (or more). They also brought with them a wide range of interests. Diversity in the student body was valued at Price Lab School. We welcomed students of color, as well as those with special needs, students of various religious faiths, and family configurations.

In addition to recognizing the uniqueness of each student, the faculty realized it was critical to understand the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of the adolescent. It was imperative that the integrated language arts program in the seventh through twelfth grades be designed to meet their needs in all these areas. Dr. VanderBeek's devotion to building an

integrated and vertically articulated language arts program at the 7-12 grade levels was approved and supported by Dr. Nielsen, Head of the Department of Teaching.

DIVERSITY 1971.

In 1971, Ross Nielsen and other faculty members developed a program in conjunction with administrators of the Waterloo Schools and leaders in the African American community in Waterloo. Through this program, parents of students of diverse ethnic backgrounds from the East Waterloo school system could elect to send their children to the Price Laboratory School N/K-8 grade program and/or Northern University High School. This inclusion led to growth in awareness for Price Lab teachers and students as well as the university level students who participated at the Lab School in various capacities.

In language arts, additional books were purchased so that all students could understand more fully diverse ethnicities. The students would read and write about people from a wide range of backgrounds. Some students from the Waterloo program were not used to regular free reading times. They grew in their use of the library and in their independent reading.

University students frequently came from single ethnic backgrounds and were introduced to our multi-ethnic inclusion language arts program. This dispelled notions about ability and performance among multi ethnic groups. UNI students worked with the Lab School students when they had their “sales” to earn money. This was an opportunity for the college students to see the students outside the classroom and watch them grow in their social cohesiveness.

Close relationships with parents were developed. Parent-teacher-student conferences were held twice a year. Every effort was made to schedule conferences at a time that was convenient for working parents in the Waterloo and Cedar Falls area. Allowing at least a half hour for conversation and questions was important. No conferences were ever rushed. If a parent and child could not make it to the Lab School the day the conference was scheduled, faculty members went to the homes for these meetings. The conference system and the advisor program were effective in developing close ties with both students and parents. The advisor followed the student from seventh grade through graduation. We all--students, parents, and faculty--grew as partners in our mutual support of all students. Because of this focus, the closeness between parents and faculty became strong.

THE INTEGRATED LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM N/K-12

Dr. VanderBeek, with his elementary-secondary colleagues, crafted an N/K-12 language arts curriculum that integrated reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, and visualizing. Artistic and dramatic expression were integrated as well. The strength of the program grew out of the partnership among all grade levels in integrating and vertically articulating the Language Arts curriculum. A committee of elementary and secondary teachers developed a *Language Arts Curriculum Guide*. The document provided teachers at each level with guidelines for their integrated teaching. Other than this guide, there were no adopted published programs; teachers were free to select materials which they felt would best fit their group, as well as meet the expected criteria set out in the curriculum guide.

TENETS OF THE PROGRAM

Elementary colleagues from N/K-6 developed seventh grade students who were confident in themselves as learners. They came with skills in making choices in relationships with others and possessed knowledge of how to solve interpersonal problems. They came with knowledge that they could DO SCHOOL. They were thinkers and freely expressed their thoughts. The students who came into what was at that time called junior high needed to be confident about their surroundings and sure of their teachers' support. This movement from “elementary” to junior high was a challenging shift for some students. Junior high students attended the Laboratory School from 8:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. Students took seven courses, each taught by a different Laboratory School professor, which was a change from the self-contained or possibly team taught classrooms of the elementary school.

In addition to language arts classes, students would participate in science, mathematics, social studies, music, industrial technology, art, home economics, and physical education classes. Furthermore, they could expect to share their day with college observers, participants from college classes, visitors, and student teachers. As faculty members and their teachers, we were expected to listen to the students and also to help them ask questions of us and their fellow students. Learning occurred by interaction with classmates, college students, and teachers. Learning also occurred for the college/university students. Laboratory School students going through the N/K-12 program could expect to interact with 1500 university students during their Laboratory School career. (Duea, J. M. (1976). *An Assessment of Provisions for Practical Teacher Education Experiences and Research in Public, Private and Laboratory Schools*. Iowa State University, Ames. 233 pp.)

Teachers were expected to grow in knowledge of their students and the colleagues with whom they worked. Previous teachers in the students' elementary experience were valuable resources when assessing the skills and knowledge new junior high and high school students brought with them. Faculty friendships were easily attained and held—along with collegial respect. We worked in close proximity to one another, often just a room or two down the hallway. We were also encouraged by our department head, Dr. Ross Nielsen, to get to know our colleagues informally. He expected us to make time to sit down, talk, drink coffee, and become members of a team dedicated to the students. However, with the range of responsibilities for Laboratory School students, university students, and colleagues in the larger university, coffee time was often difficult to squeeze into the demands of the day. We didn't always have the time to sit down and relax over coffee, but we often lunched together, and traveled to classes we taught together in other departments or through extension assignments. These were never gripe sessions. Rather they were gifts of time to share experiences with colleagues. Meeting individual needs of students was facilitated by the free exchange of knowledge and ideas between and among these fellow teachers.

The language arts program was more than an integrated program; students were learning *how to learn*, rather than how to learn for testing. Believing that they could do school was not a treatment, applied once, but a constant effort to grow as they moved from early adolescence through later adolescence and into early adulthood. They were constantly reassured that their ideas and communications were valued and heard. Students were encouraged to talk to each

other and their teacher(s) while they were in the process of working. Teachers were directly and constantly involved in what students were doing. They asked questions and drew attention to the successes the students were accruing. Students worked in groups or in concert with other classmates; therefore, the classroom was seldom expected to be silent, but rather purposefully noisy.

The faculty applied the Goodlad (1983) research. They believed that the categories of academic and social knowledge comprised many of the insights students learn in school. As students grew in their ability to learn and find information on their own, and grew through social and academic interactions with other students, they grew in the literacy skills included in this integrated language arts curriculum.

Students were celebrated for what they *could do*. Completed assignments in literacy skills were kept in a folder so students and their teachers could make plans to enhance their strengths and shore up skills that needed attention. Information was constantly collected on a student's physical, social, emotional, creative and academic development. This data provided records of growth used for parent conferences and shared with other teachers.

PARENT INVOLVMENT

Advising Students

As we became more familiar with our students, we grew to know their parents. Soon after school opened in the fall, an Open House was held. Students and parents followed the students' schedule, meeting the teacher of each class for 30 minutes where they were introduced to the expectations and curriculum for those courses. This was the beginning of a conversation that continued through the year through individual meetings or phone calls, and parent/student/teacher conferences.

The latter occurred three times a year at the end of each nine weeks. Ten to thirteen students were assigned to one of their PLS teachers as advisees. This advisor followed the student from seventh through twelfth grade. Strong relationships were built with students and their parents over these six years. It was the advisor's job to see that students were prepared to co-present their work during the nine weeks conferences. Parents asked questions, often complimented students, and joint plans were made for improvements, continued involvement, or special programs for the coming nine weeks. Movement from the elementary conference program into the secondary advisor/advisee program was facilitated by the support and advice of students' former elementary teachers.

These advisor/advisee/parent conferences were closed to university/college students unless parents and their student(s) were willing to allow an outsider visit.

Since conferences contained data from all content areas, constant conversations about on-going progress and student concerns included interactions with other secondary colleagues. The advisor was responsible for constant "check-ins" with content teachers, which could lead to written or telephone conversations with parents that might be needed during a given nine week

period. Advisors were sources of a first line contact when a student needed help in a class or with a report card evaluation that called for a conference with the advisor, student, parent and teacher of that particular class.

