

Hansen Alternative Program

Handbook

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Revised OCTOBER 2016

HAP mission

What is the mission of the Hansen Alternative Program?

The Hansen Alternative Program (HAP) is an Olympia School District Program located at Julia Butler Hansen Elementary School, in west Olympia. It was developed by parents, teachers, and district staff in response to a desire for additional educational opportunities for children. It is open to students in kindergarten through fifth grade that reside within the Olympia school district, including those within the Hansen boundaries. The HAP seeks to attract a diverse student make-up. We strive to create a non-biased learning environment for all children.

The program's mission is to bring children, teachers, and parents together in a progressive educational environment. This setting enhances a child's love of discovery and learning, while developing academic and social skills at an individual pace. The program emphasizes team teaching opportunities, parental involvement, and multi-aged classrooms. It is designed to foster an active, hands-on learning experience for all children. The students are involved in identifying their learning needs and in evaluating their own learning strengths and limitations. Emphasis is placed on emergent curriculum.

Parental involvement is vital to the HAP; the goals of the program can only be achieved with an active educational partnership among students, teachers, and parents, with each assuming a shared responsibility for the learning outcomes.

Educational goals

The HAP mission is realized through actions taken every day and throughout the school year by students, teachers, and staff. Our success is measured against program goals we've identified as a community that we believe directly serve our mission.

Because the HAP mission emphasizes team teaching, the program provides ...

1. **an educational partnership** where students, teaching professionals, and parents routinely engage in activities as a team that enhance learning opportunities for our children.
2. **personalized education** focused on individual student's needs and interests. The objective of this personalized education is to help students learn to make choices, accept responsibility and become self-directed. Personalized education is used as a tool for tapping the natural curiosity of our children and to make learning interesting and fun.

Because the HAP mission seeks to foster active, hands on learning, the program provides . . .

3. **experiential activities** that emphasize inquiry, exploration, and discovery in ways that call for full student participation. In these and other HAP activities, diverse learning styles are recognized, and the curriculum reflects different ways of gathering and sharing information.
4. **collaborative learning** that is both an individual and a cooperative venture. The objective is to provide students the opportunity to work with other students to develop ideas and solve problems.
5. **integrated learning** is connected to the real world so students understand applications to their lives and communities. Themes are used to link (integrate) subjects as skills are developed.

Because the HAP mission emphasizes multi-age classrooms, the program provides . . .

6. **vibrant multi-age classrooms** whose objectives, including leadership, mentoring, socialization, cooperation, and a community that embraces diversity, are enhanced by a supportive classroom environment that emphasizes multi-age learning strategies and recognizes the unique supporting role of our parent volunteers.
7. **balanced multi-age enrollment** with a grade head-count ratio that supports implementation of learning strategies that will help achieve these multi-age objectives.

Because the HAP mission emphasizes emergent curriculum, the program provides . . .

8. **reflective assessment** that emphasizes continuous feedback, encouraging and training students in self-evaluation, as well as guiding the development of more effective teaching and learning strategies.

Because the HAP mission emphasizes a diverse student makeup, the program provides . . .

9. **outreach to underrepresented communities** with relevant information to a wide range of families about the program and its benefits, especially within the Hansen service area.
10. **a forum for ideas** where the HAP community works together to develop new and innovative strategies for recruiting underrepresented communities, as well as potential changes to program practices and procedures that may be determined to be roadblocks to their enrollment.

Because the HAP mission emphasizes parental involvement, the program supports . . .

11. **our HAP co-chairs** in their continual efforts to ensure that information needed to connect volunteers with ongoing and emergent opportunities is available.
12. **our parent volunteers** by making sure our volunteer positions are filled, and that every HAP family can take advantage of volunteer opportunities to the greatest extent practicable. For those who cannot volunteer during the day, opportunities after hours to participate and contribute to the success of the program are made available.

Achieving our HAP Educational Goals

Our Educational Goals are achieved through the dedicated work of our teachers, staff, and parent volunteers. Examples of this work include:

Educational partnerships and personalized education are achieved through parent volunteer involvement, individualized instruction, and HAP activities.

Experiential instruction, collaborative and integrated learning are achieved through field trips, experimental style investigations, and classroom-wide, group, and individual projects.

