

Port Angeles School District
End of Year Report
Multi-Age Classroom Committee Recommendations
April 12, 2010

HISTORY OF MAC

The Multi-Age Community was initially formed in 1978 when staff moved into the newly renovated Franklin Elementary. It was originally called the “Alternative Primary” and structured to accommodate first through third grades for students across the district. An additional class was added each year until the program reached fifth grade. The name was changed to the “Alternative Program”, or AP, when the fourth grade was added. Confusion in the community regarding the nature of the program—some believe due to the similarity in name with the Advanced Placement program at Port Angeles High School—motivated the name change to Multi-Age Classroom (MAC) about 1986. Program founders indicate they always intended this to be an “alternative” program for elementary students, despite it picking up the reputation in the community as a gifted program.

ELEMENTARY TRANSITION AND RE-BOUNDARY

During the 2006-07 school year, the transition team determined that Franklin Elementary would become a two unit school with the third unit being a classroom in the MAC program. This configuration with the re-boundary created a three unit school at Franklin. This determination provided for the re-boundary decision to make Franklin Elementary a two unit kindergarten with the exception of years when a bubble occurs. This provides for a fluctuation in the number of available spots in the MAC program. It is also recognized that students who have attended grades first through fifth in the MAC may choose to remain at Franklin for grade six. (See <http://www.portangelesschools.org/parents/ElementaryTransitionTeam.html> for Transitions 2007: Reports 2, 3, 6)

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Multi-Aged Community currently serves approximately 129 elementary aged children in grades one through five of the total 318 students in grades one through five. Teachers, community volunteers and supportive parents work together in grade level and multi-aged settings designed to develop independent lifelong learners. The MAC is a District Elementary Alternative Program open to all students in the district as space permits.

In the multi-aged community, students are expected to be responsible for their learning and behavior. They are guided in their learning to become disciplined, motivated, and confident in their abilities. Children are encouraged to rely upon themselves and to cooperate and share with others.

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF MAC

- MAC is a community of learners, students, parents, teachers, and volunteers who work together during a period of 5 years.
- Students learn with each other in peer age and multi-age groupings.

- While a member of the MAC, students will remain with a consistent peer group throughout grades 1-5. This provides stability and enhances cooperative learning in their peer group.
- Parents support the learning of their own children as well as others in the classroom. We welcome parents' participation in grades 1-5.
- Teachers in grades 1-5 meet weekly to plan, problem solve, coordinate, and meet the needs of all students.
- Volunteers from the surrounding community support instruction with specialized talents.
- Teachers collaborate at the beginning of each school year to choose a theme that guides quarterly multi-age projects, with a culminating project and a field trip at the end of the year.

The curriculum is based on school district and state guidelines and student interest areas. Basic skills, as well as critical thinking and problem solving, are vital components of the program. Students are expected to work to achieve district and state standards in all subject areas. Flexible grouping and room arrangement allow a variety of teaching strategies to be used to assist students in successfully reaching their full potential in all areas.

ENRICHMENT CLUSTERS

Enrichment Clusters allow multi-aged groups of students who share a common interest to come together during specially designated time blocks to produce a product, performance or targeted service based on that common interest. Clusters usually last for two-three weeks and are held twice a year. Parents and community volunteers facilitate Enrichment Clusters as they evolve according to each particular group's interests and needs.

PARENT EXPECTATIONS

As in any classroom, parents are expected to keep informed of their child's progress throughout the year by phone calling, visiting the classroom, attending conferences, and looking at work brought home. Parents are encouraged to volunteer and be involved in the classroom in the following ways:

- Weekly classroom helper, clerical work, work with students
- Enrichment clusters, planning team, cluster facilitator/assistant
- Fundraising project
- Field trips chaperone
- Representative to PTO

PLACEMENT REQUESTS

A brochure and a request form are available from the Franklin Elementary Office or the Port Angeles School District Central Services Building, 216 East Fourth Street, during the enrollment period. Parents are expected to visit the MAC to observe and have a first-hand experience in this setting during parent visitation week at Franklin. Specific enrollment and visitation dates are announced in advance. Parents are encouraged to learn more about the program by attending a public evening meeting in March for an introduction to the program.