This program also included participation of advisors in the advisees' social and fund raising events. These money raising events were great social times for the students, teachers and, counselors involved. They got to know each other better outside the classroom.

Reporting Progress

Report cards were unique. They took a long time for PLS teachers to prepare, because they were especially descriptive as well as evaluative. In-depth comments were always given that described the student's work in units of the integrated language arts program. These descriptions included work done as a social member of the class as well as the quality of the student's participation in that work. The second part of the report card celebrated the student's particular skills and described the instruction and student work that would continue during the following nine weeks. Letter grades were not given until ninth grade.

Folders of writing samples followed students from elementary school and continued to be kept for future teachers, as well as for advisor/advisee/parent conferences. Drafts and finished products were shared with parents at any time--as well as at the assigned scheduled conference. Again, the teachers' critique of products included individual celebrations of work, of mechanics and usage growth and/or need for continued improvement, rather than whole class comparison by grades. Critiques were positive in tone and encouraged students to want to proceed in the learning process.

Ninth Grade – Twelfth Grade Report Cards.

High school report cards continued to be both evaluative and descriptive. Descriptive comments took two forms. One was a letter grade that evaluated student progress compared to his/her colleagues in the class. The second grade described the effort the student made for the nine weeks compared to his/her ability to perform. The letter grade was given in order that grade records could be compiled to provide colleges, universities, and technical schools indication of rank in class and an individual's success in a variety of language arts skills.

Parents were invited and welcomed in the classroom at all times. Visits might be followed up with conferences with an instructor then or at a later time. Some parents, eager for involvement in their child's progress, visited frequently and provided after school or at home assistance for them. Compulsory nightly homework was not a required practice until high school. Adolescents in the laboratory school had church commitments, music lessons, and practice sessions that filled their evenings. Their teachers valued time with family as part of the development of the total individual. Time to rest and get sufficient sleep for an active academic day was also considered important.

FACULTY PLANNING SESSIONS

Teacher/professors in the four-person language arts department met weekly. At two of these meetings each month, the purpose was to discuss department and curricular concerns regarding the vertically articulated, integrated language arts curriculum. At the other two meetings during the month the teachers discussed students who did not seem fully engaged in the language arts program. Each teacher shared a list of students who demonstrated the following attributes: did little or no leisure reading or writing; began an assignment but failed to complete it; were very verbal about their dislikes for any/all the language arts; were opposed to the regular library visit; wasted their time at the library or when writing; or became a discipline problem during work time in one or more of the language arts activities. After each teacher shared his/her list, the group discussed things they could do to assist the students to rectify these problems. More individual attention or modification of the academic/social program and how to implement these strategies were discussed. Plans were made and each teacher made a commitment to work with his or her students. Attention to the needs of individual students and for modifications in the program were essential.

These meetings were held to keep all four language arts faculty members aware of any new materials being used in a given class, new practices that were being experimented with, and successes or difficulties with current curricular offerings.

Student teachers were permitted to be part of all these meetings. They began to learn why the Laboratory School language arts faculty met weekly to discuss the appropriateness of a student's program and how individual teacher assistance and program modification might be implemented. They saw over the course of the student teaching experience how these practices impacted the Lab School students' attitudes about their language arts experiences, and how important this was for student growth.

Work Samples

Examples of students' work were placed in individual folders, which were kept during students' tenure in the Laboratory School. These language arts portfolio collections were begun in the early childhood program and could include nursery/kindergarten literacy experiences. Samples to be passed on in the language folder were gathered throughout the year. These artifacts included reading records, pieces of writing, drawings, reading/response journals, and partially written pieces which the student would wish to continue to work on in the future.

Some of the language artifacts were selected by the teacher to represent the student's best work. Some were chosen by the student and consisted of those which the student was particularly proud of, and/or any other language work that he or she wished to pass on to his or her next teachers. Still other conference materials for inclusion were selected cooperatively by both student and teacher.

STUDENT TEACHERS ASSIGNED TO THE LANGUAGE ARTS DEPARTMENT

Student teachers working in the Laboratory School were introduced to the group teaching technique of response/evaluation for critique of student writing. This technique involved having the Lab School students, working in small groups, read drafts of their papers to each other. The

students would seek to understand each-others' writing, ask questions of each other, and make suggestions that the writer might adapt. They also helped each other with spelling, punctuation, and usage corrections so that final drafts were as perfect as possible. The teacher's role was to listen, to guide when needed by asking leading questions, and to support and encourage group work. The student teachers learned that teaching is not standing in front of a group and telling, but more like being a coach who listens, questions, and guides students as they develop their own learning.

In addition, student teachers were introduced to the Lab School's method of assessment of student work for grade evaluation. In their own academic background, most had been given letter grades rather than in-context descriptive language statements. They learned how to offer descriptive and evaluative assistance to students, and how drafts of compositions or responses to reading gave way to other drafts. Student teachers were frequently familiar with the "assign and assess" method of teaching where one assignment would lead to a single paper that would be "graded." In the faculty planning sessions, student teachers learned discussion and questioning techniques, and the importance of wait time between questions. They also learned how to cull from as well as to write appropriate practice materials as they taught language skills such as paragraph construction, usage, and varieties of grammar. Frequently the sources for these practice "lifts," came from one or both of Dr. VanderBeek's Guide to Modern English Editions I and II, and/or Louder Than Words: A Guide to Non-verbal Language by Marjorie Fink Vargas.

Student teachers were usually well aware of classical literature from their college courses and their own high school assigned novels. They were much less aware of the quality of the adolescent novels, short stories, poems, and essays available to junior high and secondary students. Even a college course in adolescent literature could scarcely prepare them for the demands that would be made on them to meet the interests students in the secondary school brought to the classroom. The language arts faculty worked assiduously to help student teachers learn to match student reading interests and abilities with young adult literature. The student teachers usually came to know the importance of possessing a growing knowledge of adolescent titles, their content, and the adolescent audiences who might be interested in reading these works. New awareness of the ongoing learning that lay ahead of them after they took their first job ensued.

Student teacher seminars were held each Thursday from 3:15 until 5:30 p.m. At these meeting student teachers could talk to one another and their faculty supervisors, describe their plans, and discuss their new knowledge about the students they were teaching.

GUIDANCE FACULTY AND THE LANGUAGE ARTS DEPARTMENT

Guidance Counselors Dr. Richard Strub and Dr. Len Froyen, who later moved to the Educational Psychology Department on the "Hill," provided four major services to the secondary language arts department (7-12th grades): seventh grade orientation; attendance at the language arts faculty weekly and monthly meetings; preparation for and advice on interpretation of the results of the standardized tests the students took each year (Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and Iowa Tests of Educational Development); and small group sessions which focused on student needs.

Seventh Grade Orientation

In the early fall of the seventh grade year, Dr. Strub planned an orientation program to welcome these students into the junior high. This was helpful because students entering the junior high school were moving from a self-contained classroom with one main teacher for content instruction (plus teachers for music, art, and industrial technology) to many teachers in various rooms in the high school wing of the building. Students were given their schedules, then walked through the building to observe secondary school students involved in the content classes of math, science, language arts, and social studies as well as the junior high sections of art?, industrial technology, typing, home economics, and physical education. The possibilities of daily classes in Spanish or French; of chorus, band, or orchestra in music; of extra-curricular competitive sports; and the junior high (7th and 8th combined) homeroom were also explained. Seventh grade orientation activities included an opportunity for students to describe their interests as they introduced themselves to their classroom colleagues. This allowed them to practice using informal informative speaking skills.

