

Maple Creek is a one school district located 25 miles northeast of Eureka. The school is currently composed of nine students from mixed income families. The two teachers at Maple Creek plan a differentiated curriculum in order to teach the State Content Standards as well as address the different student abilities, interests and learning modalities in two multiage classrooms.

It is the goal of the Maple Creek School District to provide a standards based curriculum which will challenge both the general and special aptitudes of our Gate students while providing for their social and emotional needs. It is the goal that all identified Gate students score “Advanced” or “Proficient” in English Language Arts (ELA) and in Math on the California Star Test (CST).

1. Program Design

The program will challenge each student to extend their academic achievement, to develop positive role models, to search for alternatives, to become a creative problem solver and to be aware of and respect the needs of society, and to use his/her unique abilities to succeed. Teachers incorporate the following activities for all students, paying special attention to the needs of the GATE students:

- Assign special projects, including use of technology, which may be individual, small group, or whole class.
- Utilize community resources, which may include special presenters with expert knowledge, programs, plays, and tours of local businesses, galleries, and museums.
- Present the core curriculum using a variety of strategies (compacting, accelerating, modification), allowing for individual needs, and providing enrichment and extensions to the assignments.
- Assess all students on a regular basis. Teachers use STAR results, publisher tests, and a variety of assignments in order to determine student progress in meeting and exceeding the State Performance Standards.
- Create programs that involve the students in cognitive, affective, and locomotor learning modalities.

One teacher is multi-funded and serves as the GATE Teacher who coordinates activities and monitors GATE student progress under the supervision of the principal. The business manager oversees the allocation of GATE funds.

Teachers participate in staff development activities to strengthen their abilities in implementing a differentiated curriculum and strategies designed to challenge all students. These are currently funded through the PAR programs.

The School Site Council (SSC), which meets 2-3 times a year, serves as the District Advisory Committee for GATE. Each year the SSC reviews the program and develops budget, which is then approved by the school board. Every three years the GATE coordinator updates the school’s GATE Plan which is then approved by the SSC and the School Board. Upon its completion this GATE plan will be linked to our website at www.humboldt.k12.ca.us/mapleack_sd/.

2. Identification

Students are referred to the GATE program by the classroom teachers and can be referred by their parents. Because of our small size, students have the same teachers each year, so teachers become very familiar with each student's abilities and learning styles. Teachers conduct on-going assessment using a variety of measures including CST results, Student Study Team referral, high grade point averages, and student performance in the fine arts and extra-curricular activities.

Students are formally identified for GATE screening any time in grades 3-8. The K-2 students who exhibit GATE characteristics are targeted by the teachers as they plan and implement the curriculum. Parent permission is obtained as well as a signature. The criteria for GATE identification and qualification have been streamlined since our district's last gate plan by the dropping of the SOI test and Rensulli survey. Students are currently considered for GATE by meeting 1 out of the 3 following criteria:

1. STAR Test: Advanced score in Science, ELA, or Math
2. A Student Study team recommendation based on teacher observation or a student's creative ability in the fine or performing arts.
3. Student Excellence in all fields of study as demonstrated by a high grade point average (G.P.A.)

Students entering Maple Creek School who have already been identified, are added to our GATE student list. Identified students will receive services until they leave the district. Maple Creek will forward GATE identification to any GATE students new school if they ever leave our District.

The School Site Council and staff felt that with only 9-12 students, all students have the opportunity to exhibit some leadership in different areas making it hard to identify a GATE student by the exhibition of exceptional leadership ability. Hence we decided not to formally identify leadership as one of our categories or criteria for GATE classification.

Our low student to teacher ratio (5:1) allows the staff to easily identify possible GATE students at any time of the school year. Each year staff will assess each GATE student's and potential GATE student's STAR test scores as well as academic performance in all subjects to identify strengths and weaknesses. Before any student is considered for withdrawal from the GATE program an intervention will occur as well as a meeting with the parents and student.

3. Curriculum and Instruction

Because of the rural setting and one hour driving distance from town, there is a focus on utilizing the greater community resources in order to extend the Standards Based curriculum. These include: schedule people with expertise in an area to work with the students; plan student trips to town to attend plays, visit museums, businesses, and local colleges; and have students participate in a local GATE academy, math counts, or other activities outside of the school.

Acceleration is one way we meet the needs of GATE students. The identified GATE students may receive instruction a grade level above when they meet their grade level standards. Maple Creek's 5:1 student to teacher ratio allows for all curriculum delivered to be differentiated if not individualized for each student's needs.

In the multiage classroom, the grouping is flexible among the different grades, especially in math and reading. The assignments are designed so that all students can be challenged; scoring rubrics reflect the different ages and grade level standards.

For extended projects, the students may have an opportunity to work together in groups of 2 to 3 students. In these long-term projects students have some degree of self-directed learning and multiple project choices which can incorporate a variety of learning modalities.

Teachers routinely assign special projects, especially in the content areas where all students can extend their capabilities. Students are directed and encouraged to utilize the internet for information and to incorporate fine arts and technology in presenting their information. Teachers have developed rubrics so that students know in advance how they will be evaluated.

All students in grades 3-8 participate in the school Science Fair and History Day which are planned in alternate years. Students may work in pairs or individually on a project of their choice. Teachers guide students in their research, meeting the requirements, and displaying their projects on backboard, computer programs such as power point, digital videos, documentaries, or through dramatization.

