

1981

The Ungraded Primary Department: Centennial Lab School, Decatur, Illinois

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THE UNGRADED PRIMARY DEPARTMENT:

CENTENNIAL LAB SCHOOL, DECATUR, ILLINOIS
(TITLE)

BY

JOHN REEVES HENRY
=

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

SPECIALIST IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1981

YEAR

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ABSTRACT

During the summer of 1980, this writer became a member of the faculty of Centennial Laboratory School, 1500 East Condit, Decatur, Illinois. The transfer to Centennial occurred in order to take part in the establishment of an Ungraded Primary Department within that school. This paper examines the rationale, planning, and production of such a department as an integral part of the total educational program of Centennial during the first semester of its existence.

The Ungraded Primary Department is a valuable educational experience for five, six, and seven year old children. It provides flexibility of grouping according to individual needs, a system of continuous progress and evaluation of children's needs, reduces the problems associated with acceleration and retention, and provides each child with experiences which provide success, self-esteem, and well-rounded growth in all areas.

The paper is divided into four main sections. The first section of the paper serves as the introduction, explaining the purpose of the field experience, giving pertinent background information, and reviewing briefly some of the literature consulted in establishing the department.

Section II consists of a Log of Activities carried out as a part of the field experience. Both as an observer of the department and a participant in its development, this writer was involved in numerous activities. This log is a weekly record of the activities unique to the establishment and development of the Ungraded Primary Department.

Section III is an analyses of the four major activities conducted as a part of the field study. The activities reported include Student Placement, Instructional Program, Communications, and Mainstreaming Students.

The Student Placement section outlines both the Initial Placement plan, which includes screening, interviewing, and reviewing past performance, and the Adjustive Placement plan which corrects errors made in initial placement.

The Instructional Program section details both the content of the curriculum and the methods used to enhance learning. The curriculum is a balance between teaching and learning experiences.

For purposes of this paper Communication activities are reported in two sections---those activities of communication between staff members and communication activities between school and home.

Children are mainstreamed into the Ungraded Primary Department from two different sources and for two very different reasons. They come from the Early Childhood (Special Education) Department for exposure to the normal classroom and from the Refugee Classroom to learn English.

The summary, Section IV of the paper, contains conclusions and recommendations for the future.

The nine appendices to the paper contain forms, communication and evaluation devices, and other information which has been part of the development of the Ungraded Primary Department.

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SECTION I
INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 1980, this writer changed teaching positions within the Decatur Public School District #61. The transfer to the Centennial Laboratory School took place in order to take part in the establishment of an Ungraded Primary Department within that school. The purpose of this project is, therefore, to examine the rationale, planning, and production of such a department as an integral part of the total educational program of Centennial.

The paper will be divided into four main sections. This first section of the paper will serve as the introduction, explaining the purpose of the field experience, giving pertinent background information, and reviewing briefly some of the literature consulted in establishing the department.

Section II will consist of a Log of Activities carried out as a part of this field experience.

Section III will be an analysis of four major activities conducted as a part of this project. The activities selected for analysis are Student Placement, Instructional Program, Communications, and Mainstreaming Students.

The summary, Section IV of the paper, will contain conclusions and recommendations for the future. The submission of this report comes at a time when the Ungraded Primary Department is at the midpoint of its initial year. It is recognized that development of the department is far from complete and will be an on-going venture for years to come.

Background Information

Centennial Laboratory School is one of twenty-four elementary schools in the Decatur Public School District #61. It is located at 1500 East Condit Street, Decatur, Illinois 62526. Centennial has a student population of 404 children and a professional staff of 16 classroom teachers, plus speech, learning disability, and library personnel. The school contains an Early Childhood Department, Ungraded Primary Department, and Intermediate Department.

Centennial is a magnet school. It offers a progressive and innovative program drawing students from all parts of the city of Decatur. It is also the only public school alternative for those not satisfied with their neighborhood school. Thus, students come to Centennial for a variety of reasons.

Admission to Centennial begins with completion of an application. A copy of the 1980-81 application is Appendix A to this report. Applications are screened and potential parents and students are interviewed. As a part of the interview, the school philosophy is further explained and applicants are encouraged to tour the building and get a feel for its program. Questions are encouraged and answered openly. The "Centennial Philosophy" revised and adopted by the Parent Teacher Organization in September 1980 is as follows:

Philosophy is a statement of being. As with all forms of life the most constant element to growth is change. The purpose then in writing this philosophy is to state our expectations for Centennial Lab School students and describe the process we will assume to achieve this.

Centennial exists because there are parents who want it to be, students whose needs are met by it, a staff who choose to work

there, and a central administration supportive of non-traditional (alternative) education. The Centennial community (parent/staff/student) has a common goal for growth.

The Centennial community actively works to discover different ways to learn. Value is placed on establishing a process that leads to life-long, self-directed learning. Building on existing learning the program at Centennial strives to involve learners, encourage them to pursue interests and new ideas, and profit from real life experience. All new members of the Centennial community, through their involvement, are contributors to this process.

Equally important to the Centennial community are the values, morals, and level of concern and caring of its learners. In the process of acquiring these values the participants will be expected to come to some understanding of who they are and how they relate to others. Through developing attitudes of mutual respect and awareness of rights, responsibilities and self-worth will be expected. As a result Centennial students will grow up not so much accepting existing social standards but rather as thinking individuals with choices of behaviors and beliefs to hold.

Recognizing the unique abilities and background of each child, opportunities will be provided for the full growth of each student. Therefore it is understood that varying levels of growth will be both desirable and acceptable. A goal for each child is to experience the process of learning and increasingly be able to apply it throughout life.

In the process of developing both caring and learning human beings it is expected that many ideas, methods, and attitudes must be tried. The level of success obtained by the things tried will determine discarding or continuing them at Centennial. In this way Centennial will perpetually change and have new ideas and will grow. The Centennial community affirms its openness to ideas, both old and new, and accepts change as a process of its growth.