Orientation to seventh grade also included small group sessions to allow multi-ethnic groups to discuss academic and social interests and challenges? These discussion groups occurred during the language arts classes every week at the beginning of the year. Later in the semester, every other week small groups of students would leave language arts for their guidance meetings. The students left the language arts classes for these meetings because the Language Arts Department faculty had all of the students during each day. Further, they recognized the importance of such groups and understood the value of the groups for the students' social skills as well as their language arts skills. The students learned and improved their discussion and compromise techniques through these sessions, and the in-class results were that they stopped arguing in class and learned to listen to each other. Additionally, students from the Waterloo/Price Laboratory School program became more active participants in discussions, group writing assignments, and in-class dramatic events as a result.

Guidance Counselors Involvement in Language Arts Faculty Meetings

Dr. Strub came to all weekly language arts faculty meetings. He felt he needed to know more about any students who were having academic or social difficulties. He also attended the meetings during which curricular changes were being considered. This way he could share with other content area advisors changes in the language arts and also keep language arts faculty up to date on changes in other departments.

Standardized Testing Preparation and Interpretation

During the academic year junior high students took the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills in the spring of each year. The results were shared with parents during the spring parent-student-teacher conference.

Dr. Strub met with students and language arts teachers to prepare students to do their best work on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. He then discussed their results and assisted the faculty in making skilled presentations of these test results to parents.

The Iowa Tests of Educational Development were administered to the students in the secondary school, grades 9-12. In the fall, Dr. Strub discussed these tests with the students to prepare them for this event. He also discussed the results with the students in language arts classes and with the teachers during department meetings before scores were presented to parents at the second nine-week conferences.

Small Group Sessions

Dr. Strub continued the counseling groups mentioned above throughout the junior high years. These groups were valuable as students grew in cooperative learning and social skills. Dr. Strub's office was always open to students who had difficulties, but the need for counseling changed significantly in the secondary school (9-12). During these years he assisted students with college preparation. He helped students collect written recommendations, sought out scholarship opportunities, and assisted students in making wise "elective" course decisions. He kept close track of elective choices to make certain they were appropriate for meeting State of Iowa and NUHS credit requirements for graduation, as well as to meet university, college, tech school, and work world requirements

CURRICULUM

The school's faculty believed that students come to school with extensive, refined language arts skills, although they enter at various states of language sophistication. Students were expected to develop at their own rates through the N-12 program, rather than mastering specific skills during a given academic year of instruction. From the time they began formal schooling a constant effort was made to expand the students' awareness and use of all phases of the language arts across the content areas. Through an integration of all the language arts, students develop as creative, logical, and critical thinkers who use language for learning and for pleasure.

Recognizing that students learn at different rates and over different lengths of time, faculty believed that the program should be developmentally and individually appropriate by providing an environment conducive to: developing, expanding, and refining language sophistication; developing desire, ease, and facility in composition; developing facility in spoken language; fostering reading interests and positive attitudes towards reading by modeling and demonstrating reading pleasure; and creating student awareness that language development is a lifelong socialization process that occurs in a variety of environments, including the home, the school, and in career experiences. Figure 1 is a visual representation of the English language arts discipline as described and implemented at Price Lab School. It was developed by a team of teachers from the Price Lab School (see below) and used by schools throughout the State of Iowa.

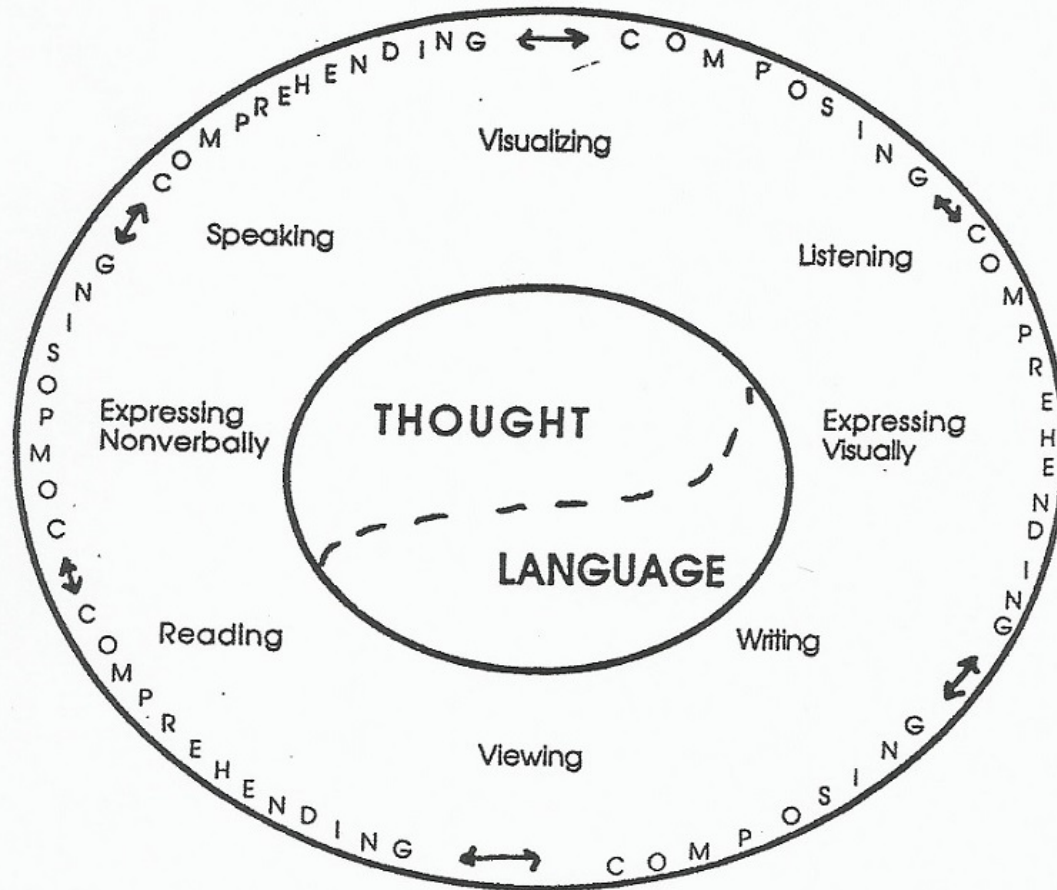


FIGURE 1: Language Arts Curriculum Diagram

Source:

(Title: Language Arts Curriculum; Nursery/Kindergarten--Twelfth Grade

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Contributors: Judy Beckman, Maribelle Betterton, Janice Blockhus, Darlene Cooney, Judith Finkelstein, Judith Gish, Cheryl Grosvenor, Diane MacLennan, Diane McCarty, Kim Miller, Kathy Oakland, Connie Rouse, Sue Ellen Savereide, Mary Kathleen Schneider, Elizabeth J. Strub, Denise Tallakson, Richard Vanderwall, Marjorie F. Vargas.

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JUNIOR HIGH-SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE PROGRAM

Students participated in 50 minutes of English language arts class each day. Before class began, students were expected to read from a book of their choice. This regular reading was a critical part of the curriculum. A weekly trip to the library was provided. Individual students were free to go to the library to pick out a new book if they finished their title during the whole class reading period. Within these five 50-minute periods, students had two days of writer's workshop Monday-Wednesday, and two days of reader's workshop Tuesday-Thursday.

