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**Below are answers to some Gifted FAQs to help clarify the important changes happening with Briarlake’s Discovery program:**

**1) Why are we just hearing about this change now?**

*This is truly not a change, but a conclusion to an initiative initiated in the 2014-2015 school year. The plan to embrace the Advanced Content Gifted delivery model has been in effect for 3 years. The caveat is that the practice of using the Gifted pull-out model was never ended. In August of 2017, the administration was notified by the District that the current pull-out scheduling practices resulted in a total number of points that was not high enough to earn all of our teachers.  We were told we were likely to lose a teacher if something wasn't changed immediately. The district has been supplementing for our school and others like us who have not ceased to pull students out of class as a primary mode of operation.*

**2)  I could barely hear what was being said in the back.  Will a letter detailing all of this be sent from the Principal?**

*The most recent blast has a link to the Ms. Lewis’s PPT from the presentation on August 15th. In addition, Ms Lewis will be sending out a communication detailing changes that will be implemented as they occur.*

**3)  Do we really need to do this?**

*Yes. We should cease the practice of pulling students out of class for gifted and early intervention services. If we do not change our model immediately, we will lose teacher(s), which will cause classes to merge and create larger class sizes.*

**4)  Isn't this putting a lot on Ms. McMillan?**

*No. Ms. McMillan understands our needs and has been preparing for this change. She also has a great deal of experience teaching gifted students in all grades and has access to resources and enriching curriculum for several subject areas. In addition, supporting the classroom teachers will be her primary focus since she will no longer have a class of her own.*

**5)  Isn't this putting a lot on the grade level teachers?**

*The grade level teachers are gifted certified the same as Ms. McMillan and have been implementing this model since 2014. This change will actually serve as an additional support to teachers, as they will be supported by Ms. McMillan. Teachers in all grades already differentiate their instruction. Ms. McMillan served gifted students through reading. Homeroom teachers differentiate reading daily in various ways. Differentiating for gifted students will be a similar model.*

**6)  How are the teachers supposed to teach extra to the gifted students for all six subjects?**

*Employing Gifted instruction across all six subjects is what the gifted certification trains and equips teachers to do. The state provides the model as an option because it is research based and supported as an effective approach to instructing students. The district has adopted a curriculum that is formatted with such detail that it addresses the rigor needed for At-Risk students, Typical Performing and High Achieving/Gifted students. Teachers will simply follow the curriculum and differentiate in all content areas by choosing and/or modifying the lesson to fit each group’s academic needs.*

**7) Where are the teachers going to get this curriculum?**

*The good thing about Advanced Content is that most High Achieving schools are following this model already, for example Oak Grove, in our cluster, has implemented this model successfully for many years now. Their teachers were trained within the same training gifted certification platform as our teachers. We do not have to re-invent the wheel.  In addition, as previously mentioned, the district has recently adopted a curriculum that is formatted with such detail that it addresses the rigor needed for At-Risk students, Typical Performing and High Achieving/Gifted students. Teachers will simply follow the curriculum and differentiate in all content areas by choosing and/or modifying the lesson to fit each group’s academic needs.*

**8) We don't want to lose any more teachers (like last year).  This is going to be too stressful for the teachers.**

*This is truly not a massive change for teachers, but a conclusion to an initiative initiated in the 2014-2015 school year. The plan to embrace the Advanced Content Gifted delivery model has been in effect for 3 years. Our teachers understand the need and are on board. IF there is a level of anxiety, it may understandably stem from teachers who await their training (which begins approximately in September of 2017). If we continue using the current methods of pull-out, we will certainly lose teachers, hence classes will be merged, and class sizes will be larger.*

**9) If the teachers are now focusing on Gifted students, what about the rest of the students?  Will they suffer?**

*The most accurate depiction of teachers’ focus is not a shift, but a continuation of meeting all students’ needs. It should be noted that gifted students are not the only group of students needing to be challenged. Similarly, high-achieving students require some of the same instructional strategies offered to gifted students. Additionally, the strategies used when teaching for acceleration also proves beneficial when applied to all students.  All students will benefit from the strategies implemented by our well-equipped and trained teachers. We have a continued focus on growth for all students. No group of students will be left behind.*

**10) Will my high achieving student (not Gifted) be able to benefit from this differentiated teaching?**

*It should be noted that gifted students are not the only group of students needing to be challenged. Similarly, high-achieving students require some of the same instructional strategies offered to gifted students. Additionally, the strategies used when teaching for acceleration also proves beneficial when applied to all students.*

**11) I'm sure this won't be an issue because the kids are used to having extra assignments, but I don't want the Discovery students to feel like they don't need to do the extra work because the rest of their class isn't doing it.  For example, dragging their feet in completing the regular assignment with the hopes they won't have enough time to start the "extra" stuff.  My kid is smart but sneaky!**

*Rigor is not extra. Rigor is deeper. We emphasize that high-achieving/gifted students should not be assigned “more” to equate to rigor. For example, all students may be assigned a problem based assignment, and in-order to challenge the high-achieving/gifted students, their assignment calls for deeper connections to be made. It requires complex reasoning, planning, developing, and thinking most likely over an extended period of time. The extended time period is not a distinguishing factor if the required work is only repetitive and does not require applying significant conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking. For example, if a student has to take the soil test from a creek bed each day for a month and then construct a graph, this would be classified as lower level of rigor. However, if the student is to conduct a soil study that requires taking into consideration a number of variables, this would be the higher level of rigor possibly needed for differentiating lessons for advanced students. At the higher level, the cognitive demands of the task should be high and the work should be very complex. Students should be required to make several connections—relate ideas within the content area or among content areas—and have to select one approach among many alternatives on how the situation should be solved.  It’s not* *about “more”.*

**12) What's the hold up with new Discovery student eligibility?!**

*The hold up on results from last year’s testing is unfortunately at the District level. Last year’s battery of tests included a brand new assessment tool, and we are still waiting on results from that assessment to be entered into our system. We do not have a time table for when we will have access to those results, but we are committed to keeping you informed as soon as we receive any new information.*