

Education
Gifted and Talented Program
1986

LWV statement read at 3/24 School Board Meeting
'86

The Appleton LWV's Education committee has studied programs for the gifted and talented this year. We feel strongly that a program for the gifted and talented should be developed and implemented in the Appleton Public School System.

In my brief summary of our recommendations, I will discuss identification of students, some features and goals of the program, and qualifications of staff.

First, we would like to see a multifaceted approach to identification of students, from 2nd grade through high school, to include creativity, aptitude and academic ability.

The program should seek to allow each child to develop his/her individual potential, considering the total development of the child. It should strive to maintain motivation, work toward building self-esteem and allow the child to develop his/her own interests. It should offer opportunities beyond the regular curriculum, emphasizing enrichment rather than acceleration, with the long-term goal of developing creative and productive adults.

The director of the gifted program should have a graduate degree in the area and staff should have specialized training as well as prior experience in working with the gifted. Equally important is excellent communication between the gifted staff and the regular classroom teachers. This can be assisted by inservice training programs.

The League is aware that a program for the gifted has been named as a priority item this year. After years of study a very dedicated committee of teachers and administrators has produced a proposal for a program to begin next year. We look forward to the presentation of this program and its approval by the Board of Education.

Sharon Fenlon
2/24/86

March 12, 1990
Statement read at
AASD Bd of Ed meeting

My name is Janice Quinlan, 322 South Court, Appleton and I speak tonight as president of the League of Women Voters. The League of Women Voters of Appleton was one of the forces working to initiate a Gifted and Talented program in this school system. You have now a chance to examine and perhaps even approve the long range direction and purpose of this important program after its first several years in the schools.

The League urges you to look in depth at both the program and its philosophy before granting your approval. Although we too are anxious to see the Gifted and Talented program become a Board-approved reality, we have some serious concerns about the long-range report and the direction this program would take if that report is adopted at this time.

We oppose strongly the recommendations that the Gifted and Talented program identify and pull out younger children. Current research overwhelmingly supports the concept that environment more than native ability determines a child's readiness and mastery of concepts in the early primary grades. Project HeadStart statistics confirm the clear role that environment plays in school success at this age level.

Therefore the problems inherent in identifying gifted children are accentuated at this age. Often children with early academic opportunities and special preschool experiences are mistaken for gifted. This discriminates against those children who have not had these advantages. We would actually be "tracking" at the age level where it is most difficult to sort out native ability from environmental factors.

The League DOES support the recommendation to bring its staff trained in Gifted and Talented Education into the regular class room - not only for those students identified as gifted - but for all. Many of the teaching methods used now in the Apex program would greatly benefit all students regardless of their "gifts." Thus we would serve more of the school age population.

We would also guard against the danger of NOT identifying certain gifted and talented students with this emphasis. The gifted and talented students hardest to identify are often those most in need of the program. Their needs are different from those students who already excel in the school system. If we decide we are committed to some sort of pull-out, pull-together program, we need to make sure that the identification process does not leave some students even more disenfranchised than before.

Please consider these concerns carefully as you consider adoption of this program.