Maple Creek School usually has at least one project that receives an award at the County Level. Teachers and parents actively support their children in developing and completing their projects.

All students are able to participate in several community performances. Student performances include music, dance, and drama. Students often write their own scripts and read their poetry and other writings. Each year one of the major themes undertaken in the social studies and science curricula is incorporated into the plotline of one or two of these performances. These are great opportunities for the gifted and other students to speak publicly and emote creatively. These original play productions allow students an active role in gaining a deeper understanding of these academic themes that goes beyond the state content standards.

Many staff and community members assist in this creative way to allow students to present their mastery of these broad standards based concepts. The performances are well attended by parents, other family members, and the community.

4. Social and Emotional Development

Maple Creek is a very small school (9-12 students) with close interaction among staff, parents, and students. Parent survey results indicate that parents are highly supportive of the close family oriented school. Teachers are particularly sensitive to the emotional needs of the students due to the low student to teacher ratio at Maple Creek elementary (5:1). A close rapport is also built between teacher and student at Maple Creek because teachers often have students for 3-4 years in a row.

Maple Creek Elementary School is dedicated to monitor, identify, and serve at risk students of all types including at risk students. Through their years of experience and staff development our school's staff are aware of the signs that might indicate if any student, including a GATE student is having social / emotional problems. If there is a concern, teachers utilize other staff member's expertise through the Student Study Team (SST) and conferences with the parents. The School Psychologist, Resource Teacher, and Community Agencies are additional resources for the teachers to provide help for the student. Information on GATE characteristics and symptoms of "at risk" behavior are reviewed at the back to school workshop and included in the informational packet given to all families at the beginning of the school year.

5. Professional Development

Staff Development activities are supported and encouraged by Maple Creek's two administrators, a chief business officer and a teaching principal. Because of our very small size, the district relies on staff development activities offered through the local County Office of Education, Humboldt State University, and other organizations.

Each year, the administrators and teachers meet to update the staff development plan. The topics are based on the district and individual identified needs. Teachers are given release time to attend workshops and conferences offered during the regular instructional day.

The district tries to keep two teachers trained in the most current ideas of gifted education, one of who is designated the GATE Coordinator. The current staff development plan identifies math and writing as general areas of focus. If there is a local workshop directed towards the differentiated curriculum, at least one teacher will attend and share the information with the other teacher at a staff meeting or in-service. Maple Creek School District recognizes these efforts as professional growth hours that can be used towards their teacher credential renewal. Since there are currently sufficient staff development funds in the PAR resource (\$3,000), no money has been budgeted from GATE for teacher training.

6. Parent and Community Involvement

There are six families in our school community. Parents are very supportive; 100% attend Parent-Teacher conferences as well as special events. Students often have extended families in attendance too. Maple Creek alumni and their families who still live in the area continue to return for annual Maple Creek holiday events and performances.

Our School Site Council is composed of 3 parents. The SSC assumes the responsibility as the District Advisory Committee for the GATE program and collaborates with the district GATE coordinator. The GATE coordinator supplies the site council with the latest research on GATE Education. For the past 6 years, parents through surveys and the SSC's year end program evaluation have continually indicated a preference for the delivery of GATE services within the classroom setting so that all students can benefit. The SSC participates in the GATE budget development and have participated in writing this plan.

Information about the GATE program is in the Back to School information packet, which is given to each parent at the beginning of the year. All parents, including GATE parents, are kept informed of their child's progress both informally through telephone calls, and formally at the two Parent-Teacher Conferences. All parents receive the annual CST Parent Report. Parents can also receive the school's monthly newsletter or email form, which updates the community about past achievements and upcoming events.

7. Program Assessment

The School Site Council reviews the GATE Program at least once a year with the GATE coordinator providing an evaluation for the council to review. In May, the SSC reviews the program including identification, curricular activities, special projects and activities, philosophy, and budget. Based on these findings, recommendations are made for the following year. These findings are presented to the Board of Trustees along with the year end evaluation of the other Categorical programs.

Due to the small student population, CST results are not reported by sub groups. The GATE coordinator reviews the GATE student's test results to maintain confidentiality. At the school year's end, teachers review school wide activities targeted for GATE students and evaluate their effectiveness to guide future planning. Teachers are given the opportunity to talk about their differentiated curriculum activities at a summer in service day. Staff can review and get feedback regarding how effective their differentiated teaching was during the school year. The GATE coordinator is part of a discussion with teachers regarding the goals met that school year and the creation of goals for the future school years as related to theories, models, practices, and latest research in GATE education.

Teachers can include a variety of assessments aligned with the Standards given throughout the school year to assess GATE student (all student) progress throughout the year. The two administrators will informally evaluate each of the teachers several times a year to determine future need for their staff development in implementing the GATE program for their students.

8. Budget

Maple Creek Elementary School has chosen to use the majority of GATE funding, \$3,188 goes towards the salary and benefits of a multi-funded teaching position at our school, a minimal amount \$600 is set aside for materials and supplies. Having this second teacher divides the difficult task of providing differentiated K-8 curriculum in two and maintains the desirable low student to teacher ratio. It also makes the job of initially identifying GATE students easier.

The district has also allocated funds other than GATE for the purchase of books and supplies, staff development activities, and for transportation to a variety of programs, plays, and community offerings in order to extend, stimulate and enrich learning for all students.