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Iowa Teacher Perceptions of K-6 Articulation in Large School Districts Employing K-6 or K-12 Curriculum Directors

Dorothy Kessler Engstrom
University of Northern Iowa

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IOWA TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF K-6 ARTICULATION
IN LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICTS
EMPLOYING K-6 OR K-12 CURRICULUM DIRECTORS

A Thesis Abstract
Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

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by
Dorothy Kessler Engstrom

May 1975

ABSTRACT

This study was concerned with finding out what perceptions K-6 classroom teachers would express about K-6 articulation within their districts. The study was also concerned with finding out what difference, if any, existed between the perceptions of teachers from districts with full-time K-6 curriculum directors and the perceptions of teachers in districts with full-time K-12 curriculum directors.

It was expected that teachers in both groups of school districts would express the need for more K-6 articulation awareness and activities within their districts, but that teachers in districts employing a K-6 curriculum director would indicate that their districts were doing more than would K-6 classroom teachers in districts employing a K-12 curriculum director.

The population for the study consisted of five large Iowa school districts that employed full-time K-6 curriculum directors, and five Iowa school districts of similar size that employed full-time K-12 curriculum directors. Questionnaires were sent to twenty percent of the K-6 classroom teachers, selected at random, from each district.

The study results supported the expectation that most teachers would express a need for greater district involvement in improving K-6 articulation. It was found that 135 out of the 160 teachers thought that their districts should give K-6 articulation higher priority than was cur-

rently being given. There was some indication that there was a wider disparity between actual and desired district priority expressed by teachers from school districts with K-12 curriculum directors than by teachers from districts with K-6 curriculum directors.

Over thirty percent of both groups of teachers indicated that their districts were involved in no activity of importance or in no activity at all that was designed to promote K-6 articulation. "Briefings or memos from the curriculum director" was checked as being used in districts by slightly over forty percent of both groups of teachers.

Teachers in both types of districts often experienced frustration at not having time to work on improving articulation, and also believed that teachers in grades or levels above them were unrealistic about what could be expected of students entering their classes.

When teachers were given an opportunity to express what they would like to see accomplished first to improve K-6 articulation, there was a difference between the suggestions made by teachers in districts with K-6 curriculum directors and the suggestions made by teachers in districts with K-12 curriculum directors. Teachers in the first group mentioned most often the need for coordinating units, materials, and curriculum kindergarten through twelfth grade. Teachers in the latter group expressed a need for more definite standards for skills or knowledge at each grade level along with a better pupil progress reporting system.

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This Study by: Dorothy Kessler Engstrom

Entitled: IOWA TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF K-6 ARTICULATION IN LARGE SCHOOL DISTRICTS EMPLOYING K-6 OR K-12 CURRICULUM DIRECTORS

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the Degree of Specialist in Education

Norman McCumsey

4-23-75

Date

Chairman, Thesis Committee

Gilbert Hewitt

4-23-75

Date

Member, Thesis Committee

Paul Brimm

4-23-75

Date

Member, Thesis Committee

Upon recommendation of the Thesis Committee, accepted by

Gordon J. Rhum

Dean of the Graduate College

April 24, 1975

Date

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of innovation has become fashionable in education. In recent years schools have added special resource persons to their staffs, changed organizational and instructional patterns, placed more emphasis on diagnosis and evaluation, and have invested heavily in new media and instructional material. Some of these innovations are related to efforts to secure a well-articulated kindergarten through twelfth grade program; one with smooth transitions from one grade or course into the next with as little discontinuity and duplication as possible.

If educators accept articulation as a desirable goal, there are a number of innovations available to them to use in an attempt to reach this objective. Examples of these are ungraded and continuous progress concepts, new curriculum materials, teacher committees, in-service, and employing a curriculum director. The question that has not been answered is whether such techniques do in fact help alleviate articulation problems. Research is needed to ascertain whether activities and programs implemented by a school district under the assumption that articulation will be improved, do in reality effect the desired change to the

extent anticipated. The research of this study focuses on one such practice, that of a district employing a curriculum director.

STATEMENT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The domain of articulation-related concerns in education encompasses a very wide range. At one end of a continuum might be the relatively simple task of selecting sequential reading material for a particular student in a particular subject. At the other end might be a complex problem such as integrating the programs of all the schools in a large district to facilitate the smooth transfer of students in a highly mobile community.

The combinations of specific articulation problems found along the continuum will be unique to each school district and to each school and classroom within the district. A school desiring to obtain some indication of the extent to which articulation is present in their program may have difficulty in deciding how to begin the analysis. A systematic approach to analyzing the situation may be, in a manner, similar to the programs of needs assessment which many schools are being asked to conduct.

The first step is to evaluate the situation in question from the view-point of finding out where needs in articulation lie and how strongly those involved feel about the necessity of seeking solutions. The perceptions of those people closest to the level of actual operation, in

this study the elementary classroom teachers, are essential to get a functional picture of what is really happening, not what should theoretically be happening. Since these are also the people whose commitment must be obtained before any real implementation of change will occur, it is fundamental to know their initial point of view. The teachers of particular concern in this study are the kindergarten-sixth (K-6) classroom teachers in school districts utilizing curriculum directors, a strategy commonly thought to be an aid for improving articulation.

This researcher expected that K-6 classroom teachers would express a need for more K-6 articulation awareness and activities within their districts, but that teachers in districts employing a K-6 curriculum director would indicate that their districts were doing more to articulate the elementary program than would K-12 classroom teachers in districts employing a K-12 curriculum director.

ASSUMPTIONS

This study is based upon the assumption that before effective solutions to articulation problems can be sought, the problems need to be clearly understood and well-defined. It is also assumed that different individuals and groups have different perceptions concerning the same topic or situation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The school districts selected to participate in the study were limited to Iowa school districts with an enrollment of from 3,000 to 9,000 students that also employ at least one full-time curriculum director. Because of the specific population, limitations must be placed on generalizing study results to schools in other areas, to schools of different sizes, or to schools not employing a curriculum director.

Only K-6 classroom teachers were asked to complete the questionnaires concerning elementary articulation. It is possible that other individuals or groups within the districts may have perceptions that differ from this group. Some individual interpretation of the questions is unavoidable.