The 50-minute periods on Fridays were a gift of time to recall, regroup, and record. First, all students had 30 minutes of library time. This time was quickly used. Students returned books and shopped the book spinners for new titles with multiple copies. Junior high students frequently want to read and discuss the same titles. This search and the conversation the "shopping" evoked were imperative. The social needs of the junior high student are fed by such searches.

Students also needed time in the library to become familiar with the skills involved in research. Writing was in constant process and students used this time to seek materials that enhanced their papers for language arts as well as other content areas. This often took more than 30 minutes and these students remained in the library to continue the search and note-taking they had begun for the final twenty minutes. They were supervised and assisted by Librarian Kent Mc Intyre.

Other students returned to the classroom. Lab School students did not have required homework. Therefore they had many tasks to update or complete during the remaining twenty minutes of class time. Students kept personal records of their reading; the genre, and the date completed. They also kept and maintained in their personal journals a record of various papers they had completed. All of this needed to be updated. Their personal spelling and weekly word study lists also required review and entry into the journal.

The final twenty minutes were used by some students for reading and writing conferences with the teacher. All of these activities prepared them to begin a new week with tasks that were in place and ready to be tackled. No matter what they were engaged in, the final twenty minutes quickly vanished.

During the two days devoted to writing, attention focused on instruction and practice including writing for self, writing for peers, and writing for an unknown audience. Content, form, and accuracy were stressed as students' compositions moved toward final form. During this time, students were free to talk with their group to share a writing draft. Accuracy included attention to spelling, punctuation, mechanics, levels of usage, and the grammar of English. Instructional tasks were aimed at stretching abilities that were in the process of maturing. Final drafts were read and critiqued by the teacher to further the knowledge of a particular writer or determine what whole class lessons required teaching or re-teaching.

The reading focus included age-appropriate and interest-appropriate classic and modern young adult literature experiences. Students were encouraged to advertise a particularly wonderful title they had read. This was a perfect way to "sell" their fellow students on a "next read." Comprehending and responding to poetry, short stories, novels, plays, and nonfiction by

professional and peer authors were also areas of concentration during the two 50-minute reader's workshops. These experiences were intended to extend students' existing awareness of the variety of structures within each genre.

All students in the school were enrolled in the junior high language arts classes. No students were ability-grouped in these classes. Students whose parents and elementary teachers recommended special language arts instruction were grouped in ways determined by outside consultant services and seldom in conjunction with the classroom teacher. These students were offered instruction elsewhere and were enrolled in private or college clinical services, special education facilities within the school, or in surrounding facilities in the city. The future of a student's participation in these specialized programs was determined by the parents, state consultants, and to some extent the administrators within the school.

The Bicycle Trips to Island Park

Seventh and eighth grades were transitions from heavily activity oriented programming to more formal academic units. For example, in the fall students took part in a language arts/science event. Students and teachers rode bicycles from the Lab School to Island Park to enjoy a picnic, games, and science exploration. Jody Stone, a teacher in the Lab School Secondary Science Department, co-sponsored this event with me.

Preparation for the picnic included bake sales to earn the picnic grocery money. The whole group planned the menu and constructed a grocery list. With the cooperation of a local grocer, a small group of students whose task it was to purchase the food, went to the grocery store; read labels for appropriate and healthy selection of ingredients; purchased the food; and brought it all back to school. Finally, another small group of students decided on the steps necessary for the preparation of their picnic foods.

The bicycle trip to Island Park, some five miles from the school, was enough to keep the students enthusiastic about each of the planned activities. A car brought out the athletic equipment and carried the groceries for the picnic.

Reading and writing activities prepared for this trip. They included a unit on bicycle safety. A police officer visited the classroom and talked about the importance of bicycle safety. Especially important was the information on riding in large groups. The officer talked about the numbers of students who should make up each group of riders, the distance that should be maintained between the groups, and the importance of keeping jackets on rather than tied around their waists where they could get caught in wheels and throw the rider off his/her bike. The classes made posters from this presentation, an important review of what they had learned. They hung the posters all around the school. In addition, they visited various classes N/K-6th grade and shared information on this topic, which was valuable for all students in the school.

Service Projects

Junior High Students did service projects. They took a class period to clean the schoolyard of papers, sticks, and leaves. They went to homes of the elderly and assisted them in cleaning up

leaves and debris from their yards. Seventh graders planted acorns in local parks in the fall and went back in the spring to see if they had come up. Poems, short stories, and imaginative writing ensued. These were bound into books and placed in the school library.

Money Making Projects

Students began projects to earn money when they came into seventh grade. The class would be earning money through their efforts so they could put on the prom when they were juniors. Their biggest moneymaker was selling popcorn, candy, and soda for basketball games held in the Ross Nielsen Field House. This was an exciting event and a lot of chaos as well. All the kids wanted to sell. Being behind the counters was a privilege. One time, math teacher John Tarr carefully constructed a chart that assigned students “selling times.” That worked for the first “crew.” They just didn’t leave. The next assigned group came and now we had two groups selling, standing around talking to each other and to potential customers. Again, when the third “shift” came, the enthusiasm of the first two shifts did not abate. They stayed. All of them. By the end of the evening we had a herd of kids behind the counter filling cups, selling candy and soda. What a crowd. The best part of this was that the “crew” was large enough and energetic enough to stay and be the cleanup crew.

Junior high students also began the Youth for Understanding Cake Walk. This was like musical chairs except the final person won a cake. By the day of the sale my office looked like an overstuffed bakery, cakes everywhere. One year a group of boys decided they would get together and make the “cake to end all cakes.” They did. They created a cake in the shape of the UNI Dome. This was no small challenge. The dome was not then built. The students built their cake from a picture of the “future dome.” The boys became overly fond of their cake. They decided it was just too fantastic to go into the sale. They collected money, actually \$48, and bought their cake before it went into the musical cake contest. They went off, all of them, forks in hand, to eat their treasure. The sky-high price they paid didn’t matter to them: owning that cake was all that mattered.

The junior high students hosted and provided food for numerous bake sales. Again, the day of the sale my office smelled of frosting and baked cookies. The crowd of kids could hardly wait for the day to end so they could set up their tables, carry down their treasures and begin to make money. No one left and went home. After all, counting the money and celebrating their effort to earn money for a project was an essential part of the event.

They earned money for bus trips like their trip to the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis to see The Christmas Carol as well as the admission price for plays at the Strayer Wood Theatre on the UNI campus or at one of the theatres in Waterloo. Many bake sales were required for these activities. Baking also was an excuse for getting together with a purpose in mind.

Tombstone Rubbing

A favorite poetry project involved tombstone rubbing. This was an opportunity to study poetry found on tombstones and to become aware of symbols that took the place of language at a time when writing was an art owned by only a few. The students studied childhood diseases leading to

early deaths of small children and babies. They became aware of tombstones and mausoleums installed by people of wealth and the markers that served the purpose of indicating a loved one but were not fancy. They walked through Fairview Cemetery to learn about past burial customs and tombstone styles popular in various time periods. They read about grave humor, intentional or unintentional. Finally, they made tombstone rubbings out of crayons they melted in muffin tins. They used rolls and rolls of shelf paper held on the tombstone by masking tape. One tombstone rubbing was adequate, but making several was a lot more fun. The rubbings were rolled up, carried back to school, and posted around the room.

The students then made short speeches describing their rubbing, the symbolism they discovered, the possible significance or disease they discovered from the dates of death on the stone, and any history they could find of the person? They described where they found their stone, and what difficulties they encountered while they were making their rubbing. This was a particularly intriguing project. Our house was just next to the cemetery and for weeks after the cemetery trip, we would see students, sometimes accompanied by parents, crayoning more tombstone rubbings.