The Centennial Lab School philosophy not only allows for the establishment of an Ungraded Primary Department, it endorses such moves and encourages them to the fullest extent. In establishing such a department at Centennial the staff has used ideas, both old and new, for the purpose of bettering the education of its students. Those ideas which succeed will be used again. Those ideas which seem to be failures will be revised, tried again later, or totally discarded.

For the past several years there have been multi-grade classes at Centennial. The Ungraded Primary Department has brought a levels approach to Centennial where grades are insignificant. Children are placed into groups of children working at or near their own level. Some children will complete their work after three years in the department, some after four years in the department, and others may spend five years completing the curriculum. All children will move through the department at their individual rates with continuous progress and no one will be labeled a failure. The department is also ungraded in that no grades are assigned as part of the evaluation of completed work.

A Review of the Literature

One of the first steps in organizing the Ungraded Primary Department at Centennial was a workshop held the week of August 11-15, 1980. An initial activity of that week was a review of literature on the subject of ungradedness in education. The literature was collected and reproduced for the staff by the building principal, Mrs. Pat Tingle. The literature contained information on programs in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Park Forest, Illinois, as well as other programs over the last twenty-five years. Some of the literature was of a very general nature while other literature stated specific steps in developing a program.

The literature was of assistance to the staff members in that it gave them ideas that had been proven successful in other programs. Much of the literature contained ideas common to the various programs and some of those ideas have been incorporated into the Centennial program. Some ideas which succeeded in one model program did not achieve success with

another. Thus it was left to the Centennial staff to pick and choose the ideas they felt had the best chance of success in their specific program.

One idea common to all the programs in the literature was that the Ungraded Primary Department followed a strong kindergarten program. At Centennial, the kindergarten-age children are a part of the program and not something that precedes it. The Centennial staff saw no reason to deprive five year-olds of the same flexible, adaptive, individualized program it was developing for those students six, seven, and eight years of age.

SECTION II
LOG OF ACTIVITIES

Both as an observer of the department and a participant in its development, this writer has been involved in numerous activities. Many of the activities occur on a daily basis and are considered normal procedure for the classroom teacher. These routine activities are not detailed in the log that follows. Rather, it is a weekly log of the activities unique to the establishment and development of the Ungraded Primary Department at Centennial.

<u>Week of</u>	<u>Activities</u>
AUG 11	Ungraded Primary workshop: review of literature; draft philosophical statement for the program; design an organizational system to chart and evaluate student progression; prepare introductory letter to parents; set up a procedure for moving students within the program; determine materials needed; decide how leadership of team and weekly meetings should be handled; identify inservice needs for the year; finalize placement of students
AUG 18	Division of learning materials and organization of classroom environment
AUG 25	Meet with Early Childhood staff members to discuss and organize mainstreaming; student registration and beginning of school.
SEP 1	Submission of Innovative Program application for inservice time and materials for implementing department
SEP 8	Ungraded Primary (U.P.) meeting: organize U.P. reading chart; discussion of reading groups; reading group and homeroom adjustments
SEP 22	Parent Teacher Organization meeting: explanation of U.P. program and open house
SEP 29	Begin Early Childhood mainstreaming
OCT 20	Evaluation conferences
OCT 27	Music concert including mainstreamed children

- NOV 3 Up-date U.P. reading chart
- DEC 1 Writer served as department chairperson; develop reading continuum as part of evaluation devices
- DEC 8 Department chairperson; design internal memo; discussion of math curriculum; write article for newsletter
- DEC 15 Department chairperson; concert with mainstreamed children
- JAN 4 Department chairperson; oral report to Parent Teacher board; begin refugee mainstreaming; meet with Early Childhood staff members to evaluate first semester and plan mainstreaming for second semester
- JAN 11 Department chairperson; develop evaluation device for parent-teacher-child conferences; up-date U.P. reading chart; draft prospective parent letter for revision of Centennial 1981 student application

During the first semester the Ungraded Primary staff met 14 times. Each meeting included discussion of the reading and math curriculums, student placement, and communications. The staff met with a district reading teacher once and once with the school librarian. The staff also met with the Early Childhood staff members to discuss their programs.

SECTION III

ANALYSES OF ACTIVITIES

The whole is only as good as the sum of its parts. No program can succeed without much hard work and the Ungraded Primary Department at Centennial is no exception. Many activities have been and continue to be carried out to produce a department which is an integral part of the total educational program of Centennial. The activities selected for analysis in this section are four which the author felt were of particular importance in establishing the program effectively, productively, and efficiently.

Student Placement

Schools need students, and once a student population is present they must be placed. This does not usually present a problem in a traditional graded school. However, it was one of the most critical activities in the establishment of a successful ungraded primary program at Centennial. The two major categories of student placement discussed in this paper are initial placement and adjustive placement.

Initial Placement. Initial placement activities for students fell into three classifications: those students returning to Centennial for another school year; those students transferring to Centennial from another school or school district; and those students beginning their formal education.

Placement activities for those students returning to Centennial in the Fall 1980 began near the Spring 1980 term. The teachers of these

students completed two evaluation and appraisal devices to rate each student both academically and socially. These devices were completed before this writer became a faculty member at Centennial and were discarded when tentative class lists were compiled. The exact forms are not available for inclusion in this project. However, the devices included data pertaining to all academic subjects, study habits and behaviors, and socialization skills. Exact reading and math levels were given, and each student was ranked in a comparison with his or her peers. Having worked with these students for at least one year, the teachers were confident in their evaluations. The number of students returning to Centennial for the Ungraded Primary program was 83.

Evaluations for placement of students transferring to Centennial from other schools or school districts was, of necessity, a less controlled process. The children were not known by the faculty and were coming to Centennial for a variety of reasons. The only information available for evaluation came from the parent interviews, student application, and previous academic reports. In some cases this information was slightly prejudiced as most of it was supplied by parents. Previous academic records did not arrive in some instances until after the initial placement activities had been completed. Twenty-two students transferred to Centennial in the Fall Term.