The questions used were of a general nature and thus cannot be used to answer specific concerns.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A review of literature related to articulation of educational units reveals quite a number of books and articles concerned with articulation, but little actual research. Most research that is available speaks largely to the problems involved in the transition from high school to college.

As early as 1924, Koos demonstrated the considerable amount of duplication found in the course offerings in high school and college programs.¹ This study was followed by Osburn's work in 1928.² Osburn concluded that as much as a year could be saved in a typical high school-college program by eliminating duplications. Wood, in 1938, substantiated Osburn's study by contributing the conclusion from his study, that time spent in school does not correlate with the amount of information that students retained.³

¹Leonard V. Koos, The Junior College (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1924), p. 682.

²Worth J. Osburn, Overlappings and Omissions in Our Courses of Study (Bloomington, Illinois: Public Schools Publishing Co., 1928), p. 167.

³William S. Learned and B. D. Wood, The Student and His Knowledge (New York: Carnegie Foundation, Public Affairs Pamphlets, 1938), p. 406.

Through the years, studies in specific subject areas, have tended to support these early studies.⁴

More recent studies such as the one done by the Minnesota Committee on High School and College Relations and also the Andover study of 1951, showed that no new methods or courses had been devised to improve high school-college articulation since the earlier studies that have been discussed.⁵ A tremendous amount of duplication and waste was still found in course offerings.

A survey done in 1968, revealed that fifty percent of the junior and senior high school principals and teachers that were questioned believed that articulation of the curriculum was a major concern to them.⁶

Although a study involving the effects of accelerating bright junior high students to improve the articulation

⁴Irwin A. Berg and Robert P. Larsen, "A Comparative Study of Students Entering College One or Two Semesters Before Graduation from High School," Journal of Educational Research, XXXIX (September, 1945), pp. 33-41; see also W. P. Shofstall, "The Achievement of High School and College Students in the Same Classes," School Review, XLIII (January, 1935), pp. 184-88; see also Raymond B. Fox, "Improving Relations between High School and College," Clearing House, XXXVI (February, 1962), pp. 323-26.

⁵Charles W. Boardman, "Study of High School-College Curriculum Articles in Minnesota," North Central Association Quarterly, XXVI (October, 1951), pp. 195-201; see also James C. Stone, "Articulation of Educational Units," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed. Robert L. Ebel (4th ed.; London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1969), p. 88, citing Alan R. Blackmer, General Education in School and College (Harvard University, 1952), p. 142.

⁶A. D. Charles, "Achieving Articulation of Subject Matter," School and Community, LIV (February, 1968), p. 16.

of their science program was made in 1953, it is evident that as the focus of the problem gets closer to the elementary school level there is less and less research available.⁷ Research concerned with K-6 articulation problems and more specifically teachers' perceptions of those problems, is not available at all. This is not to say that there is a lack of writers willing to state views or to offer suggestions having to do with articulation at all levels.

The review of literature uncovered a number of articles written by school personnel to provide examples of how they solved a particular articulation problem that existed within their district. For instance, Whittier Union High School District in California experienced difficulty in coordinating curriculum throughout their kindergarten through twelfth grade program.⁸ A number of volunteers organized a program of elementary and secondary articulation activities within the curriculum areas. Strategies and resource material to aid articulation were made available to anyone in the district who wanted to use them.

⁷Alvin C. Eurich and John J. Scanlon, "Articulation of Educational Units," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed. Chester W. Harris (3rd ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 88, citing Joseph Justmann, Intellectually Gifted Accelerants and Non-Accelerants at the Bronx High School of Science (New York City Board of Education, 1955), p.6.

⁸Marion W. Hodge, "Articulation of Secondary and Elementary Schools," California Journal of Secondary Education, XXXI (October, 1956), pp. 322-25.

Another example of what a single school district has done to improve articulation is given in an article by Juckett.⁹ He explained the program instituted by Hyde Park schools in New York, to articulate the adjustment of sixth graders entering junior high school.

Another set of writers focus on why they believe problems in the articulation of school programs exist to begin with. For example, Romine suggested the lack of efficiency in education would cause schools to go bankrupt if they were businesses.¹⁰ He felt that the lack of efficiency in school programs produced poor articulation. He also pointed out that more emphasis needed to be placed on both the learner and the teacher and that it was not enough for each grade level to do a good job independent of others.

Another writer of this group, Hunter, saw the problem of articulation as caused by the failure of teacher education and college faculties to stress the interrelatedness of all subjects and also by the unwillingness of teachers to learn what is taught at other levels.¹¹ Further

⁹Edwin A. Juckett, "A Pleasant Bridge in the Hyde Park Schools," Clearing House, XXIX (October, 1954), pp. 81-83.

¹⁰Stephen A. Romine, "Articulation: A Look at the Twelve Year Program," The North Central Association Quarterly, XXXV (April, 1967), pp. 274-77.

¹¹Ernest L. Hunter, "Articulation for Continuity in the School Program," The National Elementary Principal, XLXI (January, 1967), pp. 58-60.

problems, he believed, were caused by the failure of school districts to plan K-12 and by the short-sightedness of administrators in recognizing the problem. Still another viewpoint blamed poor articulation on the schools' willingness to break learning into segments for the sake of administrative convenience and to maintain a graded, lock-step organization of pupils.¹²

A final grouping of writers could be classified as those primarily interested in suggesting things a school could do to improve the articulation of their particular program. Writers such as Strickland and Alexander, suggested developing alternative models of schooling, setting up cooperative curriculum planning between levels, and establishing facilities and programs on a district-wide and on a community-wide basis.¹³ They also suggested that pre-service teachers should be provided with experiences at several educational levels. Suggestions from other writers called for closer cooperation and planning between elementary and secondary school principals as a place to begin to improve articulation within a school district.¹⁴

¹²Harold G. Shane, "A Curriculum Continuum: Possible Trends in the 70's," Phi Delta Kappan, LI (March, 1970), pp. 389-92.

¹³Joann H. Strickland and William Alexander, "Seeking Continuity in Early and Middle School Education," Phi Delta Kappan, L (March, 1969), pp. 397-400.

