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compiled by Rebekah Barnes

“Gifted” replaced by high school credit programs

Miranda Carney | Staff Writer

The middle school Gifted program, which provides students who have an IQ above 130 with opportunities to think outside the box, is being replaced after the end of this school year in order to provide students with more opportunities to earn high school credit, according to Mason Middle School Principal, Tonya McCall.

“We are providing new opportunities for all students, including those students who are identified as gifted,” McCall said. “Mason Middle School students will have the opportunity to earn high school credit over the next two years. Some Mason Middle students can earn up to two and a half high school credits before entering Mason High School.”

Gifted teacher, Amy Hammond, said that it is important to provide alternative ways for gifted students to push themselves, so the new programs will make sure students are still challenged.

“I was told in February that there would be no more Gifted class next year,” Hammond said. “Just like the population with an IQ less than 70 needs a curriculum with accommodations, our gifted population with an IQ over 130 clearly needs a curriculum that caters to their special needs.”

Along with extra high school credit being offered, McCall said that a new Program of Merit is starting next year, which will be aimed at getting Gifted students to extend their learning beyond the classroom.

“The Program of Merit was created to provide opportunities for students to explore their interests and make connections to what they are studying in class,” McCall said. “Through this program, students study topics in more detail [and] pursue solutions to real world problems through problem solving based learning. Students may [participate] in Social Studies, Language Arts and Science.”

Junior Maddie Baehre, who took gifted classes in middle school, said she isn't concerned about gifted programs being removed because they are being replaced with other challenging opportunities.

“I don't think [removing gifted programs] will affect students too much,” Baehre said. “Now they're start-



Above: Seventh-grader Reagan Snyder participates in the gifted program during the school day. photo by Miranda Carney

ing to move a lot of things into the middle school, like you can take Spanish, and they're moving a lot more opportunities in that way, so that by the time you get to high school, you'll be ahead already, so it kind of balances out.”

Although she said removing the program won't be much of a problem, Baehre said that she saw the value of taking gifted in middle school pay off in high school by preparing her for harder course work.

“[Gifted programs] prepare you for the higher expectations that there are in high school,” Baehre said. “In most middle school classes, [school work] wasn't that challenging [to me]. We [got to] look at some resources that we wouldn't usually get to [in normal classes].”

Seventh-grader Reagan Snyder, who is currently in Amy Hammond's gifted class, said that she thought that removing the program would prevent future students from having the experiences she currently has.

“I really enjoy [gifted],” Snyder said. “[If it gets removed], I don't think [students] will get a chance to do the fun activities we get to do. We learn different things than in a normal classroom, and we get challenging [experiences].”

Although Snyder said she really enjoys the gifted program, she said she currently participates in the Program of Merit for Social Studies and looks forward to participating in the expanded program.

“For this year, [the school offered] Social Studies for [Program of Merit],” Snyder said. “You do an independent research project each trimester. I will do it next year too when they expand it to different classes.”

Hammond said that in her own experience teaching gifted curriculum, she has seen the growth that comes from students when they are challenged intellectually, and that is why it is important to her that the gifted program is replaced with a new challenging program.

“Not only is the curriculum fast and rigorous, but it is introspective and focuses on the whole person, especially their life beyond my classroom,” Hammond said. “[It is] a precious age to encourage students to think about their goals, choices and habits.”