Placement information for those students beginning their educational adventure at Centennial came from two sources. Parents supplied information in their interview and application. This information was somewhat biased like that supplied for transfer students. The second source of placement information was a screening device used with all incoming

kindergarten children in the Decatur Public School District #61. The device was administered in March 1980 and was not without limitations. The Caldwell Preschool Inventory is used primarily to give early detection to any special problems the new students may have. Since the test is given in March, it cannot accurately assess the students in September. Many four and five year-old children make tremendous gains during the six month period immediately preceding school. The only information from the screening device available to use in placing the students was their final score. No indication was given as to what types of questions were not answered correctly. Given its limitations it remained the only source of scientific information available for placement. The beginning student group contained 51 boys and girls.'

With all the placement information available on all the incoming students, placement into classes began. One of the six homerooms contained students at the same administrative level. The other five classes consisted of students across two administrative levels. The students were not classified by grade level within the program at Centennial. They were, however, classified by specific grade levels for record purposes in the Decatur Public Schools. Centennial Principal, Mrs. Pat Tingle, drew up the initial tentative lists. Students were placed in homerooms with primary consideration being given to reading levels. Class placement was done this way to most efficiently merge with the instructional program. During the teacher workshop in August the tentative lists were discussed. Situations which presented problems, socially or academically, were resolved and final class lists were developed. An effort was made to balance classes with equal numbers of boys and girls.

Adjustive Placement. No initial placement system is perfect and it was not expected that the process used at Centennial would be any different. Therefore a system for adjustive placement was developed during the August workshop. The adjustive placement process has three steps: (1) Homeroom teacher refers matter to Ungraded Primary staff for discussion. (2) Parent conference and/or letter. (3) Final disposition of matter by staff.

When a classroom teacher feels that it is in the best interests of a particular student that he be moved to another class a teacher referral and recommendation is made. Once the referral is completed the department staff will discuss fully the implications of such a move and make its recommendation. A parent conference will be held to discuss the potential move with the child, his parents, present teacher, and potential new teacher in attendance. Parent opinion will be brought to the attention of the department staff members and a final decision will be reached.

During the time covered by this report two students were adjusted in their placement. The adjustment took place because the students in question were already spending a majority of their instructional time in the class to which they were being transferred. The process for adjustive placement was used and proceeded smoothly.

Instructional Program

The instructional program at Centennial is one which sets it apart from the other elementary schools in Decatur. It is progressive, innovative, exciting, and subject to change. The Centennial difference is a

matter of substance and style. The instructional program of the Ungraded Primary Department expands the Centennial Philosophy and enhances learning for children. The curriculum balances teaching and learning experiences. It enables the children to see that the process of learning is as vital to life as is the content learned.

The Content. The curriculum in the Ungraded Primary Department includes the material approved for all elementary schools in Decatur but is not limited to that. District instructional materials are used and supplemented with materials/resources acquired through gifted program funds, district innovative proposals, and other available resources. The teachers are encouraged to pursue their own ideas and approaches and develop them or modify instructional resources needed to accomplish the resultant goals and objectives. The District Developmental Learner Objectives and task force guidelines are used as a basis for reference.

Of equal importance with experimental/open curriculum is the focus on developing self-direction capabilities in students. Curriculum implementation is structured to provide both instruction and independent learning experiences. Among the aspects of self-directed learning given attention this year include the ability to:

- a. use materials and resources.
- b. use and structure time efficiently.
- c. follow directions.
- d. use space/learning environment appropriately.
- e. show self-discipline.
- f. show respect for others.
- g. pursue content/interests projects.

It is not expected that all children in the Ungraded Primary Department will leave totally self-directed. However, it is expected that they will be more self-directing because of the activities in which they participate within the department.

Within the content area, the major planning and emphasis of the Ungraded Primary Department was in the areas of reading and math. An individual reading progress chart, Appendix B, was developed by the staff to accurately portray individual reading progress. The form is based on the district-wide reading series. The chart also explains alternative and supplementary programs used. A similar progress chart for math, Appendix C, was developed. Also in the area of mathematics a list of 32 objectives to be accomplished during the years in the Ungraded Primary Department was developed. The objectives are included in this report as Appendix D.

A major content objective of the Ungraded Primary Department is that the curriculum be cumulative as well as sequential. Provision is made for both differentiated rates of progress and variations in kinds of program. When a child is ready for the next step he goes to it. With this curriculum children truly have an opportunity for continuous progress.

Curriculum is organized within each individual classroom but has also been organized, in some areas, as a department. Department reading progress is charted on a large wall graph in the department staff room. Use of this chart has made it possible to better meet the needs of the children in the department. When it becomes apparent that groups of children from different homerooms are working at the same levels in the reading curriculum, children have been regrouped. This has made it

possible for each teacher to have fewer reading groups. Fewer groups have meant more time to work with the groups each has and has made it possible for each teacher to do a more effective job of teaching children to read. A future goal of the department is to develop such a department-wide organization of the mathematics program.

Other content areas vary greatly from class to class. Social studies and science units within the department have ranged across a large scope of activities. The entire department worked together on a Pilgrim and Indian unit at Thanksgiving culminating with a feast. The children were responsible for the preparation of the food and prepared appropriate costumes.

All children in the department have music class with a district music specialist one day each week for thirty minutes. Physical education classes are held twice a week with the P.E. specialist. Special services in the areas of speech and learning disabilities are made available as well as a school social worker, psychologist, and reading strategist.

The Method. The "Centennial Method" does not exist as a clearly defined structure. In keeping with the school philosophy, a number of various methods are tried. Some fail and some succeed. As a whole, the teachers believe that schools should be learner-centered and in keeping with that belief all methods tried put the individual child first. Staff members are expected to experiment with teaching strategies and techniques and develop skills/content programs which are based on both the current needs of the student population and the prevailing educational trends and research.

Several teaching strategies have been carried out during the first semester of the 1980-81 school year. Within the open classroom philosophy have been aspects of departmentalization, team teaching, learning centers, large group instruction, small group instruction, and one-to-one individualized instruction. Acknowledging that individual children learn best in different ways this wide scope of strategies makes possible the best chance of success for the child in school.