¹⁴Fred T. Wilhelms, "Elementary and Secondary School Principals--Partners in Pressure," The National Elementary Principal, XLVII (May, 1968), pp.75-79.

Some writers in the above group believed that programs such as Project Head Start can improve school articulation by smoothing the transition from home to school.¹⁵

Many writers in the group that were making recommendations, felt that abolition of grade placement along with sound counseling was the only long-term solution for obtaining smooth articulation.¹⁶

Mention of the curriculum director in the literature relating to articulation is conspicuous by its absence. No studies or articles were found that spoke to the issue of the curriculum director's role in effecting smooth articulation. Even the ample amount of literature devoted to curriculum development makes little mention of the curriculum director or specialist. T. P. Ruff suggested that this may be because all too often the curriculum director is not an innovator, but a director of the status quo.¹⁷

The fact that so little mention is made of the curriculum director is not to suggest that articulation is not one of the roles assigned to the individual, nor is it to say that the director does not have a potential for

¹⁵Keith Osborn, "Project Head Start--An Assessment," Educational Leadership, XXIII (November, 1965), pp. 92-102.

¹⁶Clarence H. Spain, "Continuity in the Whole School Program," Clearing House, XXXI (December, 1956), pp. 195-99; see also Arthur C. Hearn, "Increasing the Schools' Holding Power Through Improved Articulation," Educational Administration and Supervision, XLII (April, 1956), pp. 214-17.

¹⁷T. P. Ruff, "How to Use the Consultant," Educational Leadership, XXXI (March, 1974), pp. 506-08.

leadership in this area. As James Eisele pointed out, the functions of a curriculum director include assessing existing curricula to identify areas which need improvement, determining a direction to use in solving problems, and devising strategies for achieving goals.¹⁸ If a director were carrying out these functions, it would seem entirely likely that articulation needs would be uncovered if they are as common as the writers in the review above have led us to believe. It then follows that a curriculum director is in part responsible to decide how to solve the articulation problem.

In conclusion, it can be seen that most of the educational articulation research that is available is concerned with high school-college problems. No research is found at the elementary school level, nor is there research that has studied the classroom teachers' perceptions of articulation problems at the elementary level. The role of the curriculum director in articulating school programs has not been researched.

What we do find is a recognition that articulation problems exist at all levels and that they are of concern to many educators. Writers urge that more be done to identify and improve the situation. Many stress the point that the teachers need to be more involved if commitment to change

¹⁸James E. Eisele and Lutian R. Woolton, "Educating the Curriculum Specialist," Educational Leadership, XXIX (October, 1971), pp. 50-55.

is to occur.

It seems clear that more research to study problems in K-6 articulation is in order. Such research may assess more accurately the true nature of the components of articulation which, in turn, could lead to more insightful and successful means of effecting change for improvement.

Chapter 3

DESIGN AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY

STUDY DESIGN

Data for the study was gathered through the use of a questionnaire that was answered by K-6 elementary classroom teachers. The sample for the study was taken from selected Iowa school districts with total school enrollments of from 3,000 to 9,000 students.

The superintendents of the twenty-one school districts that fell into the above category each received a cover letter and a questionnaire (see Appendixes A and B). The purpose of the questionnaire was to ascertain what administrative pattern of curriculum leadership existed in the district and whether the district would be interested in participating in the study if it were chosen to do so. From the twenty districts responding, it was possible to match five pairs of districts according to similar patterns of curriculum leadership and by school size. Five schools had a full-time K-12 curriculum director and five schools had a full-time K-6 curriculum director.

All schools were then sent a letter notifying them of whether they had been selected to participate in the study (see Appendixes C and D). Those that were selected to

participate in the study were requested to give final consent to be included in the study, and were also requested to send a school directory listing elementary school faculties.

Twenty percent of each districts' K-6 classroom teachers were randomly selected from the school directories. A check revealed that the primary and intermediate teachers in the sample were in the same proportion as that of the primary and intermediate teachers in the total population. The proportion was 53.7 percent primary teachers and 46.3 percent intermediate teachers. Primary included grades kindergarten through third grade (K-3), while intermediate teachers included fourth through sixth grades (4-6). The higher percentage of teachers in the primary group, reflects inclusion of one more grade level than is found in the intermediate group.

The prepared questionnaires were coded to indicate the district from which the selected teacher was employed as well as to indicate whether the teacher taught K-3 or 4-6 (see Appendix G).

The packets sent to the elementary principals of the districts included in the study, contained the questionnaires and return envelopes that were addressed to the selected teachers in each principal's building or buildings. Along with the questionnaires, a cover letter was sent asking the principals to distribute them (see Appendixes E, F and G). A copy of the consent form signed by the district was also

included. The questionnaires were returned directly to the researcher by the teachers.

The questionnaire asked the selected teachers about such things as what activities their districts used to improve K-6 articulation including those activities directly involving the curriculum director. They were also asked about the types of situations involving an articulation problem that they experienced most often. Teachers had an opportunity to express what they felt would improve articulation in their own district.

In addition to the other questions, an attempt was made to design questions to discover what discrepancy, if any, existed between the priority the teachers perceived that the district actually gave to articulation concerns, and the priority that the teachers felt that their districts should give to such concerns.

One follow-up letter to the principals was sent two weeks after the questionnaires had been distributed. It asked principals to remind teachers to respond to the questionnaire if they had not already done so (see Appendix H).

STUDY RESULTS

As Table 1 below indicates, 78.0 percent of the questionnaires were returned and subsequently used in the tabulation of the data. The number of questionnaires returned was judged to be sufficient to be representative of the population sampled. Sample bias was considered to be operating

Table 1

*Number of Questionnaires Sent to and
Returned From Sample Population*

Population group	No. sent	No. returned	% returned
Teachers in districts with K-6 curriculum directors	113	84	75.2
Teachers in districts with K-12 curriculum directors	92	76	81.5
Total	205	160	78.0

at a minimal level, if at all, because of the proportional returns from both groups of school districts. The return from districts with K-6 curriculum directors was 75.2 percent. The return from districts with K-12 directors was 81.5 percent. In addition, 79.1 percent of the primary teachers and 76.8 percent of the intermediate teachers returned their questionnaires. Individual school districts are not identified, however, no district had a return of less than 68.0 percent.