Formal Genre Units

In addition to the activity-oriented units, seventh and eighth graders grew into more formal genre units. Students learned the differences in structure between plays and other forms of literature they had already experienced. They took parts and followed the stage directions as they read scenes from a play. Scenes were also acted out. Sitting on high stools, students had their first experiences doing Reader's Theatre and listening to their fellow classmates read.

For example, they read the play The Diary of Anne Frank. Dr. Finkelstein came to the classes and demonstrated the special foods, dishes, and prayers that were critical to the celebration of Passover in a Jewish home. This was followed by a visit from Rabbi Sol Serber. Finally the students made a trip to the Sons of Jacob Synagogue.

One of the most memorable activities carried out during the study of this play was trying to be quiet, absolutely quiet for a 50-minute class period as the Frank family and others in hiding had to do. Students shared various activities one could do for 50 minutes without making a sound. The next day the students came to class and left their shoes in the hallway. They quietly moved to their places for the 50-minute silent period. They understood that the Franks hid on the third floor of a factory and when the workers came in during the day they had to be absolutely silent. This quiet was assured because the office of the high school secretaries was right below our classroom. If during the 50-minute period they heard a sound the class would be discovered. The Green Police had found them out and would arrest them. Yes, they were arrested.

Short stories were also always taught. They included "The Lady or the Tiger" and "The Telltale Heart." The short story "To Build a Fire" led to a cold weather safety unit. A local emergency room doctor visited. He explained the dangers of frostbite, hypothermia, the effects of age and cold weather, what to pack to provide adequate clothing and equipment when traveling in extremely cold weather.

Following this unit, students prepared for a trip to the Guthrie Theatre to see The Christmas Carol. Students were aware of the extreme cold potential in Minnesota. They used their cold weather knowledge in case they were stranded for a period of time, should the buses break down. The buses looked like whole class slumber parties complete with raisins and bottles of water.

A university theatre major came to the classroom and talked about the importance of appropriate costumes and stage designs. Students spent time in groups planning and drawing the costumes the actors might wear and creating the sets that would represent the important scenes they would see in the production. When they returned, they compared their work with what they had actually seen and discussed reasons for discrepancies.

EIGHTH GRADE CAMP

Language Arts Teacher' Involvement

Eighth Grade Camp was a co-curricular four days of outdoor education held yearly the last week in September at Camp Wahapaton near Janesville, Iowa. Dr. Paul Brimm, the high school principal, began the outdoor education program with Dr. Corrine Harper, then Chair of the Social Studies Department in the 1950s and 1960s. Math, science, social studies, language arts, and guidance faculty, a librarian and a janitor cooperated to give students hands-on outdoor adventures.

For example science lessons led by Lou Finsand took students to a nearby quarry to search for and identify fossils. Dr. Strub, the guidance counselor, and other faculty members taught canoeing and took students on a half-day canoe trip down the Wapsipinicon River. Dr. Harper, director of the camp, and librarian Kent McIntyre taught archery, rifle safety and target practice.

Custodian Steve Birum and I took groups of 12 students for a full day's survival trip each of the four camp days. Most students had not had outdoor camping education. They believed food came canned from the super market. On this survival trip students cooked from scratch for their end-of-day meal. This took nearly a whole day of hard work in order to have a full meal of "edible food."

The menu included spit-roasted chickens and coals-roasted potatoes, pumpkin, and squash. The students made home-made bread beginning with the water they heated over an open fire. To this, they added yeast and flour; kneaded it into dough; let it rise, punched it down, and waited for their dough to rise again. The dough was baked into bread in an oven over the coals of one of their fires. They peeled apples and cooked apples and sugar until they had apple butter. They churned butter. They mixed prepared sugar and 12 percent cream, then added two dozen eggs to make two three-pound cans of "hay-hole" ice cream.

Making the ice cream included digging the hole, lining it with hay and rocks and rock salt, inserting the coffee cans, one on top of the other, and covering the coffee can mixture with more rock salt and hay. During the day students took turns stirring the ice cream as it began to "set up."

The temptation to lick the wooden spoon covered with the freezing mixture made it essential to have the Language Arts teacher accompany the “stirrers” when uncovering and checking on the process. After all, well-frozen ice cream covered with apple butter was a coveted part of the cooking/eating process.

Their poultry came in two forms. Students killed and cleaned two whole live chickens. In addition, they prepared for cooking two whole super market purchased chickens. Since most students were unfamiliar with the taste of freshly prepared chicken, this was an opportunity to compare taste and texture between fresh and store-purchased chickens.

Custodian Birum, a seasoned camper and former Boy Scout, taught students how to build fires without matches, carefully adding tiny sticks to slowly build the needed fires. No need to worry about the young people sitting around. Two fires required piles of sticks of various sizes in preparation for spit-cooking the chickens on one, and roasting the potatoes and squash on the other.

Making bread from scratch, churning butter, peeling and cooking apples, preparing chickens for cooking filled up all twelve students’ time nicely. There was no time to find other activities that were not on the agenda. Furthermore, the harder they worked, the hungrier they became, and the more intent they were on doing their individual tasks efficiently. Six to seven hours after the survival trip began, they food was ready for starving adolescents to eat.

Chickens, potatoes, squash, and pumpkins were roasted. The latter was turned into pumpkin pudding with the additions of sugar and spices. Homemade bread was ready for the churned butter, which sometimes was a little soupy, depending on the energy that went into the turns churning. No one seemed to mind. The apple butter had to be divided three ways. One third was eaten on top the bread. Another third became the topping on the “Hay Hole Ice Cream.” The third and final part was reserved for a special future classroom activity. Each student had brought a baby food jar to camp. The final third of the apple butter was scooped into the jars, labeled, and taken back to school for memory poetry and writing that would occur during the freezing cold weather of February.

The only foods left over at the end of the survival trip were the pickings from the store purchased chicken and the baby food jars filled with apple butter. Students could tell the taste differences between the chickens they had prepared themselves and the super market product. Bones were picked clean on the former; chicken was left over from the latter.

Fires were put out, the ice cream hole scooped out and the dirt and hay replaced for the next group to prepare. Pots and pans were washed and carried back to camp. Tired campers also returned ready to “call it a day.” They had worked hard together to make this special meal.

Seeds from Pumpkins and Squash

The seeds from the squash and pumpkins were washed and taken back to school to be roasted and salted for eating at Halloween. This was another memory of eighth grade camp.

Jars of Apple Butter.

The apple butter jars were taken back to school and stored until February. When we studied memories, we read Stephen Dunning's poem, "Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle." In this poem the young people remember the summer of limitless bites of watermelon. Now winter and the endless bites of watermelon were bottled up into memories called "watermelon pickles." Students tasted watermelon pickles and talked about their own memories of garden preserves. Then they also shared memories of eighth grade camp and the survival trip. They opened their jars of apple butter, and wrote poetry and prose about their memories, including the smoke-tinged flavor of the baby food jars.

The Eighth Grade Camp Newspaper.

A larger memory of eighth grade camp grew out of a study of the newspaper. Students made lists of activities from the four days of outdoor education; planned news, features, and weather reports, and advertisements as well.