In keeping with the open classroom tenet, educational experiences offered take into account the child's developmental stages, the responsibility to provide for a broad bases of interest, and the need to foster individual creativity. Therefore, an everchanging program results and includes a balance between arts and humanities, content and skills, and personal social skills development. An interdisciplinary approach results where children learn science concepts from social studies activities, learn math concepts in science units, and become better readers in music activities. A very important aspect of all teaching/learning methods is that each child is given ample opportunity to be successful.

Communications

Communications is an essential aspect for any educational endeavor. Good communications cannot make a poor program succeed. However, poor communications can doom to failure a program that has the potential to be great.

The communications activities in the development of an Ungraded Primary Program at Centennial Laboratory School can be divided into two parts: internal communications and external communications. Both are

vital to the success of the program. One without the other is of little worth. For the purposes of this paper, internal communications will be discussed first.

Internal Communications. Communications between members of the department began just two weeks before school was scheduled to begin. The six members of the Ungraded Primary staff met at Centennial for a week-long workshop to develop the program. Three of the staff members were new to the regular staff at Centennial. Two of the members did not know each other or any other member of the team. It was clear that a defined system of communication needed to be developed, and the members set to work.

The first phase of the internal communications system began with the appointment of a chairperson for the department. Realizing the increased time commitment that such responsibility would bring, it was decided the chairmanship of the department would be rotated on a monthly basis with each member bearing that responsibility equally. The chairperson would have the responsibility of making certain that each teacher was kept informed of important issues of concern. It was the responsibility of each team member to communicate concerns to the chairperson. The department chairperson would serve as the direct link between the members of the department and the administration.

A second phase of the internal communication system consisted of weekly department meetings after school on Thursday evenings. The monthly chairperson was to have responsibility for these meetings. It was thought that weekly meetings would take care of most matters but the team would meet at other times as events dictated. The agendas for these meetings were left open. Each meeting would deal with those matters of concern at

that time. A discussion of curriculum matters, especially reading and math, would be a part of each agenda.

During the months of December and January this writer was chairman of the department. He felt that communications within the staff could be improved by the development of an internal memo to advise other staff members of meeting agendas and other pertinent information that might become available during the school week. One example of such a memo is found in Appendix E.

Other more informal means of communications within the department have existed and flourished during the first semester of the school year. Four of the team members have classrooms located on the same building level. All six teachers have lunch hours that overlap at least fifteen minutes each day. Given the close proximity of classrooms and shared lunch hours, department staff members have been able to communicate with each other at frequent intervals during the day. These informal means of communications have helped to develop tremendous rapport between members of the staff and helped the formal communication system become even more productive.

External Communications. After spending a week together developing the Ungraded Primary Department, the staff confidently faced the year before them. The next major task before them was the process of informing the public, and specifically the parents, of what was going on---- external communications. Two ideas were developed to help the parents face the year before them with the same confidence with which the staff was facing it.

First, a letter was drafted to be sent to all parents of children in the Ungraded Primary Department. A copy of that letter is found as Appendix F to this report. The letter, along with other pertinent registration information, was sent to all parents the week preceding school registration.

The first communication crisis occurred during the registration process. Class lists were typed with grade levels clearly listed at the top. These lists had been typed to assist parents in finding their child's room but in some instances had a reverse effect. Status seemed to be more important than meeting a child's needs to some parents when they discovered their eight year-old in a class labeled kindergarten/first grade. The questions of concerned parents were answered fully and honestly. The staff reassured parents as best as possible and encouraged them to give the plan a chance. In the end, two students were withdrawn because the parents were not satisfied with the placement of their son or daughter within the department.

The second idea developed to inform and educate parents was a presentation to be given at the September meeting of the Parent-Teacher Organization. The presentation consisted of a welcoming speech, a statement of the goals of the department, a demonstration of how three individual students might progress through the reading curriculum during three years in the Ungraded Primary Department, a speech on the philosophy of the department, and a question and answer session.

The presentation was well-attended and considered a success by staff members and parents alike. The demonstration and philosophy talk seemed to be particularly effective.

For purposes of the demonstration all the materials used in the reading program were set on tables. Three students stood behind the tables of materials. As the moderator read specific time frames, the three students moved forward at varying rates to demonstrate where they might be at the end of one, two, and three years in the program. Each child moved as his individually prescribed program was designed.

This writer had the responsibility of giving the speech on the philosophy of the department and explaining just exactly what was the ungraded primary. In order to do so a comparison was made between a typical graded structure and the planned ungraded program. The nine points of comparison made were as follows:

Graded Structure

1. Schools are designed to cover and inculcate a specific body of subject matter.
2. Individual differences merely determine one's chances in the race to cover prescribed material.
3. Nonpromotion is the primary mechanism by which students who progress slowly are adjusted to the system.
4. Decisions about grade placement is made at the end of the school year.
5. Grade placement depends on meeting of fixed annual standards set for the whole group.
6. Specific bodies of content are assigned to specific grades.

Ungraded Structure

- Schools are learner-centered--- designed to develop the learner as an individual and as a member of society.
- Differences in many aspects of development are recognized and used in planning highly individualized programs.
- Provision is made for both differentiated rates of progress and variations in kinds of programs.
- Decisions about placement in a group take place throughout the school program.
- Individual standards are based on the physical, mental, social, and emotional status of the child at any time.
- Content is viewed as cumulative as well as sequential.

Graded Structure

7. Content assigned to the following grade os "Off Limits."
8. Subject matter should be identified and rigorously prescribed.
9. Double promotion adjusts students who progress too quickly to the system.

Ungraded Structure

- When a child is ready for the next step he goes to it.
- Focus should be on ways of knowing and thinking. Emphasis is on the individual.
- Children move through the system quickly and continuously, leaving no gaps or holes in their education.

External communications did not end with the school bell on the days after classes began. In fact, it was just beginning. Many types of informal communication were used between the school and home. Each staff member in the department used the means that best suited their needs at the time. Among the most common forms were phone calls and notes to specific parents and general letters to all parents. An example of such a general letter sent to parents is included as Appendix G.