It should also be noted that all results were tabulated not only according to the type of school district but also according to whether the responses were given by primary or intermediate teachers. The purpose was to see if there was a difference in the way that primary teachers and intermediate teachers perceived the articulation-related concerns and needs in their districts. Instances in which there was a difference in the pattern of primary teacher and intermediate teacher responses will be reported in the related discussion. If no mention is made of a difference, it can be assumed that the response patterns were essentially the same.

Table 2 shows the results of a question that asked respondents to check activities that are being used to improve articulation in their school districts. The percentage of teachers checking each category is shown. Very little difference was found between the responses of the two groups of school districts used in the study. More teachers in school

Table 2
 Teachers' Selections of Articulation Activities
 Utilized Within Districts

Activities	K-6 director districts		K-12 director districts	
	No.	%	No.	%
Scheduled teachers committees with released time	20	23.8	18	23.7
Briefings or memos from curriculum director	34	40.5	35	46.1
In-service training with released time	37	44.1	20	26.3
Curriculum guides used very little	37	44.1	25	32.9
Curriculum guides used extensively	18	21.4	18	23.7
Principal-initiated activity	25	29.8	15	19.7
Released time for visits	19	22.6	11	6.8
No activity used enough to check	13	15.5	14	8.2
Other	10	11.9	14	8.2

districts with K-6 curriculum directors checked "in-service training with released time" and "curriculum guides used very little" than did teachers in districts with K-12 curriculum directors. No difference between intermediate and primary teacher responses were found except in the area of released time for visiting other classrooms. This difference was found only in districts with K-6 curriculum directors. In districts with K-6 directors, 36.8 percent of the intermediate teachers indicated that they had released time for visiting other classrooms, but only 10.8 percent of the primary teachers indicated released time for such visits.

Both K-6 director and K-12 director districts marked the activities "briefings or memos from curriculum director", "curriculum guides used very little", and "in-service training with released time" as the three most utilized in their schools. Contact with the curriculum director through briefings and memos was reported by 40.5 percent of the teachers in districts with K-6 curriculum directors and by 46.1 percent of the teachers in districts with K-12 directors.

The quality of the articulation activities as perceived by the teachers was not measured. However, many questionnaires contained written qualifying comments such as "rarely", "a little", or "supposedly". This may indicate that the number of articulation activities checked is greater than the number of activities actually being utilized effectively.

Most teachers who checked only one activity, checked "curriculum guides used a little". If these teachers are combined with teachers checking "no activity used enough to check", the total includes 31.0 percent of the teachers in districts with K-6 directors and 36.8 percent of teachers in districts with K-12 curriculum directors. This indicates that over thirty percent of the teachers sampled perceived little or no district activity designed to improve K-6 articulation.

As shown in Table 3, nearly half of the teachers in both groups of school districts indicated that the area of curriculum presented them with the most articulation problems, although many teachers were equally concerned about pupil adjustment and pupil records problems. No differences were found in the response patterns of the two groups of school districts that pertained to this question.

When respondents were asked if teachers in adjoining grades or levels knew what materials, units, and objectives others were using in their instruction, there was no difference in the way teachers in districts with K-6 curriculum directors answered as compared to the way teachers in districts with K-12 curriculum directors answered. Table 4 shows that the majority of teachers in both types of districts marked "Yes, but only in a general way". Approximately nineteen percent of the teachers in both groups checked "Not very evident", "No, misconceptions exist", or "I don't know". There was some indication that primary teachers rated the

Table 3
 Teachers' Perception of the Articulation
 Area with Most Problems

Articulation area	K-6 director districts		K-12 director districts	
	No.	%	No.	%
Articulation between curriculum levels or grades	40	47.6	35	46.1
Articulation in pupil records and pupil adjustment	13	15.5	10	13.2
Both areas have the same amount of problems	23	27.4	25	32.9
No response	8	9.6	6	7.8
Total	84	100.1*	76	100.0

*Error due to rounding.

Table 4
 Teacher Responses Concerning the Extent to Which
 Teachers Knew What Others Were Doing

Categories	K-6 director districts		K-12 director districts	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes, quite specifically	15	17.7	9	11.8
Yes, but only in a general way	53	63.1	52	68.4
Not very evident	9	10.7	5	7.9
No, misconceptions exist	7	8.3	5	6.6
I don't know	-	-	4	5.3
Total	84	99.8*	76	100.0

*Error due to rounding.

understanding of other teachers slightly higher than did intermediate teachers.

One of the questions to which teachers were asked to respond was concerned with identifying situations in which the teachers experienced poor articulation. From a list of possibilities, teachers were asked to select the four situations they experienced most often and were also asked to rank them in order of frequency. Table 5 shows the total number of times that each category was selected as one of the four most experienced situations. A further break-down of rank is not shown because those situations selected most often were also the ones receiving the highest ranks while those situations receiving the fewest marks were rated with the lowest ranks.

There was very little or no difference in the types of situations involving poor articulation that teachers in both groups of school districts encountered. Both groups of teachers marked "No time to improve the articulation of curriculum" most frequently. "Teachers above are unrealistic in their expectations" and "Time wanted for making class visitations" were ranked second or third by both groups. Teachers were least concerned about being unable to locate student personnel information.

The only situation that appeared to represent a difference between primary and intermediate teacher responses was "Students lack background assumed present". Intermediate teachers in both districts with K-6 curriculum directors and

Table 5
 Number of Times Categories Were Selected by Teachers
 As One of the Four Most Experienced Situations

Categories	K-6 director districts		K-12 director districts	
	No.	%	No.	%
Students lack background assumed present	38	13.5	32	13.9
Students already familiar with the material	27	9.6	20	8.7
Teachers above unrealistic in their expectations	39	13.9	36	15.6
Pupil personnel information difficult to locate	9	3.2	5	2.2
Difficult to find skills level of entering class	20	7.1	21	9.1
Other teachers not following curriculum guide sequence	15	5.3	13	5.6
No time to improve the articulation of curriculum	57	20.3	49	21.2
Time wanted for making class visitations	44	15.7	33	14.3
Desire to work on teacher curriculum committee	32	11.4	22	9.5
Total	281*	100.0	231*	100.1**

*There are not four responses for each teacher because some responded inappropriately and some marked less than four categories.

