

FAQ's: (aka: How Things Work and Why)

There are a few adjustments from the practices and schedules from previous years that we are excited about, and would like to introduce. Changes of any kind (large or small, good or bad) can be challenging, and we want you to know that these adjustments are the result of a full year of thoughtful work and collaborative decision-making by Edna Maguire staff. The joint development of the reaffirmed Edna Maguire Vision statement, and its reflection in a careful realignment of the school's integrated schedule, benefited from participation by all certificated staff members.

PE Master Schedule:

How it works: Grades 1-5 students have the same 150 minutes of PE they have had historically, but that time has been arranged to enhance a more holistic instructional experience in PE overall. Students used to have PE for 30 minutes, five times a week, with the disruption of transitions at either end of those short instructional segments. They now have PE for 50 minutes, three times a week. (TK-Kinder PE remains once a week for 30 minutes.)

Why we are doing it this way: 50 minute PE periods allow our PE instructors to plan lessons instructionally with a beginning, middle and end. Previously, the shorter lesson periods focused almost exclusively on the middle – the activity or game – because of the limited time and the impact of transitions at either end. The PE curricular standards include the whole child in the context of physical activity: health and fitness, sportsmanship and cooperation, perseverance and grit, goal setting, and reflection on learning. The PE standards are focused on, but not limited to, important physical skills and exercise. Again, students have the same amount of time in PE; it is now allocated for additional emphasis on teaching and learning across the more holistic range of PE curricular standards.

In addition, for PE only in grades 1-3, the four classes go at the same time. (Each class attends separately, often at different times, in grades 4-5.) Because we have 3 PE instructors, the four classes at grades 1-3 are divided into 3 new learning groups, each made up of students from each of the four classes. The reasons for this:

- Students have a great opportunity to cooperate with peers from other homerooms, and can maintain and make new friendships with students from outside their homeroom.
- The PE classes will truly be another learning community for all. We avoid the “outsider” dynamic we’ve experienced in past years in PE, one that can result from one class being separated into thirds and grafted onto an intact homeroom that may maintain distance from the “grafted on” students.

Lunch Schedule

How it works: Grades 1-5 students used to eat lunch first and then play. Now Grades 1-5 students are either eating or playing simultaneously between 11:45 and 12:25. 4th-5th grade students play first, then eat. 1st-3rd grade students eat first, then play. (TK-Kinder lunch and play is unchanged.)

Why we are doing it this way: The amount of lunch and play time remains the same, but is now arranged to allow us to make better use of the rest of the day, with improved scheduling of classes, and longer “common prep time” for teaching teams to work collaboratively on curriculum and instruction. Last year students ate for 20 minutes and played for 20 minutes over a 40-minute period, but the 2 student groupings were staggered over a 70-minute period from 11:30-12:40. This year, students have the same 20 minutes for eating and for playing, but grades 1-3 eat first and then play, while grades 4-5 play first and then eat. (Research demonstrates there are two main benefits to playing before eating: more food eaten and less wasted, and students returning to class more ready to learn.) In an additional important benefit to our faculty's sense of community, teachers are now able to lunch and talk together as a whole group for 40 minutes.

Recess Dismissal Routine

How it works: Last year, we started something called the “Freeze Whistle.” When recess ends, yard supervisors blow the whistle once. This is the signal for students to stop their play and touch the ground with one finger. The Freeze Whistle is the invention of the non-profit organization [Playworks](#) that is dedicated to making recess fun,

inclusive and safe, and is practiced in quite a few Marin County schools. The goal is to pause for a moment between full play and the calmer transition back to class; touching the ground ensures the pause. After a 4-5 second pause, supervisors blow the whistle three times. This is the signal for students to walk to their line up areas and put recess equipment away.

Why we are doing it this way: It is a safer and calmer way to end recess and transition students back to classroom learning. Recess ends for over 200 students at a time, and at lunchtimes, we have about 450 students trading places and traveling in opposite directions. In prior years, discipline referrals from the yard to the office during and after transitions were quite high, occurring nearly daily. There were multiple injuries from collisions and falls as students raced and converged on the building doors. Informal evidence shows the short pause and calm transition we started in 2015-2016 is working, and significantly. The injuries and mishaps were nearly non-existent last year; recess and lunch-time transitions have ceased to be an impediment to safety and learning. And as a side benefit, we are having to replace lost recess equipment at a fraction of the previous rate, because students are returning it to the carts instead of abandoning it on the yard.

Edna Maguire VALUES and BELIEFS

We value:

- the energy and commitment of our Edna community.
- transparency, trust and openness among all staff members.
- individuality and creative freedom in pursuit of common learning goals for students.

We believe:

- in hard work and fun.
- students do best when staff have the time and tools to collaborate and develop teaching and learning experiences.
- every student has unique learning needs that need to be met in order for them to reach their potential.
- students learn best when they construct their own understanding, feel safe to make mistakes, and have the power to make choices about their learning experiences.

Community

Edna Maguire students, staff, and families know each other, learn together, and share a sense of belonging in the community. Students come together for learning in multi-age groupings. Edna staff works together to promote community and a powerful learning experience for our students over their six or seven years in our school. Through our PTA and classroom communities, parents have many opportunities to participate in social events and the learning life of their children.

Curricular Collaboration

Edna Maguire staff develop a powerful, coherent student learning experience that connects across grade levels. They have the time and tools for this work.

Instructional Practices

Edna Maguire staff enjoy creative freedom and individuality in their teaching practices. However, they are also committed to learning progressions that are consistent across a span of grade levels.

Learning

Edna Maguire students learn by constructing their own knowledge in a safe environment where they have ownership of their learning experiences.