Centennial Lab School produces a monthly newsletter to all parents. The Ungraded Primary Department has made use of this communication device to further spread the news of our development. Appendix H is just one example of this public relations venture.

A more formal method of continuing external communications exists in the form of the Parent-Teacher Conferences. Conferences were held for all students in October and January. The October conferences were of a general nature and helped teachers and parents set goals for the year ahead. Each teacher used a document which best suited his needs. No attempt was made to develop a uniform document for all members of the department. The January conferences were reports of academic, social, and emotional growth. They were highly specific and individualized. A

copy of this writer's January evaluation device is included as Appendix I. At the conclusion of the school year parents will be given additional written reports of the progress of their child. No definite conference is planned but conferences will be scheduled where there is need.

For the most part communication activities have been effective. Parents feel they are well-informed. They perceive the teachers as open, honest, and sincerely interested in helping children learn.

Mainstreaming Students

Children are mainstreamed into the Ungraded Primary Department from two different sources and for two very different reasons. The children come from the Early Childhood (Special Education) Department and from the Refugee Classroom. The different sections of mainstreaming will be discussed separately.

Early Childhood. The Early Childhood Department at Centennial consists of four teachers, four full-time aides, and eight half-time vocational students. There are 64 children enrolled in the program ranging in age from three to five years. The children have a variety of problems which have qualified them for the program. Some are physically or mentally handicapped. Others have emotional or severe behavior problems. Some of the children have delays in speech and language development. And there are some children who have combinations of the problems mentioned above. The Macon-Piatt Special Education District pays the salary of a full-time aide to work in the Ungraded Primary Department to assist the teachers when working with the mainstreamed children.

The selection of students to be mainstreamed is done by the teachers in the Early Childhood Program. Only those children who are old enough to attend regular kindergarten the following school year are considered for mainstreaming. Those children selected for mainstreaming are ones who the teachers feel have a chance of being successful in a regular classroom situation. During the first semester of the 1980-81 school year, 12 children were mainstreamed into two classrooms of the Ungraded Primary Department.

The primary reason for mainstreaming children from Early Childhood is to expose them to a "normal" classroom experience to assess the possibility of future success in the regular classroom. Teachers from the two departments meet at regular intervals to discuss daily progress of the mainstreamed students. The general thrust of the activities during the time the mainstreamed children are present is non-academic in nature. Many large group activities are conducted in which the children are required to function without the individual help they have received in their Early Childhood classroom where the adult-student ratio is 1-3. If the children can function in the large group setting and are making academic progress in their Early Childhood class they are recommended for regular kindergarten the following school year. The final decision is made by the special education teachers with the advice of the teachers in the Ungraded Primary Department.

The scheduling for mainstreaming is planned by the teachers from the two departments. Each mainstreamed child spends two sessions per week in the regular classroom. The sessions vary in length from thirty minutes to one hour depending on the particular activity being conducted.

Refugee Classroom. The city of Decatur has a growing refugee population from Southeast Asia. A majority of the children in that population attend Centennial Lab School and two of those children are mainstreamed into the Ungraded Primary Department.

The two boys, aged seven and nine, who are mainstreamed into the ungraded classroom have almost no knowledge of the English language. They have received no formal education because their family has been on the run and in hiding much of the past four years. The boys are small in stature and seem to fit well in the group of five and six year-old children with whom they are mainstreamed.

The primary reason from Centennial's view for mainstreaming the children from the refugee classroom is to expose them to the English language. Children can learn a great deal from their peers and the language development activities conducted in the primary classroom seem particularly suited to the task.

The refugee children are both mainstreamed into the same classroom so that they do not feel completely isolated. They are in the classroom daily from 10:15 to 11:30, from 12:30 until 1:30, and also attend P.E. and music classes with the primary group. The children seem to enjoy coming and are eagerly awaited by the other children in the class. Most important of all is that they are learning English.

SECTION IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the midpoint in its first year the Ungraded Primary Department at Centennial is moving forward with purpose. The staff has worked many long hours developing a systematic approach to the open classroom philosophy. Although it may seem an extension of Centennial's program, it is significantly different in that it is a systematic (levels approach) and it requires a team effort in grouping, planning, experimenting, and evaluating both program effectiveness and student activities.

On the following pages, recommendations will be made concerning the four activities discussed at length in this paper. The paper will conclude with general comments concerning the Ungraded Primary Department at Centennial.

Student Placement

The system developed for placement of students in the Ungraded Primary Department was very successful for the 1980-81 school year. The process designed for adjustive placement was used only twice and worked efficiently. The important idea here is that there was a process, clearly defined, to use for such adjustment.

The placement system uses test data, student evaluation, and past performance. It also involves a human element in drawing up class lists which gives significance to the facts and figures.

Two potential weaknesses of the placement process for beginning and transfer students are the early date for the preschool screening and

the biased opinions of the parents who are supplying much of the initial information. Unfortunately, both these potential weaknesses still exist. Preschool screening and kindergarten registration for the 1981-82 school year will be at the end of February, even earlier than it was done last year. One positive change is that some of the registration and screening will be done at Centennial by the Ungraded Primary staff rather than totally at the neighborhood schools. The results will have more meaning for placement when the staff is working with more than a list of scores. The problem of prejudiced information supplied by parents continues. The staff will simply have to educate itself to know the children more effectively and use the adjustive placement process when needed.

It may well be that the two potential weaknesses are simply that, potential. The placement process this year was very productive and efficient. While continuing the present placement procedures it is recommended that the staff continue to look at ways to improve the placement of students.

Instructional Program

Of the four activities discussed in detail in this paper, the one most likely to undergo continued scrutiny and change is the instructional program. The instructional program and curriculum is a constant topic of discussion. The staff evaluates, assesses changes, and recommends improvements in daily interaction and weekly department meetings. A strong point of the Centennial program is that it is innovative, experimental, flexible, and changing with the times.

During the remainder of this school year and in future years the staff will continue to seek ways to improve instruction and make learning more efficient for children. The early work started this year to organize and strengthen the math and reading curriculum will be carried on in the future. It is recommended that the staff develop a department-wide organization of the math program as done with the reading curriculum. It is recommended that as these programs become stronger, the staff look into ways of improving the curriculum in the areas of science, social studies, and language. It is suggested that the department continue to give the development of self-direction skills in children a high priority.