The students drew caricatures, wrote classified ads, editorials, editorial cartoons, and sports stories. They chose articles they wished to write, worked in groups to enlarge, edit, and make plans to publish various sections of their camp newspaper: The Waphaton News that later became Harper's Bazaar. (Dr. Harper was the Director of the camp.) An extra page was included in the 12-page newspaper so that students could sign each-others' copies and write notes depicting a special memory.

SECONDARY LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

Just as in the Junior High School language arts program, the secondary program did not participate in teacher or test-result-ability grouping of students. All high school students selected courses offered by the language arts faculty, which were listed in the course catalogue. Their choices were often made in conjunction with the college, university, technical schools, or other avenues they wished to pursue after graduation. A ninth grade student could choose the ninth grade language arts class or the language arts workshop. As students moved from one grade level to the next, they were able to choose among the language arts options available to them with the language arts workshop always an option. After eleventh grade, if the student had accrued enough language arts credits to satisfy state requirements for graduation, he/she could decide not to take a language arts class. Most students, however, took a language arts class during each semester of the four years of secondary school.

CANON OF LITERATURE (CLASSICS)

Ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades focused on the classics of literature as well as free reading of popular works. The faculty chose carefully from the classics those texts they felt were appropriate for the maturity level of the students. For example, Shakespeare was taught from ninth through twelfth grades. Ninth graders studied Romeo and Juliet or The Merchant of Venice; tenth graders Julius Caesar or Twelfth Night; and, eleventh graders, Hamlet. Novels included Ethan Frome; Pride and Prejudice; I Never Promised You a Rose Garden; Be True to

Your School; The Great Gatsby; and, The Bridge Over San Luis Rey. Non-Shakespearean plays included Arsenic and Old Lace and Our Town.

Students saw live productions every year at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and at the Strayer Wood Theatre on the UNI campus since plays are meant to be seen rather than just read. In addition, the high school put on a significant play each year, and a musical every other year. In-class enrichment was provided as films of well-acted and produced plays followed the study of a play. The emphasis on live performances took two forms in the Laboratory School curriculum. Not only were plays such as The Diary of Anne Frank; Helen Keller [The Miracle Worker]; The Monday After the Miracle; or Twelve Angry Jurors read aloud?, but the high school students tried out for roles in the school's productions. They also signed up to work on the various play crews

THE LANGUAGE ARTS WORKSHOP ELECTIVE (GRADES 9, 10, 11, 12--TWO SEMESTERS EACH YEAR)

As students reached the end of junior high school, teachers knew that some students did not see themselves as successful language arts learners. This did not mean that they were clinically diagnosed as learning disabled, slow learners, or remedial students. Some simply felt little or no joy in reading and writing. Others felt insecure in being able to produce extended discourse in language arts and/or content areas. Still others felt immobilized by fear of speaking or working in small or large discussion groups, and experienced more than usual fear when giving a solo oral presentation

An important offering at the senior high school level was the language arts workshop. Students described above could elect this class. This was not a remedial class. It was a small class where students could practice their growing skills with the help of group projects and close teacher supervision. Many of the students in this class had had few experiences in having parents or teachers read to them beyond elementary school. This class provided all students with important growth experiences in writing models, and the ability to “have read” novels and short stories. They kept a notebook (journal) in which they wrote responses to their reading. They found safety in small numbers and were able to give speeches and do creative dramatics that grew out of their reading and writing.

A student who chose to enroll in the language arts workshop for the semester could return to the appropriate grade level language arts class the following semester. Enrollment options included any of the courses available at his/her particular grade level.

The major difference between the language arts workshop and other language arts electives was the size of the class and thus the amount of individual attention students received. Academic rigor was expected and maintained. Many students in this class had plans for college or other educational experiences beyond high school. This class was not “bone-head English.”

Initially, focus was placed on building a sense of community within the multi-grade class, followed by efforts to develop confidence in reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and creative visualization. The small class size was effective in reducing insecurities and building

skill confidence. Because many of the students lacked experiences in being read to aloud, this was a regular part of the novel, short story, poetry, and essay studies. Hearing unfamiliar words pronounced correctly and in context enhanced students' vocabulary and usage prowess.

Having had few genuinely pleasurable reading or writing experiences, students were encouraged to choose texts for leisure silent reading from fiction and nonfiction, magazines, and newspapers. Encouragement came from information gained during informal inventories or conferences with their instructor. Writing grew out of a student's leisure and formal reading experiences. Oral reading, shared oral reading, reader's theatre, speech communication skills, and body language study were integrated across the semester. In-class reading and writing time supplemented leisure reading and written responses composed outside school. Both were essential for building a success base for these students.

CLASSES OFFERED FOR 9-10-11-12 GRADES EACH SEMESTER

NINTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS (TWO SEMESTERS)

Freshman language arts students developed their language skills through a variety of speaking, writing, and reading activities. They learned to use the word processor to further develop (and experiment with?) the organization, clarity, and mechanics of their writing. As readers, the students deepened their appreciation for specific types of literature as well as the styles they self-selected. Literary pieces read in common during the year included the play Romeo and Juliet, the novel To Kill a Mockingbird, and short stores such as "The Stone Boy," "The Grains of Paradise," and "The Rocking-horse Winner."

Each student created and delivered speeches to inform, describe, and persuade connected to the literature and writing with which they were involved. Both the teacher and the student peers provided the speaker with feedback designed to facilitate growth. The mechanics of grammar and the differences between spoken and written English were studied. Drills and worksheets were taken from Dr. VanderBeek's ninth grade volume of Guide to Modern English. Evaluations grew from a rubric developed to encourage students to make suggestions and note their own grammar and usage errors. A parliamentary procedure unit gave students experience with basic parliamentary law.

Building lifetime readers was a focus in the ninth grade language arts and students had regular class time for independent reading. This included time for them to make entries in their journals about characters, plot, language, reactions to their reading, and questions they had about what they had read.

LANGUAGE IN CONTEMPORARY LIFE (SUGGESTED FOR GRADE 10--TWO SEMESTERS)

As the title suggests, this course emphasized written, visual, and aural language as used today—in the media, in poetry and fiction, and in daily human communication. The course continued the department's focus on composing and comprehending through the integration of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and creating visually.

Structured activities helped students to understand how writing can be an aid to personal understanding as well as a form for artistic expression and pragmatic interpersonal transactions. Students learned to consider an audience and to look for the stance and intent of the authors, speakers, and artists whose work they encountered. Improvement in using writing and speaking conventions was achieved through individual instruction regarding weaknesses in these areas, when they occurred. Entire classes received usage instruction followed by drill only if the whole group needed such remedial help.

Daily opportunities to practice and expand language skills were provided for each student. Students read widely. At least one novel, one full-length play (frequently one by Shakespeare), and selected stories, poems, and essays were read in common. Free choice reading was expected and time was provided for it. Use of library resources and visual literacy were also incorporated. The art teacher provided slides of modern art and students took a trip to the gallery in the Kamerick Art Building on the UNI campus to view appropriate traveling art shows.

SPEECH COMMUNICATION: ISSUES DEVELOPMENT (SCID) (SUGGESTED FOR GRADE 11--ONE SEMESTER)

As the title suggests, this course led students to think through the multiple factors behind divergent views to develop a deeper awareness of social issues. Students became more competent in developing constructive relationships and more effective in communicating diverse messages and views.

Through thematic units students developed an awareness of the connection between intrapersonal and interpersonal communication. Issue areas included: human conflict, ethics, population, race, poverty, drugs, education, and employment. Community resources and guidance personnel were utilized in the process.