Vibrant and balanced multi-age classrooms are achieved through parent and administrative support for instructors in their own creative approaches to meeting the challenge of our multi-age objectives, including provision of a grade head-count ratio in each classroom that contributes to successful implementation of the multi-age goals.

Reflective assessment is achieved through ongoing, periodic, and/or occasional communication between parents, teachers, and students and the use of assessment tools that encourage self-evaluation.

Outreach and recruitment in underrepresented communities is achieved through materials developed and presentations given by parent volunteers in close cooperation with the Principal and HAP teachers. Recruitment is improved by the HAP Community through a regular assessment of enrollment results, especially with respect to targets identified by the Principal or school district.

Support for our HAP co-chairs and parent volunteers is achieved through meaningful assessment, using regular parent volunteer forums led by the co-chairs where specific objectives for participation are established, gaps in participation are determined, and solutions to improve participation are proposed and adopted.

Classroom assignment kickoff

To support good communication about HAP Educational Goals and their implementation, the HAP co-chairs organize a meeting with the Principal in June of each year to review the classroom assignments for the coming school year in order to engage in a collaborative discussion about any

challenges or opportunities foreseen with respect to HAP Educational Goals, including multi-age classroom objectives in particular. The goal is to work together to consider whether any strategies, actions and measures that the HAP Community as a whole may take can be used help ensure program success.

Education Goals updates

Given the central role of these Educational Goals in mutual understanding, respect, and commitment of all who participate or have an interest in the vitality of the HAP program and community, regular communication among HAP community members about how goals are being addressed is essential to our success. As a result, the HAP co-chairs organize an annual Educational Goals update report to the HAP Community that features both program successes and challenges with respect to one or more Educational Goals of particular interest to the HAP Community that year. The report is led by one or more HAP volunteers; participation by staff is welcome but not required. A presentation approach is suggested that provides opportunities for questions, suggestions, and proposals for program improvements, including potential updates to the HAP Handbook. Report content is flexible; suggestions include statistics, trends, stories, anecdotes, teacher accounts, and other materials depending on the goal being addressed. Recommended actions or program improvements may be submitted as part of the report for approval of the HAP Community.

Parent involvement

How are parents involved in the program?

Parent involvement is vital in the Hansen Alternative Program (HAP). As a condition of admission, parents of children enrolled in the HAP make a commitment to work within the program. This commitment can be met in a variety of ways. All parents can make a meaningful contribution to their children, the classroom, the school and the community by actively participating in this program.

Parent commitment

Parents of students enrolled in the HAP commit themselves to cooperative involvement in the program. Each parent who has a child/ren in grades K – 5 is asked to commit 40 hours of volunteer time to the program per school year. This commitment of time is per parent, not per child in the program. Parents with more than one child in the program are welcome to invest additional time if they choose.

Why is volunteer help so important to this program?

The curriculum is designed to meet the individual needs of each child, yet even children close in age rarely grow and develop at the same rate. It is much easier for a teacher to design and implement a curriculum that meets many children's different needs if the teacher has adult assistance in the classroom. The program strives to have at least one adult in the classroom with the teacher throughout the day. To meet this goal, 1080 hours of volunteer time (180 school days × 6 hours per day) are needed. Dividing this total between 25 families results, on average, in 42 hours of classroom time per family.

What does the parent commitment mean in practice?

Ideally, a single parent family with one or more children in Grade 1–Grade 5 would volunteer at least 40 hours of time per school year; a two-parent family would volunteer 80 hours. Similarly, a single-parent family with only one child in kindergarten would volunteer at least 25 hours per school year: a two-parent family would volunteer 50 hours.

Still, not all parents will be able to volunteer during regular school hours. They may choose to provide assistance to teachers and students outside of the classroom. For instance, teachers may request instructional support that can be completed during evening or weekend hours (e.g., preparing bulletin board materials, gathering equipment needed for an activity, coordinating field trips, locating community resources, etc.). There will also be many opportunities to assist in the operation of the HAP, or to help with school-wide activities.