During the workshop held before the start of the school year the staff developed progress charts for reading and math. The charts were needed because no such charts existed within the district. However, the district did acquire reading progress charts during the year which contained many of the aspects of the staff-developed reading chart. It was determined that completion of the staff-developed reading chart would be needless repetition and it was abandoned. The math progress charts continue to be used and are meeting the need.

Communications

Communication activities, both internal and external, have been highly successful. Communication between staff members has been active. Parents have been educated and well-informed. They perceive the staff as personable, open, honest, and sincerely interested in their children.

It is recommended that a permanent chairperson for the department be named for the 1981-82 school year. Rotating the chairmanship has

achieved its goal of equal responsibility but it is not as efficient in the long haul. Because it would add tremendously to that teacher's job, it would be very nice for the district to reward the department's chairperson financially as it does with senior high department chairmen.

The weekly meetings have been an excellent opportunity to discuss issues, debate curriculum alternatives, and assist each other. It is recommended that these weekly meetings be a permanent part of the Ungraded Primary Department.

Although internal communications have been very good in the present setting, it could be improved if the six staff members all shared a common lunch period and had classrooms on the same building level. But as long as Centennial continues to exist in a renovated 51 year-old junior high school, such a situation is a luxury and not a requirement.

External communication efforts have also been rewarded. The staff is preparing at this time for recruitment of students for the 1981-82 school year. The school application has been revised to reflect the changes in organization.

It is recommended that the staff continue those means of formal and informal communications developed during the present school year.

It is highly recommended (and an absolute requirement) that when class lists are typed for next year, grade levels be eliminated!

The development of better evaluation devices is a continuing goal of the entire Centennial staff. The teachers of the Ungraded Primary Department believe that the devices used this year are an accurate reflection of the curriculum and philosophy of Centennial. They are viewed as far superior to the district report card but can always be improved.

Mainstreaming Students

Mainstreaming is here to stay and what better place for it to occur than in an ungraded primary department. The children from the Early Childhood Department have merged smoothly into the flexible curriculum of the Ungraded Primary Department.

It is recommended that the amount of time spent in the regular classroom be increased for the mainstreamed students. It is difficult to predict future school success based on such limited exposure to the "normal" classroom. It is recommended that all mainstreamed children spend a minimum of four hours a week in the Ungraded Primary classrooms next year.

The Ungraded Primary Department also seems the ideal placement for the refugee children. As their language develops, they will have the opportunity to move quickly through the content areas of the early school years. The best place to learn the English language is in a classroom with English speaking children.

The Ungraded Primary Department

The process of building the Ungraded Primary Department is by no means complete but it has had a solid beginning. Having a systematic approach is crucial if there is to be continuity in the department from one year to the next. Centennial has a young staff and has traditionally had a large turnover of teachers from year to year. The average age of the present Ungraded Primary staff is 30 and at this writing one-third of that staff is pregnant. Filling staff vacancies in the future will

be a more efficient process because the position is more clearly defined. Applicants will be able to see exactly what they are applying for and will know in what ways they can best contribute.

The establishment of the Ungraded Primary Department is also seen as a strong point for attracting young children and their parents to Centennial. The potential paths of student progress are clearly defined and parents can determine if this is what they want for their child.

In general, things have gone and are going well.

APPENDIX

Appendix A
Centennial Lab School Student Application

Centennial Laboratory School
1500 East Condit Street
Decatur, Illinois 62521
March 1, 1980

TO: Parents of Elementary Student
in Grades Kindergarten-5th

FROM: Centennial Laboratory School

SUBJECT: Admission of Students to
Centennial - General Description of Program

Admission of Students

Any elementary student (K-6) residing in Decatur District #61 is eligible to attend Centennial Lab School. The laboratory school offers an alternative instructional program at no cost to District #61 parents. Criteria for selection of students includes:

1. Prospective parents interested in sending their children to Centennial Lab School should visit the school and discuss the program with the principal and/or staff. Genuine interest in the program and suitability of the student to the program will be prime factors in acceptance of applications.
2. As a magnet school:
 - A. Centennial will accept students from all elementary attendance centers in the district in order to maintain a representative population.
 - B. Students of all levels of academic aptitude and educational achievement will be accepted. As much as possible an equal number of girls and boys will be accepted.

Program Description

To gain a full understanding of the philosophy and program of the laboratory school an appointment should be arranged with the principal (424-3180) and a visit to the school scheduled. A brief outline of some key features of the program follows to enable parents to ascertain initial interest.

Individualization

A basic goal of the Centennial program is to provide each student with an opportunity to develop at his own pace and in his own style. Emphasis is placed on creativity and personalization of instruction. Another important goal is to encourage independent learning. In a rich and interesting environment, opportunities are provided for students to choose, plan, execute, and evaluate learning activities. Student independence and responsibility commensurate with maturational level, is thus encouraged.

Curricula

Students attending the laboratory school receive the same basic skills instructional program (math, language arts) as is provided by all other schools. Staff members are encouraged to employ innovative materials, techniques and ideas in order to meet diverse individual needs and make

learning an interesting endeavor. Positive attitude about school and the learning process is a primary goal.

Interest centers and/or specific programs or activities in the areas of aesthetic education (music, drama, art, movement), affective education (self-concept development, values clarification, personal-social interaction skills), career awareness, environmental education, and activity and project-oriented social studies and science units are all offered at Centennial. A fully equipped math lab offers students opportunities to use math manipulatives, games, and construct projects.

Multi-age class groups operate in which students are encouraged to participate in individual, small group and large group learning.

The all-day kindergarten program offers children an opportunity for both academic readiness experiences and many enriching activities which prepare them for participation in the grade 1-6 program.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is an important part of the lab school program. Parent conferences held twice yearly aim at setting student goals and assessing student progress. Parent volunteers may serve as tutors, clerical aides, resource persons, special project assistants and math lab and library helpers. It is expected that parents who have children in the program will provide some form of assistance and support.