**Error due to rounding.

in districts with K-12 curriculum directors marked this category more often than did primary teachers. In school districts with K-6 directors the percentages of marks for primary and intermediate teachers were 7.1 and 20.1 respectively. In districts with K-12 directors primary and intermediate teachers' percentages on this statement were 11.0 and 16.8 respectively.

The teachers were asked what they would like to accomplish first if they were on a committee that had as its purpose the improving of articulation within the elementary school. The question was open-ended and did not attempt to direct responses in any way. Out of the total 160 teachers in the sample, forty did not respond to the question. That number included nineteen teachers in districts with K-6 curriculum directors, and twenty-one teachers in districts with K-12 directors.

Each of the 120 responses that were used was placed into one of twenty general classifications that attempted to capture the essence of the suggestion without misrepresenting the intention. It was found that seventy-two of the responses or sixty percent fell into the five general classifications found below in Table 6. All other categories contained tallies of five or less.

Teachers in school districts with K-6 curriculum directors indicated that they would give top priority to achieving better articulation through coordinating units, materials and curriculum, kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Table 6

Suggestions Given by Teachers Concerning the First
Thing a Curriculum Committee Should Accomplish

Five most-named suggestions	K-6 director districts		K-12 director districts	
	No.	%	No.	%
Coordinate units, materials and curriculum K-12	19	29.2	5	9.1
Establish grade level and between level meetings	10	15.4	7	12.7
Work for a set standard of skills for each grade level	7	10.7	10	18.2
Find a better way to evaluate and report pupil progress	1	1.5	6	10.9
Work for released time for teachers for in-service	4	6.2	3	4.6

Teachers in districts with K-12 curriculum directors were more concerned with setting a definite standard for skills or subjects at each level or grade. More teachers in the latter group also expressed a need to find a better way to evaluate and report pupil progress than did teachers in districts with K-6 curriculum directors.

The mention of a curriculum director in any context appeared only once. Promotion of the concepts of continuous progress and individualized programs was mentioned only twice.

The teachers were given a chance to indicate on a scale of 1 to 7, that represented low to high, the priority that they believed their districts actually gave to improving K-6 articulation within the total educational program. The teachers were then asked to rate on a similar scale, the priority they believed that their districts should actually give to K-6 articulation concerns.

Figure 1 shows the results of how teachers from districts with K-6 curriculum directors rated their districts' priorities. The mean of the scale ratings for the priority actually given by districts with K-6 curriculum directors was 4.25. The mean for the teacher ratings of what those districts should give was 6.04. The difference between the two means was 1.79.

Figure 2 shows the results from the teachers in districts with K-12 curriculum directors. The mean for the

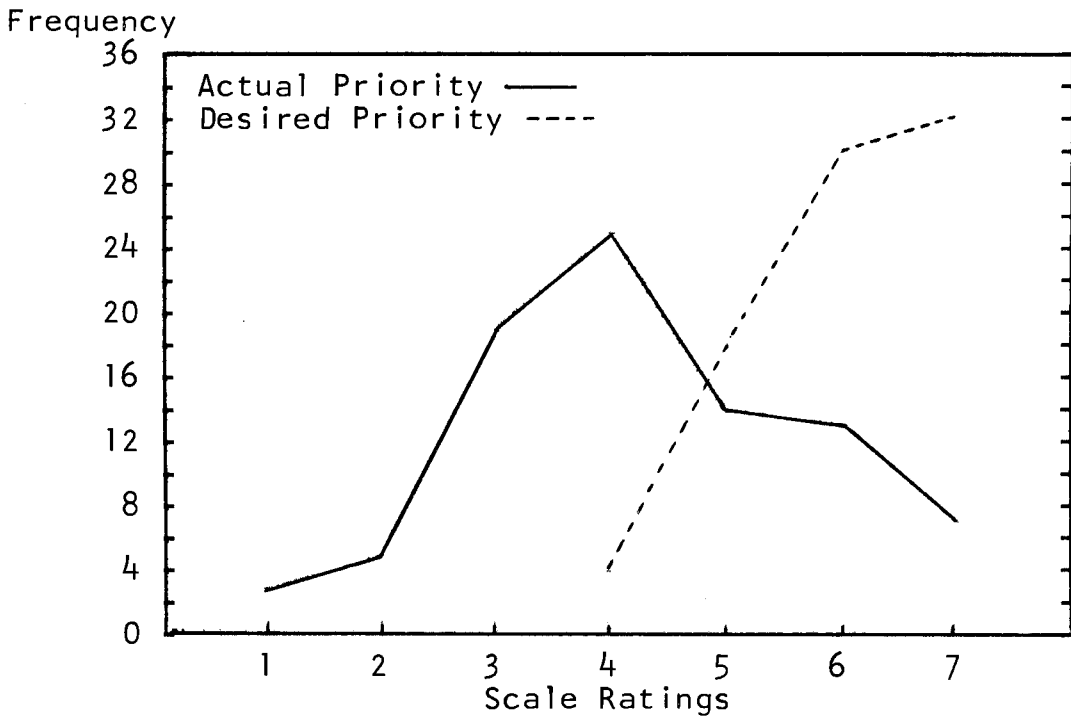


Figure 1

Teachers' Rating of District Priorities Pertaining to K-6 Articulation in Districts with K-6 Curriculum Directors