Classroom coordinators will work with teachers to assess and prioritize classroom needs before the school year begins and throughout the year. The classroom coordinators will organize parents in the classroom to meet instructional support needs inside and outside of the classroom. In order to document the number of volunteer hours HAP families contribute to the program and school, families will be asked to record each month the number of hours they have volunteered.

Parents having difficulty meeting their commitment can ask extended family members, friends, or other families to work hours on their behalf. When hours are worked on behalf of a family, the person working will record current hours and identify the benefiting family.

How can parents contribute time to the program?

The parent hours commitment can be satisfied in various ways according to both program and parent needs. In order to achieve program goals, families are asked to commit most (75% or more) of their hours to providing Classroom Assistance and Teacher Requested Instructional Support (see section I below.). However, participation in all-school activities and HAP operations is also very much needed (see section II below.). Some examples of volunteer opportunities:

I. Classroom Assistance and Teacher-Requested Instructional Support

- assist in classroom
- serve as classroom coordinator
- substitute for regularly scheduled parent
- tutor students
- transcribe student stories
- read to children
- find guest speakers
- work on class projects
- assist students in library
- coordinate field trips
- shop for class needs
- drive on field trips
- prepare bulletin boards
- make learning materials and games
- help with special projects
- construct classroom furnishings
- serve as guest speaker
- set up construction projects for kids
- teach a mini-course (art, gardening, cooking, computers, etc.)
- participate in classroom committees
- review student work

II. All-School and Alternative Program Operations

- HAP & school administrative tasks
- HAP & school parent meetings
- assist enrichment programs
- recess & after-school activities
- organize school fund raising events
- organize family/social events

- coordinate child care
- assist in health screening
- contribute to newsletters
- contribute to year book

There will be training and support for parents participating in many of these areas. The success of the parent participation component depends on each parent carefully considering how s/he can make a meaningful contribution of time. This program depends on all of us!

Organization

How is the Hansen Alternative Program organized?

Parents play an essential role in organizing the community to achieve the program's mission and educational goals and to reduce the burden of administering the program for teachers, the principal, and staff. Specific HAP leader titles and job functions are explained later in this section.

What roles do teachers, parents, and the principal play in the HAP?

The HAP operates as a partnership between parents, teachers, and the principal.

Each partner contributes to the overall effectiveness of the program.

The central role of parents in the HAP is to support learning in the classroom. As the organization of the HAP reflects, parents also carry much of the burden for organizing community efforts to provide additional resources to the classrooms and, as delegated by the principal, for administering limited tasks required to effectively operate the program.

Teachers play a different role in the partnership. As trained professionals, teachers design the curriculum and determine the methods of instruction. In consultation with HAP volunteers, they serve as program representatives in all school staff meetings and in staff decision making processes. Teachers work with classroom coordinators to develop appropriate volunteer training and to provide volunteer opportunities in the classroom and at home.

Teachers are assured certain professional rights through negotiated agreements with the school board and by administrative practice. No right, assured either by contract or district policy, may be abridged by decisions made by the community meeting regarding program goals or activities without the unanimous consent of the teachers in the program.

The principal is the sole administrative authority in the school. He or she is charged with implementing, in cooperation with parents, the HAP, under the policies established by the Olympia School Board. The principal supervises and evaluates the performance of the teaching staff. At all times, the principal strives to support and encourage creative approaches to teaching and parent involvement, so that the HAP mission and educational goals are achieved. The principal attends HAP Community meetings, and is responsible for organization and implementation of the HAP enrollment process.

Both the Principal and teachers are welcome and encouraged to provide suggestions about potential improvements to the HAP Handbook at any HAP community meeting.

How do parents, teachers, and the principal work together?

HAP Community Meetings

The HAP Meetings, normally held four times in the school year, are the forums in which parents, teachers, and the principal discuss program issues. Goals are established and working groups are created to accomplish specific tasks. The meetings are open to all members of the HAP community.

The HAP facilitators, a teacher representative, classroom coordinators, working group representatives, and the principal attend on a regular basis; however, all parents and volunteers are encouraged to attend and participate. Decisions are made by a consensus process in which input from the whole community is considered.