Transportation

School district buses, city bus service, and car pools are all possible sources of transportation to and from school. Specific information is available by calling the school secretary (424-3180).

Interested parents should submit the following application to the school on or before May 1, 1980. Information must be complete and all new applicants should schedule an interview with the principal. Please send the completed forms to:

Patricia Tingle, Principal
Centennial Lab School, 1500 E. Condit St.
Decatur, Illinois 62521

Name of Student(s) _____ Grade Level for 1980-81

Parents Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Zip _____ School _____

Kindergarten children should have been registered at their neighborhood school on March 4, 1980.

All parents of students presently attending the school must submit this application. Enrollment will be limited to 340 students. Please respond immediately as staffing needs are determined by school population.

Appendix B
Reading Progress Chart

READING PROGRESS CHART

NAME _____

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS _____

COMPLETED LEVEL (1979-80) _____

LEVEL	DATE BEGAN	DATE COMPLETED	ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM USED	TEACHER COMMENTS	SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAM USED	TEACHER SIGNATURE
<u>PREREADINESS</u> Shape Books						
<u>READINESS</u> Letter Books						
<u>BEGINNING READING</u> Lippincott A						
Lippincott B						
Lippincott C						
GINN 4						
GINN 5						
GINN 6						
GINN 7						
GINN 8						

Appendix C
Math Progress Chart

NAME _____

MATH PROGRESS CHART

Special Considerations _____

		COMPLETED DATE	COMMENTS	TEACHER SIGNATURE
1. Pre-Readiness				
2. Readiness Heath				
3. Scott Foresman				
4. Heath				
5. Scott Foresman				
6. Scott Foresman				
7. Scott Foresman				

Appendix D
Mathematics Objectives

MATHEMATICS OBJECTIVES

- ___ 1. Given sets (fewer than five elements) the pupil can identify if they are equivalent. Given two non-equivalent sets, they can identify the set having more members and the one having fewer members.
- ___ 2. Given a series of pictures, the pupil can identify the tallest, shortest, empty, half, whole, long, and short.
- ___ 3. Pupils can reproduce a given pattern in blocks or beads.
- ___ 4. Pupils can reproduce circles, squares, triangles, and rectangles.
- ___ 5. Given a set of numerals 0-20 the pupil can identify, count, and write them.
- ___ 6. Pupils can identify and understand the concept of "pair."
- ___ 7. Pupils can count from 1 to 100 by ones.
- ___ 8. Pupils can identify penny, nickel, and dime.
- ___ 9. Given a set picture for a number ten through ninety-nine, the pupil can indicate the place value numeral for that number and name the digits in the ones and tens place.
- ___ 10. Given units of measure for time, the pupil can determine and record time by the hour and half-hour.
- ___ 11. Given oral and ordinal numbers, the pupil can identify the named number and say its ordinal name. (1-10).
- ___ 12. Given units of measure the pupil can identify the named member and measure to the nearest centimeter and inch.
- ___ 13. Given addition and subtraction combinations (sums through 12), the pupil can determine the respective sums and differences.
- ___ 14. Given pictures of objects 0 through 999, the pupil can write the place value numeral, identify the digits in ones, tens, and hundreds place.
- ___ 15. Given addition and subtraction combinations for numbers 0 through 9, the student will know the respective sum or difference and be able to pass the 5 minute timed tests at 75% accuracy.
- ___ 16. Given the addition and subtraction algorithm for two numbers 0 through 99, the pupil can determine the sum or difference with no renaming.
- ___ 17. Given a clockface with hands showing the hour, half-hour, or quarter-hour, the learner can name and write the time.
- ___ 18. Given a calendar and specified date, the learner can locate a given day the week before and the week after.
- ___ 19. Given geometric models or sets of objects, the student can identify $1/2$, $1/3$, and $1/4$ of the region or the set.
- ___ 20. Given units of measure for money, the pupil can determine and record using the cent symbol (¢) the value of a set of coins up to one dollar (pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and half-dollars).

- ___ 21. Given line segments and geometric figures and the proper measuring devices, the student can determine the measurement of line segments to the nearest centimeter and the nearest inch.
- ___ 22. Given equivalent and non-equivalent sets, the pupil can express the number relationships using mathematical symbols, operations, and sentences.
- ___ 23. Given a story problem situation involving addition or subtraction (sums through 18) the pupil can write an open mathematical sentence and solve the problem.
- ___ 24. Given a problem with two 3-digit numbers, the pupil can compute the sum or difference with renaming.
- ___ 25. Given any 4-digit numeral, the pupil can tell the value of each digit in the ones, tens, hundreds, and thousands place and write the expanded notation for that numeral.
- ___ 26. Given a geometric figure divided into halves, thirds, or fourths, the pupil can identify the parts and write the fractional number.
- ___ 27. Given a clock, the pupil can tell time to the nearest 5 minute interval.
- ___ 28. Given multiplication combinations (through 5×9) the pupil can write the respective products.
- ___ 29. Given a 2 or 3-digit dividend and 1-digit divisor, the pupil can determine the quotient (combinations through $45 \div 9$).
- ___ 30. Given an object, the pupil can measure its length in centimeters and/or meters and in feet and/or yards.
- ___ 31. Given dollar bills and a set of pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and half-dollars, the pupil can identify and write the value using the symbols (\$) and (.).

Appendix E
Ungraded Primary Staff Memo

4 DEC 80

To: Ungraded Primary Staff
From: J. Henry

WHAT'S **U**NGRADED
PRIMARY AT CENTENNIAL

Ungraded Primary Staff will meet at 3:15 today in Room 103 (Del's).

Suggested agenda is as follows:

1. Newsletter
2. Kdg. Inventory Sheet
3. Calendar Dates:
 - a) Early Childhood---January 15
 - b) Illinois Bell---January 8 at 3:15
 - c) H.O.P. Program---Jan. 27 (Tues.) and Jan. 28 (Wed.)