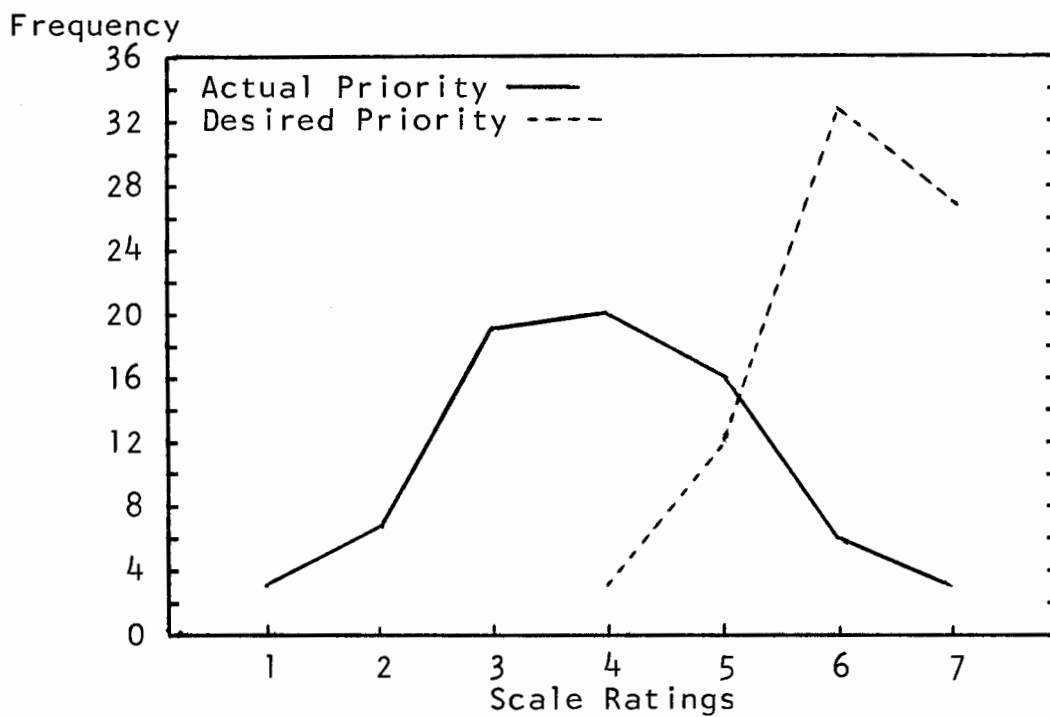


Figure 2

Teachers' Rating of District Priorities Pertaining
to K-6 Articulation in Districts with
K-12 Curriculum Directors

rating by teachers of the actual district priority was 4.02. The mean of the rating for the priority teachers wanted their districts to have was 5.97. The difference between the means for the K-12 curriculum director districts was 2.17.

The teachers in both groups rated the actual priority their districts gave to K-6 articulation lower than the priority they believed their districts should give to such concerns. The difference was greater in school districts with K-12 curriculum directors (2.17), than it was in the other group of school districts (1.79).

There was very little difference in the response pattern between primary and intermediate teachers. Intermediate teachers tended to rate the priority their districts should give, higher than did primary teachers.

Out of the 160 responding, only three teachers indicated that their districts actual priority was higher than it should be. Two of these three teachers were from the same district and wrote in an explanation of their rating. They disagreed with their district about the importance of a specific activity in which they were being asked to participate. Only twenty-two out of the 160 teachers rated actual and desired priority in their districts as the same. Over a third of that number can be accounted for from one individual district.

Teachers were asked to rate the priority that they believed they individually gave to articulation consideration in planning their over-all instructional objectives. It was

found that in both groups, teachers rated their personal priority between what they felt was their districts' actual priority and the priority they believed the districts should give to K-6 articulation. There was almost no difference between the ratings of the two groups of teachers.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

CONCLUSIONS

Evidence from this study indicates that a majority of teachers in the selected districts experience many problems related to K-6 articulation. This situation exists despite the fact that all of the districts employ full-time curriculum directors who would presumably be in a position to have exerted some positive influence on articulation. This raises the question of whether districts with no curriculum directors might have an even greater need for improved articulation than districts with directors.

The teachers in the study did not appear to perceive the curriculum director as having a key role in improving articulation. Nor is the concept of continuous individual progress readily seen by the teachers as a solution to poor articulation even though some writers, as seen in the review of literature, advocate this concept as the only real solution. Actually the desire expressed by a number of teachers to set definite standards for skills or knowledge at each grade or level, could work in direct opposition to the continuous progress concept.

Most of the districts in the study showed a definite lack of uniformity in teachers' perceptions of the activities being used by their districts to work on K-6 articulation concerns. This may indicate that little concerted, unified effort is being attempted. Ineffective teacher-administrator communication could account for part of the teachers' lack of awareness about activities within the districts. Some of the apparent lack of teacher awareness may not be due to lack of information, but may be due to differences in the way teachers interpreted the question. Some teachers may have interpreted the question more strictly than did other teachers. This means that some teachers did not check activities that merely existed, but checked only those activities that were used specifically for K-6 articulation concerns. Other activities may not have been checked because they were perceived to be so ineffective that teachers did not consider them to be operational. For whatever the reason, the fact still remains that less than one half of the teachers in any of the individual districts could agree on whether any single activity listed was present in the district or not. This seems to indicate a great amount of confusion or ineffectiveness.

It appears that although primary and intermediate teachers share many of the same articulation problems, the intermediate teachers seem to feel that there is greater need to improve articulation than do primary teachers. This may be due in part to the intermediate teacher falling heir

to problems that have been multiplied because the effects of poor articulation have been accumulating for a longer period of time. Another factor could be the wider use by primary grades of comprehensive, "pre-articulated" reading and math programs that are supposed to have been coordinated by the publisher throughout the primary level.

A study such as this one, points out the potential for more research in a number of areas. Studies are needed to clarify the role that the curriculum director plays in articulating the educational programs at various levels. Further study is also needed to ascertain whether articulation is related to factors other than curriculum directors. Such factors may include school size, school organization, or school utilization of other innovative practices. It may also be of value to pursue a study of the administrator's perceptions of articulation activities and priorities within their districts.

Many teachers repeatedly indicated that the district would have to provide them with more time in order to pursue improved articulation. This is certainly understandable and desirable. However, this issue is not easily resolved when today's school districts have great demands placed upon them, but have only limited resources with which to meet these demands. An insurmountable stumbling block could develop if educators insist on waiting for the ideal situation--one that in all probability will never materialize--before they are willing to work on the improvement of articulation. It may

be more productive if educators could be convinced to turn their imagination and energy toward working on the problem as much as possible within present limitations, until the "ideal" situation can be realized. Perhaps this all points out a need to re-evaluate the activities and time currently designated to improve articulation. Both need to be examined from the framework of whether they are effective in relation to the intended outcome, and whether something else could be used to a better advantage.