Specific activities included family narratives, role-playing, debates, interpreter's theatre, and public speaking. Students concentrated on both verbal and non-verbal techniques. After identifying specific goals and topics, students searched newspapers, periodicals, and library resources to find materials to use in response papers and presentations.

By the end of the semester each student had completed a portfolio that reflected personal conclusions. Students developed a deeper understanding of what they believed and who they were. Reading was focused on research topic issues in preparation for the writing of a research paper.

PROCESSING LANGUAGE (SUGGESTED FOR GRADE 11--ONE SEMESTER)

Building on English language arts skills developed in Language in Contemporary Life and preceding years, this final language arts course required students to process language through reflection, reaction, and refinement.

1. Reflection: During and after reading a variety of literary forms—novels, plays, poetry, essays (both classical and popular)—students

were required to process the authors' words, techniques, and style. By interacting with this new material, they were able to expand their previous life experiences. In writing, they explored their own thoughts and observations to derive deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

2. Reaction: Discussion in both large and small groups pushed students to express and explain orally their understandings of literary and informative writing. Journal and personal writing extended the reflection phase as students wrote to discover and clarify their own thoughts. Some of these writings were developed into writing for other specified audiences. In these cases, writing workshop processes allowed students to aid one another by serving as friendly critics, reacting to written drafts in an effort to identify strengths and weaknesses for further instructional attention.
3. Refinement: The development of lifetime reading habits was continued through attention to individual needs and guidance in the selection of books for free time leisure reading. Close examination of classical forms and writing styles helped students to understand and appreciate literary artistry. Writing instruction enabled students to adapt to varied audiences and purposes for writing, including such specialized forms as lab reports, business letters, essay exams, and application essays. Problems in general style, sentence structure, word choice, grammar and usage, and punctuation were identified and countered on an individualized basis.

WRITING FOR PUBLICATION (SUGGESTED FOR GRADES 11, 12--ONE SEMESTER)

This one-semester elective course was designed for juniors and seniors interested in improving their skills in commanding and controlling words for possible publication.

While it was not a career preparatory course, the functions, audiences, ethics and standards of the print media provided the arena within which students worked. Actual publication in Midwest High publications was available to successful writers. In addition, the requisites of other publishing markets were examined, and interested students were aided in writing to meet them.

All students learned to gather information through interviews and investigation and to write "hard" and "soft" news stories using strong leads, inverted pyramid style, and an "objective" stance. By the end of the semester students also practiced writing feature stories, in-depth news stories, reviews, and editorials.

TWELFTH GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM (TWO SEMESTERS)

The twelfth grade language arts program was a special program that grew out of a grant written by Charles Cacek who started the program but left the Laboratory School shortly after the grant

was awarded. This elective was then taught by Dr. VanderBeek and later by me. Students in this class were responsible, with the support of their instructor, to be continually reading and journaling on specific literary selections. They chose from popular literature with sophisticated formats, such as Wild Life by Richard Ford; If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Send Me Home by Tim O'Brien; or classical selections such as Emma by Jane Austen; or Edith Wharton's House of Mirth.

Students who elected this class were expected to increase and expand their reading and writing skills and also make reading choices that would prepare them for post-graduation literacy. They were expected to read and journal, have regular teacher/student conferences at least once every two weeks, write a report card to their parent(s), and give themselves two grades: one that compared themselves to other students in the classroom; and the other grade that indicated how hard they were working as compared with their expectations--based on their growing skills in reading, writing, and discussing.

These students could also elect to take a three-hour course of their choice at the University of Northern Iowa in addition to their English language arts electives. The university credits were usually accepted in the student's freshman year at most colleges/universities.

INTRODUCTION TO THEATER (GRADES 9,10,11,12--ONE SEMESTER)

Introduction to Theatre included a variety of topics, including the history of Western Theatre; the structure of dramatic literature; and lighting, sound, and set design. The course included these activities: classic play reading, acting exercises, design projects, and discussions. Students were also given an opportunity to practice what they had learned as they assisted in the school's dramatic productions. This one-semester course was available to all students grades 9 through 12 and could be taken for elective credit.

EXTRA CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

THE NU DRAMA PROGRAM

Mr. Butzier led the quality high school drama program. Students PK-12 were encouraged to try out for parts when appropriate. For example, The Sound of Music allowed elementary children to play the roles of the von Trapp children. Most of the time, however, roles in the plays were assigned to students in ninth through twelfth grade after a series of three try-outs. All high school students were encouraged to participate. Actors chosen committed to six weeks of blocking and rehearsals—capped by public performances. The commitment required students and parents to agree that the student(s) would appear from 6:00 through 9:30 every school night except Wednesday “church night.” Only emergencies would excuse drama participants.

Saturdays were given over to the construction of sets and costumes. Costumes were seldom rented, except for special moments, such as the Ascot Race in My Fair Lady. Students learned to build complicated sets and costumes. A set shop triumph was the house for Fiddler on the Roof and its four-part rotating set, religiously turned by the trusty backs of the set crew.

Plays of high quality were chosen with an eye for gender equity. Mr. Butzier also chose plays to challenge student actors and student set and costume designers. Some productions grew out of plays studied within a classroom (Arsenic and Old Lace.) For each production two to three nights beyond the six weeks of rehearsals were given over to full-dress rehearsals with make-up.

Costumers learned to build costumes from design books used by college/university students. Some students undertook senior projects in theatre that might include designing and making costumes for a character within a given production (such as Mary, Queen of Scots.)

Three drama students took a senior semester to do an individual project with me. The plays were Spoon River Anthology, Mary Queen of Scots, and Fiddler on the Roof. Each costumer met with Mr. Butzier to discuss costume visions. The students then met with the actors and measured them.

In one particular case, the student measured the actor and found or made appropriate patterns for the various costumes the actor would need. She purchased the fabric and measured the actor again before cutting out the pattern pieces. She sewed the costumes and met with the actor to check for alterations that might be needed. After making necessary changes, the student costumer labeled the costumes and hung them on a rack where the actor could find them. The student costumer was responsible for the actors' clothes during dress rehearsals. After each rehearsal, she checked the costumes for needed repairs, ironed them, and rehung them on the rack for the next use. During each performance student actors were responsible for their costumes. At the end of the last performance, the student washed or dry cleaned the costumes, and hung them away clean. The student earned one credit for this senior costuming project.

Junior high and high school students designed and printed the drama posters. One seventh grade student turned in posters for each drama production across his entire junior high and high school career.

Behind the Scenes Aspects of the Theatrical Productions

The technical areas of the NU Theater program were given as much attention to detail as any of the others. Lighting crews were trained by Mr. Butzier to control a lighting system that was, by all accounts, exceptionally advanced for a high school theater. The lighting arrays consisted of three "gangs" of 6 dimmer lights mounted onto a fully fly gallery, and another set of 2 iris spotlights and 2 sliding spotlights mounted in the ceiling of the auditorium so a crew member could follow the actors onstage. Mr. Butzier configured the lighting panel, originally by manually arranging pegs to complete the circuits. This system was replaced in the mid-1980s with an electronic controller capable of configuring the arrays, which was located in Mr. Butzier's office. This was located on the second floor of the building and included a window which looked out over the auditorium and stage. Each crew member had detailed instructions for positioning and activating the lighting, which, under Mr. Butzier's direction, were meticulously rehearsed until flawless.