Jean 9:15	John 9:15
Jan 10:00	Cole 10:00
4. Surplus Feast Fund---Jean to divide
5. Conference Report Sheet---Please bring a copy of form you used!
6. Room 103
7. Room Painting and Other Business

<u>✓</u> J. Allen	<u>✓</u> P. Williams	<u>✓</u> C. Williams	<u>✓</u> P. Tingle
<u>✓</u> D. Floyd	<u>✓</u> J. Henry		

Appendix F
Program Explanation Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

This year the primary department at Centennial will be ungraded. The children will no longer be grouped by grade, but by levels.

In doing this we hope to: (1) provide flexibility of groupings according to individual needs; (2) provide a system of continuous progress and evaluation of the children's needs; (3) to reduce the problems associated with acceleration and retention; and (4) provide each child with experiences which will provide success, self-esteem and well-rounded growth in all areas.

We feel that this program will provide an education that is tailored for the individual needs of all the children.

The department is divided into six homeroom groups each of which includes children from more than one level. With teams of teachers working together and the six teachers meeting regularly to planned agendas which will plan curriculum and assess student placement, we feel a more consistent program will result, as more alternatives will be open for each child.

At our September P. T. O. General Membership meeting we will explain, in detail, the workings of the program. Please plan to join us for this very important session for parents.

We feel that this program will fit well with Centennial's overall philosophy of developing ideas, methods and new attitudes in learning.

Sincerely,

Jan Allen (Mrs.)

Delinea Floyd (Mrs.)

John Henry

Jean Lebo (Mrs.)

Cole Williams

Pat Williams (Mrs.)

Appendix G

General Information Letter to Parents

10 Sep 1980

Dear Parents,

Our first day of full day attendance went well and the days that followed have passed without problems. Thank you for your part in helping get the year off to a smooth start.

There are a few problems that I would like to get taken care of before they grow. Lunch money is 55¢ per day. Milk money is 6¢ per day. If a child pays for hot lunch it is not necessary to also pay for milk. If you send money for your child with a child in another room, please send me a note.

We will not have a milk break during the day so it is not necessary to send extra milk money. However, we do have a long morning so I would like to suggest that we do take a break for cookies. I would like each family to take a turn in sending a package of cookies for that purpose. If you are not willing to participate please let me know soon. I will arrange a schedule for providing cookies next week.

We have been discussing jobs in our class. Each child is to bring something about his or her parent's job next Monday for Show and Tell. If your child has already done this it is not necessary to do it again.

Next week I would like each child to bring a picture of himself/herself below the age of two. The pictures will be returned safely when we finish our unit of study.

If you have any questions please feel free to call me. If anyone would like to be Room Mother please let me know soon.

Sincerely,

Mr. Henry

Appendix H
Ungraded Primary Newsletter Article

What's Ungraded Primary at Centennial

The Ungraded Primary Department is clearly where things are happening at Centennial. The month of November found all the classes studying Pilgrims, Indians, and Thanksgiving. The month of study was culminated with a Thanksgiving Feast on Wednesday, November 26. The children in each room took responsibility for preparing part of the food. Everything was delicious! The children attended the Feast in costume and a good time was had by all. December finds the children studying a wide range of things. Included in the current units of study are the Family, Dinosaurs, Weather, Time, Printing, Holidays, Colors, and Sharing and Caring.

The Ungraded Primary Staff spends their spare time (?) working for the improvement of the educational program of the department. We meet weekly to discuss curriculum, techniques, problems, and solutions. We remain open to your comments, criticism, and praise.

The holiday season is upon us with full force. Holiday parties will be held the week of December 15-19. Please do not send refreshments unless you are specifically asked to do so. Individual rooms will be planning their own parties and contacting parents as needed.

by John Henry

Appendix I
January 1981 Student Evaluation Device

III. SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Science and Social Studies activities have given us a chance to learn more about ourselves and the world about us. In many instances, these activities have been part of reading, language, sharing, math, or simply being a member of a school class.

First semester units have included:

Weather	Our Families
Seasons	Occupations
Plants	Pilgrims and Indians
Ourselves	Holidays

IV. MUSIC AND ART

The children have one half-hour music class with Ms. Grap each week. They have worked on listening skills, rhythm, movement, and learning songs. In addition, we have 20 minutes of music each day. The children are learning to enjoy music and develop an appreciation for different types of music. We have given two concerts thus far and are currently working on music for a Spring concert.

Enjoys participating in music _____

Needs to become more involved _____

Art activities give the children an opportunity to develop creative expression. We have used various media in our projects thus far in the school year. Activities have been open ended to encourage individual differences. Cutting and coloring to develop fine motor skills have been a feature of several projects. The children always illustrate their Language Experience stories.

V. PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Following directions and the development of gross motor skills have been major aspects of the Physical Education program under the direction of Mr. Luster. Children have participated in skill development in such areas as running, skipping, galloping, tossing, catching, dancing, movement, and organized games.

_____ Participates in P.E. activities

_____ Attends additional motor skills class

Teacher Comments:

VI. SOCIAL-PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

During the primary school years, children develop and refine those social and personal skills that will be with them for the rest of their lives. They must learn to interact with others in a variety of situations and in a manner that is considered acceptable.

Cooperates with adults.
/-----/
Never Usually Always

Cooperates with other students.
/-----/
Never Usually Always

Sensitive to others.
/-----/
Never Usually Always

Controls noise and behavior.
/-----/
Never Usually Always

VII. SKILLS OF SELF-DIRECTION

The Centennial Lab School philosophy is that children are here to learn more than facts and figures. They are here to learn how to learn. The ability to be self-directing does not magically appear when one reaches adulthood. It begins to develop when children are given responsibility for their own actions.

Uses time productively.
/-----/
Seldom Sometimes Usually

Uses materials wisely.
/-----/
Seldom Sometimes Usually

Concentrates and attends to task.
/-----/
Seldom Sometimes Usually

Works for quality, not quantity.
/-----/
Seldom Sometimes Usually

Works independently.
/-----/
Seldom Sometimes Usually

Follows directions.
/-----/
Seldom Sometimes Usually

VII. GENERAL COMMENTS

Teacher

Principal