Educators are attempting to cope with the "knowledge explosion" at the same time that students are bemoaning the lack of "relevancy" in schools. Repetition, discontinuity, and the inclusion of out-dated, unrelated subject matter contribute to both problems. Serious determination to learn more about where poor articulation exists and how to correct the situation, could be an important factor in dealing effectively with the pressures of making education more efficient and also more related to the world of the student.

SUMMARY

This study was concerned with finding out what perceptions K-6 classroom teachers would express about K-6 articulation within their districts. The study was also concerned with finding out what difference, if any, existed between the perceptions of teachers from districts with full-time K-6 curriculum directors and the perceptions of teachers in districts with full-time K-12 curriculum directors.

It was expected that teachers in both groups of school districts would express the need for more K-6 articulation awareness and activities within their districts, but that teachers in districts employing a K-6 curriculum director would indicate that their districts were doing more than would K-6 classroom teachers in districts employing a K-12 curriculum director.

The population for the study consisted of five Iowa school districts that employed full-time K-6 curriculum directors, and five Iowa school districts of similar size that employed full-time K-12 curriculum directors. A questionnaire was designed to obtain the teachers' perceptions of what their districts were doing to achieve a well-articulated elementary program and whether the teachers felt their district needed to do more in this area. The questionnaires were sent to twenty percent of the K-6 classroom teachers, selected at random, from each district. The 160 questionnaires that were returned represented 78.0 percent of the selected teachers.

The study results supported the expectation that most teachers would express a need for greater district involvement in improving K-6 articulation. It was found that 135 out of 160 teachers thought that their districts should give K-6 articulation higher priority than was currently being given. There was some indication that there was a wider disparity between actual and desired district priority expressed by

teachers from school districts with K-12 curriculum directors than by teachers from districts with K-6 curriculum directors.

There was little over-all difference between response patterns of primary and intermediate teachers. Intermediate teachers tended to rank the priority their districts should give to K-6 articulation concerns slightly higher than did their primary counterparts. Intermediate teachers also expressed having a greater problem with students that lacked prerequisite skills that the teachers had assumed were present.

Over thirty percent of both groups of teachers indicated that their districts were involved in no activity of importance or in no activity at all that was designed to promote K-6 articulation. "Briefings or memos from the curriculum director" was checked as being used in districts by slightly over forty percent of both groups of teachers. Teachers in school districts employing a K-6 curriculum director indicated that they had more opportunity for in-service training with released time, than did teachers in districts with K-12 directors.

Approximately sixty percent of all teachers felt that the other teachers knew only in a general way what materials, units, and objectives that teachers at the next level or grade above and below were using. Twenty percent of all teachers felt other teachers had misconceptions or no idea at all of what teachers in adjoining levels or grades were doing.

Teachers in both types of districts often experienced frustration at not having time to work on improving articulation and also believed that teachers in grades or levels above them were unrealistic about what could be expected of students entering their classes.

When teachers were given an opportunity to express what they would like to see accomplished first to improve K-6 articulation, there was a difference between the suggestions made by teachers in districts with a K-6 curriculum director and the suggestions made by teachers in districts with a K-12 curriculum director. Teachers in the first group mentioned most often the need for coordinating units, materials, and curriculum kindergarten through twelfth grade. Teachers in the latter group expressed a need for a more definite standard for skills or knowledge at each grade or level along with a better pupil progress reporting system.

The potential use of a curriculum director in any capacity was mentioned only once, and promotion of continuous individual progress concepts was mentioned only twice.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A



UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA · Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

October 18, 1974

Dear Superintendent :

I am conducting a study as part of my Education Specialist thesis at the University of Northern Iowa. The study concerns how different elementary school organizational patterns of curriculum leadership relate to the articulation present as perceived by elementary teachers. Articulation is considered to be smooth transition from one grade or course into the next with as little discontinuity and duplication as possible.

We educators are concerned with attaining articulation at all levels. It is hoped a study such as this may make a contribution toward understanding some of the factors involved.

The first step must be to pinpoint more precisely the structure of curriculum leadership in elementary schools whether or not they have designated supervisors, department heads, etc., so that school districts can be grouped. It is for this process that I need your help. You will find enclosed a brief questionnaire and an addressed, stamped return envelope. I would appreciate your cooperation in filling out the form and returning it as soon as possible.

In the study results, no school district will be identified individually but only collectively as groups with common size and organizational patterns. It is therefore hoped that your school district will participate in the second phase of the study which will involve a random sample of elementary teachers being asked to fill out a questionnaire concerning articulation as they perceive it. A questionnaire would be available for your inspection before the teachers were involved.

I urge you to complete the enclosed form as well as to allow the elementary teachers the opportunity to participate in the study.

Most sincerely,

Dorothy Kessler, Graduate Assistant
School Administration and Personnel Services
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Enclosures

APPENDIX B

Do you have specific people designated to work in the area of K-6 curriculum?
 If so, please check the appropriate line and fill in the percentage of released time, if any, that is allowed for the discharge of the responsibility.

	designated for K-6	% of released time
Curriculum Director, K-12	_____	_____
Curriculum Director, K-6	_____	_____
Elementary Consultant	_____	_____
Subject Areas:		
Math	_____	_____
Science	_____	_____
Social Studies	_____	_____
Reading	_____	_____
Language Arts	_____	_____
Other title, specify: _____	_____	_____

If you use a different arrangement that does not involve a designated administrative pattern, please explain briefly.

What is your current 1974-75 elementary enrollment? _____

What grades are included in the above figure? _____

If your district is selected, will the elementary teachers have an opportunity to participate in responding to a questionnaire concerning perceptions about articulation?

- _____ Yes
- _____ Yes, provided I review the questionnaire
- _____ No

Name of School District _____

APPENDIX C



UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA • Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Dear Superintendent :

Thank you for your response to my letter of October 18, in which I described the study concerning how different elementary school organizational patterns of curriculum leadership relate to the articulation present as perceived by elementary teachers.

