# Enrichment Resource Teachers

Enrichment Resource Teachers (ERTs) collaborate with your child's classroom teacher to teach thinking skills and extend the district curriculum. ERTs do not have a set curriculum, but follow guiding principles in creating lessons for all grades. We focus on three areas: **critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving.**

**Critical Thinking:** Critical thinking is making judgments. It includes using criteria to make decisions, supporting a position with evidence, identifying attributes for classification, drawing conclusions based on logic, identifying cause and effect relationships, inferring information from evidence, sequencing events or information, predicting outcomes based on patterns, and making appropriate generalizations.

**Creative Thinking:** Creative thinking is creating new ideas. It includes designing unique and relevant products, creating alternatives, having an original perspective, elaborating or adding detail, expressing novel answers, creating new combinations, being driven by curiosity, hypothesizing, and tolerating ambiguity.

**Problem Solving:** Problem Solving uses critical and creative thinking. In solving any kind of problem, we use critical thinking to analyze its components and creative thinking to generate good solutions.

Enrichment teachers apply these principles to teaching children in language arts, math, and other subject areas. The children learn metacognition -- to think about their thinking. They recognize they need to remember information, understand and explain concepts, make connections and applications, be analytical and logical, evaluate and make inferences from information, and create new products.

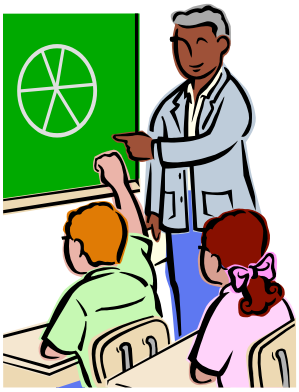
Enrichment teachers use overarching generalizations or "big ideas" as they teach across content areas. These include ideas like: change, systems, patterns, structures, community, and exploration.

In **mathematics**, we emphasize problem-solving strategies so that children connect thinking skills and math concepts to multi-step problems. These strategies include: **using logical thinking, finding a pattern, making a table, finding all possible combinations, making a picture or diagram, working backwards from key information, guessing and checking using logic, simplifying a complex problem, and brainstorming new approaches.**

We teach mathematical concepts using big ideas from algebra: **representation, proportional reasoning, balance, variable, function, and inductive and deductive reasoning.** We connect skills to essential mathematical concepts.

In **language arts,** we focus on high-level comprehension, vocabulary development, and thinking skills. The children learn the importance of deep reading and making connections within literature and other subjects, their lives and the world. They learn to: **preview, question, predict, infer, connect ideas, summarize, and evaluate.** They learn to justify their opinions on evidence from their reading. The children learn the logical techniques of creative problem solving, applying the steps to issues raised through literature and also in their lives. They learn to: **analyze problems, find relevant facts, find the real problem in a complicated situation, think of creative solutions, evaluate them, and create a plan of action.**

These are some of the principles ERTs apply to meet children's needs for intellectual growth in their classrooms and in enrichment groups. ERTs also guide children as they delve into research topics and areas of high interest and talent. The children we work with most often thrive on depth and complexity. These children need to work together with peers who share their strengths and abilities. They come together to work in a "thinking seminar," where they learn metacognition, make connections, express their ideas, and explain their thinking.



# How are Enrichment Groups Formed?

The K-4 enrichment program is flexible and based on gifted education principles. In District 67, students naturally experience an enriched environment within their classrooms. Providing an appropriate challenge is part of the nature of differentiated teaching. Enrichment is a team effort, with the ERT working with your child's classroom teacher as a resource.

Children demonstrate their affinity for the thinking skills approach to learning that the ERTs use in enrichment groups. Their performance in the classroom and in enrichment groups guides teachers and ERTs in forming flexible groups. The ERT works most with children who have the greatest need for services, in accelerated groups made up primarily of children who thrive on abstract -conceptual learning. The ERT also works with groups of children who need moderate pacing and modifications. Some children are deep thinkers who are acquiring skills in divergent ways, while others show high levels of readiness in academic skills. Teachers and ERTs work to accommodate a range of high level learning needs.

Teachers and ERTs meet to reflect on children's learning style, performance, and potential in forming enrichment groups. We form academic and interest groups that work together for varying amounts of time, throughout the school year.

Enrichment students receive most of their instruction within the given subject area from the classroom teacher so the enrichment teacher seldom assigns homework. This flexible, informal and interactive approach is an important tool educators use to respond to children's changing learning needs.

**Children working together in enrichment groups will not necessarily meet the criteria the district has established for the Explore program in mathematics and language arts in 3rd and 4th grades.** Classroom teachers and ERTs meet high level learning needs in all grades. District 67 provides a variety of opportunities to meet the needs of high-level learners.

# A Note on the Third Grade Enrichment And Explore Program

Third grade is a **transitional year** for the Enrichment and Explore programs. At the end of 2nd grade, District 67 uses a matrix and a review committee to determine children who meet criteria for placement in 3rd grade Explore mathematics. The matrix uses standardized test scores and performance assessments in the classroom and in enrichment groups. Children who have high scores on the matrix are placed in Explore mathematics in 3rd grade.

Knowing this, please understand that a child might have had enrichment for years previously, but now can qualify for the Explore program or have his/her needs met in the regular classroom. Classroom teachers have pre-tests in grade 3 that they give per unit in math and students are appropriately placed in groups within their team structures. For the language arts portion, guided reading (leveled reading groups) occurs naturally in the classroom.

Explore Language Arts in 3rd grade is flexible. A core group of children with high matrix scores in language arts works with the Explore teacher on a regular basis. A few other children who have high level skills, scores and potential in language arts may work in novel study groups with the Explore teacher on a flexible basis.

The Enrichment Resource Teacher (ERT) also works with flexible higher- level language arts groups in 3rd grade, meeting with groups. The ERT also works with interest and research groups. All other children work in differentiated reading groups in their classrooms.

In mathematics, the Explore teacher works with the group identified through the district's formal process. Classroom teachers teach differentiated groups in their classrooms. Children also work across the classrooms in leveled math problem solving groups, with the ERT as part of the team, working with a group on logical thinking in math.

The Explore teacher and the ERT collaborate with the 3rd grade team in language arts and math. Together, they reflect on children's performance in the classroom and in groups and provide them with many opportunities to work and grow together.

Should you have additional questions about the programs outlined here please contact Colleen Brueggeman, K-4 Gifted Coordinator, at **cbrueggeman@lfschools.net.**