Because HAP meetings raise issues important to implementing the program goals, teachers are asked to attend. Although at least one teacher usually attends each meeting and also makes a presentation on a relevant topic, the teachers often alternate their attendance so that no-one is burdened excessively. An agenda is provided in advance so that staff who cannot attend can discuss issues with those who can attend, and thus be represented. Minutes taken at the HAP meetings should include: the date and time, list of people attending, and a summary of discussions and decisions. Handouts from the meeting and a preliminary agenda for the next meeting are attached to the minutes, which are marked "draft" and distributed to the classroom coordinators, teachers, principal, and the assistant superintendent of elementary education. Minutes are reviewed, corrected, and finalized at the next meeting, with the final version substituted for the draft for record keeping. This final version is then archived on-line in HAP's secured web site.

HAP Facilitators

The HAP Facilitators (aka co-chairs) play a key role in the HAP. They organize the agenda and facilitate the HAP meetings, monitor the progress of the working groups, and monitor the activities of external groups whose work affects the HAP, like the Hansen Community Council (HCC) and the School Board. Their primary responsibility is to play an informational and organizing role in the HAP community's decision-making process. When possible, HAP Facilitators are elected or appointed in the spring for the following school year. If this is not possible, they may be elected or appointed at the first HAP gathering, usually the back-to-school potluck, in the fall. In order to provide consistent leadership, co-chairs should be elected or appointed with one rotating out each school year. Other key organizational roles in HAP, with whom the co-chairs collaborate, include the secretary, treasurer, volunteer coordinator, events coordinators, classroom coordinators, the HAP-HCC liaison, and of course, the HAP faculty.

Working Groups

Working groups help achieve the program mission and educational goals.

Parents are asked to become involved in one or more working groups, based on their interests, skills and time availability. Following is a list of past and present working groups and their primary tasks.

Not all of these groups function during any given year, and additional working groups may be formed at the HAP meetings to accomplish specific tasks.

Parent Partnership Working Group.

Foster parent involvement, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Provide training and support for volunteers. Provide orientation and establish mentor relationships for new families. Identify transportation needs and resources. Organize child care for program meetings, events, and training. Collect and tabulate volunteer hours.

Resources Working Group.

Gather resources inside and outside of the program to help teachers and volunteer coordinators achieve the HAP mission and educational goals. Help implement and monitor any program grants.

Enrollment/Marketing Working Group.

Assist the school secretary with the enrollment process by communicating with interested families, providing program information, coordinating classroom visits, and conducting external marketing. Update and distribute the HAP Handbook.

Newsletter Working Group.

Publish and distribute the program newsletter.

Website Working Group.

Publish and maintain the program's secure web site for informational sharing (news, photos, events) and document archiving.

Fundraising Working Group.

Raise funds to support the HAP mission and educational goals. Pursue, in conjunction with teachers and the principal, grants compatible with the program. Coordinate fundraising efforts with the Hansen Community Council (HCC). Communicate HAP ideas on school-wide fundraising ideas and needs to the HCC.

Classroom Coordinators

The classroom coordinators are the primary link between the teacher and the parents in the classroom. The teacher can use the classroom coordinator in a variety of ways, including: to assist in scheduling volunteer time, to identify classroom and program resources to meet learning objectives, and to coordinate field trips. The classroom coordinator is at the hub of the email and phone tree for special communication. Monitoring volunteer hours and supporting high levels of parent involvement are important parts of the classroom coordinator's role. When possible, classroom coordinators should be elected or appointed in the spring for the following school year. If this is not possible, they may be elected or appointed at the first HAP gathering, usually the back-to-school potluck, in the fall. The coordinators will be available to participate in the spring Information Night.

Hansen Community Council (HCC) Liaison

The HCC is the place where parents can come together to address the financial and social needs of the entire Hansen Elementary community. Parents of children enrolled in the HAP are encouraged to volunteer and assist in the activities of the HCC. Parents who are involved in the HCC will be asked to report on their goals and activities, and the need for HAP parent support at HAP meetings throughout the school year. The HCC includes one "official" liaison of the HAP, although anyone is encouraged to participate. The HAP/HCC official liaison is appointed by the Facilitators in the fall for the current school year.