The sound system was equally advanced with several power amps driving a high-quality preamplifier into one main speaker, mounted atop the stage, with the ability to support additional

speakers if needed. Sound effects were coordinated by Mr. Butzier and originally recorded onto reel-to-reel tapes, and cued using a time schedule that was overlaid onto the performance's script. Later, digital technology replaced the tape system, with the result that more and varied sound effects could be produced, and the cadence of the effects controlled programmatically. The sound crews typically worked from Mr. Butzier's office, with one crew member backstage for troubleshooting.

MUSICAL PRODUCTIONS

Every other year, Mr. Butzier from the language arts program and Dr. Les Hale from the music department produced a musical such as Fiddler on the Roof, Sound of Music, and The Music Man. The two worked together for twenty-five years. Mr. Butzier was director for spoken lines in all productions. He drew the initial set plans and blocking which he then fine-tuned in conference with Dr. Hale. In some productions Mr. Butzier supervised the costuming. However, his premier talent and skill was in set design.

Mr. Butzier's musical knowledge was also a great asset to the Butzier/Hale productions. As he blocked actors' movements, he understood the audience's need to hear each singer clearly. Therefore he positioned them for success. Once again, the students working on the sound crew and lighting crew were schooled in their responsibilities during these productions.

The success of all musical productions and variety shows required more extensive preparation than that required for the two plays produced each year. Musical and variety shows might take as much as six months to prepare voices, the orchestra, the lighting and sound amplification for these performances.

The Pit Orchestra's Role in the Musical Productions

Musical theater at NU was typically produced in May, at the culmination of the theater season and the school year. Dr. Hale led the planning for the musical aspects of these performances, which normally began early in the year with tryouts, including the tryouts for the pit orchestras. The role of the pit orchestras was to perform the introductory and closing music for the performance, to accompany the actors in their solo or ensemble pieces, and also to furnish "entr'acte" selections for continuity and transition between scenes. Numerous hopeful musicians competed for coveted places in the pit orchestra, and ultimately Dr. Hale selected an excellent group consisting of strings, winds and brass, percussion, and keyboard artists. Dr. Hale progressively integrated the rehearsals of the pit orchestras with the actors' vocals, and this was enhanced and repeated until the high quality of performance and professionalism that he expected was attained. The ensemble performances of orchestra and vocals in NU musical theater represented another (and possibly the ultimate) example of bringing forth the talent and skill of many students to furnish signature and memorable moments in the best tradition of music and theater at NU.

MADRIGAL DINNER

During their twenty-five-year collaboration, Dr. Hale and Mr. Butzier produced nineteen Madrigal dinners and one Colonial Christmas, with the encouragement and support of Dr. Nielsen, Head of the Department of Teaching. The Madrigal dinner was created to replicate a Renaissance evening in a Lord of the manor's castle. At the head table would be the Lord, his Lady, and his fourteen lords and ladies. As the evening began, the first to enter the great room amid a fanfare of three herald trumpets and the rumble of two percussion instruments was one of the (student) minstrels carrying a boar's head for the feast. More fanfares ensued as the fourteen lords and ladies strolled to the head table. More fanfares and finally came the Lord and Lady of the manor. A short concert of madrigals was followed by a spectacular dinner planned by Dr. Hale. This scrumptious and beautifully appointed dinner included roasted Rock Cornish hens and rice, carrots with hot orange sauce, and flaming flan for dessert. Throughout the meal groups of strolling minstrels and singers serenaded the diners. Following dinner, the Lord of the manor and the other lords and ladies provided a concert. Madrigals were chosen because they best fit the student actors' voice ranges. The concert ended with the royalty singing "Silent Night" with the audience. Quietly and reverently, to soft music produced by an ensemble from the high school orchestra, those who were seated at the head table proceeded out of the hall.

Mr. Butzier and his costume crew built or altered 105 costumes for the Madrigal Dinner. A new Lord of the manor costume was crafted each year. Fortunately, former plays such as Mary of Scotland provided a trove of costumes from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Dr. Hale and a student created the boar's head. Accoutrements were added to the production each year. For example, the first year Dr. Hale and Mr. Butzier bought an appropriate tapestry to hang behind the head table. Dr. James? Coffin from the UNI Music Department loaned them three herald trumpets until they could budget for their own. Year by year the pieces needed to create the fully developed Madrigal Dinner were acquired. The cast performed four nights. There were no reserved seats and so ticket holders began gathering outside the doors an hour and a half before the performance to get the seats they preferred.

COMPETITIVE IOWA HIGH SCHOOL SPEECH PROGRAM

Northern University High School was an active and respected member of The Iowa High School Speech Association. Mr. Butzier and Dr. William Waack were recognized as outstanding members of this important organization. Mr. Butzier in 1978 and Dr. Waack in 1979. Dr. Waack left NUHS to become the Director of Teacher Education for UNI and later Associate Dean of the College of Education.

Students learned public speaking and interpretive speech through their high school classes as part of the integrated language arts program. Their skills were then tested in the yearly IHSSA district and state competitions.

NU students first participated in a home speech contest. Those judged successful went on to compete at the district and state IHSSA levels. Students judged outstanding at the state level were eligible to participate in the Outstanding Speakers' Contest held through the UNI Speech

Department and the Iowa High School Speech Association. Many NUHS students were part of this Outstanding Speakers event.

These high school speech activities were another way in which the Laboratory School served the University of Northern Iowa education program. UNI student observers, participants, student teachers, and simply interested speech students worked with NUHS students and their coaches to prepare and rehearse for the increasingly rigorous contests. They then used these coaching skills when they completed their University course work and entered the teaching profession. Mr. Butzier and Dr. Waack did many oral evaluations of speech students throughout the state—as well as of the students from NU High.

CONCLUSIONS

The integrated Language Arts Program at the junior and senior high school levels at Malcolm Price Laboratory School helped students grow and learn in four major areas.

1. Personal Growth and Development. Lab School students:

Came to recognize the importance of building a personal library

Developed a passion for learning

Grew in ability to produce group and individual projects

Distinguished between interpersonal and intrapersonal communication

Gained an understanding of audience

Increased their interest and participation in extra-curricular activities

Recognized the need for community service

Gained a deeper understanding of what they believed and who they were

2. Acquisition of Skills in reading, writing, viewing, listening, speaking, discussing, visualizing, and expressing visually. Laboratory School students:

Increased their ability to concentrate on reading and writing

Read widely

Became aware of the structures of various genres of literature

Grew in “processing” authors' words, techniques, and style

Became critical readers

Recognized writing as a process

Wrote to discover and clarify thought

Became comfortable discussing their reading and writing

Became empathic, friendly critics of peers' writing and speaking

Viewed and participated in dramatic and music productions

3. Development of Information Gathering Skills. Lab School students:

Became comfortable in the use of the library (including electronic sources)

Increased their use of the library for research and pleasure

Became able to choose books according to personal interests and needs

Learned how to gather information through interview and investigation

4. Development of Life Skills. Lab School students:

Gained a deeper awareness of social issues

Became able to create, collaborate, and think critically

Grew in leadership skills

Became active problem solvers

Recognized and reacted to propaganda techniques

The End

Author's Note:

I would like to thank Dr. Judy Finkelstein for her continuous support and encouragement as we wrote these memories of the Dr. Ross Nielsen years at Malcolm Price Laboratory School. We would like to thank Dr. Barbara Lounsberry for her editorial suggestions. Thanks also to Jim Brewer, '75, and his colleagues for the information on the very important sound and lighting crew's work as well as the contributions of the pit orchestra to the Drama Program and Musical Productions at Price Laboratory School.

We hope that this tome will inspire others who were teaching at MPLS during the Dr. Ross Nielsen years to record their memories of what we did, how we did it, and why.