I have appreciated the good response and have been able to make size and organizational classifications. Because of the matching procedure, it was not possible to place every school into a category. For this reason your district was not selected to receive the questionnaires that will complete the second phase of the study, but I thank you for your cooperation.

If you have a particular interest in the results of this study, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Kessler Engstrom, Graduate Assistant
School Administration and Personnel Services
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

APPENDIX D



UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA · Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

November 25, 1974

Dear _____ :

Thank you for your response to my October 18 letter in which I described the study concerning how different elementary school organizational patterns of curriculum leadership relate to the articulation present as perceived by elementary teachers.

I have appreciated the good response and have been able to make size and organizational classifications. Your school has been selected to participate in the next phase of the study which is to get randomly selected elementary teachers in your district to respond to a questionnaire, a copy of which you will find enclosed.

Your elementary principals will shortly receive packets containing a brief explanation of the study and questionnaires addressed to the selected teachers in each building along with stamped return envelopes. The procedure will be designed to take as little of your staff's time as possible.

I again want to express my appreciation to districts such as yours that are open and responsive to efforts to find out more about common concerns of education.

If, for some reason you now feel your district cannot participate in this phase of the study, please let me know as soon as possible.

Please return this form in the envelope provided along with a school directory containing the names of the elementary staff personnel from which teachers can be selected at random.

_____ The district will be expecting the questionnaires to complete the second phase of the forementioned study.

District: _____

Most sincerely,

Dorothy Kessler Engstrom, Graduate Assistant
School Administration and Personnel Services
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Enclosures

APPENDIX E



UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA • Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Dear _____ :

Your district has agreed to participate in a study that is concerned with how different elementary school organizational patterns of curriculum leadership relates to articulation as perceived by elementary teachers. Articulation is considered to be smooth transition from one grade or course into the next with as little discontinuity and duplication as possible.

Individual teachers or schools will not be identified. In the study results, no school district will be identified individually but only collectively as groups with common size and curriculum leadership patterns.

Please distribute the enclosed questionnaires to the teachers selected at random from the district, that are in your building or buildings. The teachers are asked to complete the questionnaires and to return them to me as soon as possible in the return envelopes provided. The questionnaires are designed to be answered with ease and do not require very much time.

I appreciate your cooperation and would ask that you urge the selected teachers to respond within a reasonable time.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Kessler Engstrom, Graduate Assistant
School Administration and Personnel Services
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Enclosures

APPENDIX F



UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA · Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Dear Selected Elementary Teacher:

Your district has agreed to participate in a study that is attempting to determine from the teachers' standpoint, how policies and activities designed to increase articulation are viewed, what problems of articulation need more emphasis, and what priority in the total program articulation activities should have. These views will be looked at in relation to differences in organizational patterns of curriculum leadership.

You have been selected at random to respond to these concerns through a questionnaire. Individual teachers or schools will not be identified individually but only collectively as groups with common size and curricular leadership patterns.

Your cooperation is very much appreciated and it is hoped that your suggestions and views will lend insight into the nature of articulation concerns that many educators have. Articulation is considered to be smooth transition from one grade or course into the next with as little discontinuity and duplication as possible.

Please fill out the accompanying questionnaire and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Kessler Engstrom, Graduate Assistant
School Administration and Personnel Services
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

APPENDIX G

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

56

For purposes of this questionnaire, articulation is considered to be smooth transition from one grade or course into the next with as little discontinuity and duplication as possible. Please fill in responses to the questions and return the questionnaire as soon as possible in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. Your cooperation is essential to this study and is much appreciated.

1. What activities are utilized in your district to work on the problem of improving K-6 articulation?

- regularly scheduled committees of teachers with released time
- briefings or memos from curriculum director
- in-service training for which you have released time
- curriculum guides that are used very little
- curriculum guides that are used extensively
- principal-initiated activity within the building, explain: _____

- released time for visiting other classrooms
- no activities are used enough to check
- other: _____

2. In which area do you feel that there are more problems?

- articulation between curriculum levels or grades
- articulation in pupil adjustment and personnel records between levels or grades
- both areas of articulation have the same amount of problems

3. Do you believe that the teachers in the grade or level above and below you know what basic material, units, and objectives you use in your instruction?

- yes, quite specifically
- yes, but only in a general way
- not very evident
- no, misconceptions seem apparent
- I don't know

4. In what types of situations do you most often experience a concern relating to articulation? Please rank in order of frequency 1, 2, 3, and 4.

- students lack background material you assumed was present
- students are already familiar with a film, concept, etc. that you attempt to introduce
- teachers in levels above or in Jr. High, don't realize what the students leaving your grade or level can be realistically expected to know
- personnel information you need to know about a student is difficult to locate
- you can not easily find specific information about the skills level of students entering your class
- other teachers are not following the sequence of material and units in district curriculum guides
- you do not have enough time to familiarize yourself with the broader aspects of curriculum which may improve articulation
- you wish you had more time for visiting other classrooms
- you would like to work with a group of teachers on problems concerning articulation

5. If you were on a committee to improve articulation in curriculum, what would be one of the first things you would like to accomplish?

6. On the scale below that represents low to high priority, circle the number that you feel represents the priority your district actually gives to improving K-6 articulation within the total educational program.

low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 high

7. On the scale below, circle the number that represents the priority your district should give to articulation.

low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 high

8. On the scale below, indicate your personal priority given to articulation in your over-all objectives.

low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 high

Name of School District: _____

APPENDIX H



UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA · Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

January 21, 1975

Dear Participating Principal:

I have appreciated your cooperation in distributing the questionnaires to selected teachers as part of the study on elementary articulation. Responses have been generally good but as in any study every possible response is valued and adds to the usefulness of results.

I have been an elementary teacher and appreciate the special demands upon their time, however, it would be most helpful if you could remind the teachers listed below to complete and return the questionnaires if they have not already done so. Since the questionnaires are identified only by district, I can not say which individuals have responded and which have not. If replacement questionnaires are needed, I will be happy to send them if requested.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Kessler Engstrom, Graduate Assistant
School Administration and Personnel Services
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613