Resolving Issues and Concerns

Although we tried to anticipate some of the most commonly asked questions, we know that many others will arise during the school year. This section of the handbook provides you with the best channels of communication for accessing information and expressing concerns. Our advice? Begin with the person most directly involved and go from there.

Questions and Concerns About: Should be Directed To:*

District-wide policies (like busing, boundary lines, program expansion)	Principal or Olympia School District staff
Class placement issues	Teacher
Enrollment issues	Principal
Classroom curriculum (content or process)	Classroom coordinator, teacher
Parent volunteer hours and opportunities	Classroom coordinator, teacher, HAP co-chair
Program curriculum issues	Teachers
Recess/lunch issues	Teacher, recess monitor
Education assistant issues	Teacher
Teacher selection (helping pick new HAP teachers)	HAP committee, principal
Field trips	Classroom coordinator or teacher
General program issues	Teachers, HAP co-chairs
Bullying	Teacher

*If you have consulted with the teacher and the issue is unresolved, take to the principal.

Communication strategies

Parental involvement in the classroom is an essential part of our Hansen Alternative Program. Ultimately, however, teachers are responsible for what goes on in the classroom. When parents have concerns or questions about classroom or program-related issues, they should address those issues outside of class time. Class time is never the time to raise those concerns.

Open, respectful, and constructive communication between parents and teachers will go a long way toward resolving concerns, and will model for our children the very skills we want them to learn. Parents have a responsibility to take concerns or complaints directly to the teacher because generally s/he will be able to shed the most light on the situation. Likewise, teachers have a responsibility to take concerns directly to the parent involved. We strongly recommend that either party request a meeting outside of class time to discuss the issue. If the concern regards a student, the parent or teacher may suggest a conference with the student if it seems appropriate. In the past, HAP families and teachers have also used trusted, third-party mediators (usually other HAP parents or teachers skilled in mediation) to facilitate communication. This informal approach might be tried before turning to a more formal dispute-resolution option. The Olympia School District has a formal set of procedures to follow for conflict resolution if needed.

Confidentiality

Because the HAP relies so heavily on parental involvement, parent volunteers often see and hear information about students. It is imperative to the success of the program and our community feeling that all volunteers honor the confidentiality of their position, being careful to protect and respect any information about a student's work, background and/or behavior. It is expected that volunteers will treat all students fairly, equally, and positively. For more information about volunteer expectations and guidelines, see the Olympia School District Volunteer Handbook.

Enrollment

The HAP enrollment cycle begins each spring with informational meetings and involves a great number of people with various responsibilities. As new students are added to the program, a number of district, building, and program policies regarding student placement must be followed. In the following section, we have tried to outline the HAP enrollment procedure.

Enrollment policies

- There is currently a target minimum of 81 and a maximum of 89 HAP seats across the entire HAP program. These seats are spread out over four classrooms and 6 grades (K–5).
- Each spring, informational meetings are provided for new families interested in entering their child/ren into HAP. HAP requests that all interested parents attend one of these meetings and observe in the classroom during the observation week (the child to be enrolled is welcome to accompany the parent/s to the observation). A HAP preregistration form **MUST** be completed for each child seeking enrollment. This form is distributed at the informational meetings and must be returned by a specified date in order to be included in a spring lottery.
- Priority for placement in HAP is given to siblings of K-5th HAP students. Remaining open seats are filled by lottery. This spring lottery is conducted by Hansen office staff and a representative of the Enrollment Working Group. It is a blind draw lottery and determines the fairest order for how children are placed in HAP. Any students who are not placed via this lottery will be put on the wait-list in order of drawing. The wait-list remains active until the next year's lottery, which establishes the new wait-list. Thus, families must re-enter the lottery every year if their child is not yet in HAP. Those who gain seats during the spring lottery will be notified as soon as possible following the drawing. Those on the wait-list will be told what their status is. You may check your status at any time with the building principal.
- Open seats in HAP classrooms may occur at any time during the school year. When possible, open seats in HAP classrooms are offered to those on the wait-list on a contingency basis. These students will remain in the classroom for the duration of the current school year but are not guaranteed a seat in the program the following year. Under extenuating circumstances such as overcrowding, the building principal reserves the right to place students in seats not filled via the lottery. This will not affect currently enrolled HAP students, but it may mean that a seat will be given to someone in the Hansen general population instead of being offered to someone on the HAP wait list.