The principal and MAC teachers determine the number of openings at each grade level in the spring and a random lottery drawing is used to select students for placement in the program for the following year.

TRANSPORTATION

Students living outside of Franklin's attendance area are responsible for their own transportation.

MAC PROCESSES

Student Placement

When placing students in the MAC, the goal would be to initially fill the MAC to within two student placements of the contracted class size limit. Leaving two place holders allows for flexibility throughout the school year from within the school and provides capacity for students who may move into the Franklin attendance area. If all classes outside of the MAC at any grade level are at capacity, the MAC would place students within the program to reach capacity as well. The following class size guideline shall be in effect for regular classrooms and students are counted if they are in the class a majority of the day.

Class Size Guidelines

Grade 1: 23 students
Grades 2-3: 26 students
Grades 4-5: 29 students

Before the start of school in the fall, every effort will be made to balance classrooms based on the number of openings in the MAC, as determined by returning students and class size limits, and the random draw of applications to maintain gender, ethnicity, and behavioral balance in all classrooms at Franklin. If classrooms at Franklin outside the MAC reach capacity, additional student applications will be drawn from the remaining Franklin applications to help balance the classrooms and those students will be placed in the MAC.

A drawing is not necessary when the number of applications for placement in the MAC is equivalent to or less than class size limits.

No random drawings for inclusion in the MAC will be conducted following the start of school. The MAC classroom teacher along with the other Franklin classroom teachers will meet by grade level with the principal to follow a placement meeting protocol when students new to Franklin are placed there or move into the attendance area.

Annual Multi-Aged Community Information and Application Timeline

It is recommended that the dissemination of information to all Port Angeles School District elementary staff occur each spring prior to the MAC informational parent meeting. It is recognized that due to budget decisions and declining enrollment, it may not be possible to meet this timeline each year, but every effort will be made to do so.

MAC information and application timeline:

March: MAC informational parent meeting
April 30: MAC Applications due to Franklin
May: Student assignment or placement denial with written notification to parents

Following the April 30th deadline, MAC teachers will contact potential new MAC students' current teacher to learn more about the student's classroom performance and learning style. New members of the MAC will be invited to a classroom visit on Franklin Elementary School move up day in June to meet their new teachers and classmates.

MAC Requests and Classroom Assignments

The parent/guardian will:

1. Request the MAC brochure (Appendix A) and complete the placement request form (Appendix B) and return to the Franklin Elementary School office no later than 4:00 pm on the last Friday of April to be considered for September enrollment.
2. It is an expectation that parents will visit the Multi-Aged Community to observe and have a first-hand experience during parent visitation week at Franklin.
3. Parents are encouraged to learn more about the MAC program by attending a parent informational meeting during the month of March at Franklin Elementary School.
4. Placement requests will go through the following steps:
 - A. The student's current teacher will be contacted to share information regarding the student's classroom performance and learning style.
 - B. Students will be considered for placement with preference given to students living within the Port Angeles District boundary.
5. The number of requests accepted will be based on available openings at each grade level as determined by current enrollment at Franklin and in the MAC. A random drawing to determine placement consideration into the MAC will be conducted if the number of requests is greater than the available openings.
6. All parents will be notified in writing by the last Friday in May, whether or not their child will be placed in the MAC for the following school year.
7. Students who are approved as new members of the MAC will be invited to join their new classroom on move-up day in June to meet their teacher and visit the classroom.

MAC COMMITTEE TEAM COMPOSITION

Principals, staff, and parents in the Franklin Community along with other staff from the Port Angeles School District will studied the history and current educational conditions that contribute to the implementation of the MAC program.

MAC COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	
Area of Representation	Member
Facilitator and District Office Representative	Mary Hebert
Franklin Principal	Amity Butler
Principal from outside of Franklin	Michelle Olsen
Teachers from the MAC	Lambert Grimes (primary)
	Claire Rausch (intermediate)
Teacher outside of the MAC from Franklin	Maria Kays
Teacher outside of the MAC and outside of Franklin	Sharon Fritschler
Historical Perspective	Hester Hill
MAC Parents	Carrie Cobb Kelly Heim
School Board Representative	Cindy Kelly Patti Happe