Enrolling in HAP

If your child is offered a seat, parents must complete an Olympia School District registration packet and, if Hansen is not your neighborhood school, complete an inter-district transfer form. Parents also must complete the HAP Acceptance and Parent Commitment forms. New HAP parents are encouraged to read the Hansen and HAP Handbooks, meet with other HAP parents, attend the HAP back-to-school potluck and orientation, and participate in HAP meetings.

HAP classroom placement

- All formal student placement at Hansen (including HAP classrooms) is made by the principal or his/her designee.
- Hansen and District policy state that students with a range of exceptional needs will be distributed as evenly as possible throughout all classrooms in the building (including HAP classrooms).
- Except for kindergarten, HAP classrooms are multi-grade. The classes are 1st/2nd, 2nd/3rd, and 4th/5th grades. In keeping with HAP's emphasis on multiage education, ratios of grade levels in each of these classes will be balanced.
- During second grade, your child may be in a classroom with first and second graders or second

and third graders. Classroom placement in second grade is at the discretion of the teachers and the principal. No HAP volunteers are involved in this process. Many times a child who is an accelerated learner can develop leadership skills by being a second grader in a 1st/2nd grade classroom. A second grader in a 2nd/3rd grade classroom may be challenged in ways that are more appropriate for his or her learning level. Sometimes the boy to girl ratio or the grade-level ratio in a classroom can be balanced with appropriate placement. It is important to remember that classroom placement is neither reward nor punishment. If you have questions or concerns about your child's classroom placement, please talk to the appropriate teacher.

- Our goal is to provide for balanced multi-age classroom enrollment across the program. To this end, there will be a June meeting between Principal and HAP Chairs [see "Classroom Assignment Kick-off" in the section Achieving Our HAP Educational Goals] about upcoming classroom assignments. As a follow-up, in August, the Principal and HAP Enrollment Chairs will meet to study the school's enrollment to identify any extenuating circumstances (such as overcrowding) and discuss possible courses of action. The Principal will communicate with District Administration regarding enrollment issues, such as overcrowding, that may impact HAP. If a circumstance occurs during the school year, communication will occur between the Principal and Enrollment Chairs on a case by case basis. A study may include a provision for regularly scheduled assessment or monitoring by the Principal and Enrollment Chairs. If a plan is made and action is taken, a report on the result of the plan is provided at the end of the school year between the Principal and Enrollment Chair(s) to the HAP Leadership Chairs.

Answers to other questions

In no particular order, here is a list of answers to questions you may not even have thought to ask!

What happens if we move out of the Olympia School District in the middle of the year?

If you move during the year, your child can complete the year in HAP but will not be eligible for re-enrollment the next year. Out-of-district families will be offered a seat only after all in-district students have been placed in the HAP, and then only on a year-to-year basis.

Can my child take the school bus?

If you live within the Hansen school boundary along a scheduled bus route, your child/ren may take the bus. If you live out of the school boundary, you are responsible for arranging transportation. Carpooling has been successful and carpool opportunities will be shared at the first school meeting.

Why is there separate fundraising for HAP?

Currently, HAP families are asked to contribute a fee of \$10 per family per school year, regardless of the number of children a family may have in HAP. This \$10 supports HAP projects and events, such as HAP Potluck Picnic, Arts Night, International Night, Games Night, the Greenbelt Restoration Project, and the HAP community web site. HAP's operational costs are the same as those budgeted for other elementary classrooms in the Olympia School District. However, achieving the educational goals may exceed the budgeted costs. To meet the needs for extra materials and activities, donations may be requested or special HAP fundraising activities may occur.

Can my child get before- or after-school care? What about breakfasts/lunches?

Yes, any programs available to students and families in Hansen Elementary School are available to those attending the alternative program. See the Hansen Elementary School handbook or office staff for details.

When we're asked to vote, how many votes do we have as a family?

Most issues in HAP are resolved during HAP community meetings and are decided by a consensus process rather than voting. Should an issue call for a program wide vote, then voting will be based on one vote per child in the program.