

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Giftedness is about more than simply being “really smart”; it is having an alternative way of thinking that comes with a unique set of intellectual and interpersonal skills, and sometimes having challenging sensory issues.

Gifted students have different learning needs. When the social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and creative aspects of a person develop at an uneven rate, it is described as **asynchronous development**. Research shows that often gifted children develop asynchronously.

A six-year-old child with a nine-year-old mind wants to write like a nine-year-old, but his motor coordination is age appropriate.

A five-year-old girl may be reading at an eighth grade level, but she is at grade level in math.

A young gifted child may cognitively understand difficult concepts such as death and social justice, but may not have the life experience to handle these concepts.

The students’ social and emotional needs are also affected by this asynchronous development. Many gifted children need targeted assistance with peer relationships, perfectionism, understanding their asynchronous development, and situational stressors.

A program like Quest allows students to be together with others who have similar learning needs. A comparison of the characteristics of gifted students and how they have learning needs different from other bright students can be seen below and shows the need for a program like Quest to ensure that all of our students are challenged and learning each day.

A Bright Student...

- Remembers the answers.
- Is interested.
- Is attentive.
- Generates advanced ideas.
- Works hard to achieve.
- Answer the questions in detail.
- Performs at the top of the group.
- Responds with interest and opinions.
- Learns with ease.
- Needs 6 to 8 repetitions to master.
- Comprehends at a high level.
- Enjoys the company of age peers.
- Understands complex, abstract humor.
- Grasps the meaning.
- Completes assignments on time.

A Gifted Learner...

- Poses unforeseen questions.
- Is curious.
- Is selectively mentally engaged.
- Generates complex, abstract ideas.
- Knows without working hard.
- Ponders with depth and multiple perspectives.
- Is beyond the group.
- Exhibits feelings and opinions from multiple perspectives.
- Already knows.
- Needs 1 to 3 repetitions to master.
- Comprehends in-depth, complex ideas.
- Prefers the company of intellectual peers.
- Creates complex, abstract humor.
- Infers and connects concepts.
- Initiates projects and extensions of assignments.

- Is receptive.
- Enjoys school often.
- Absorbs information.
- Is a technician with expertise in a field.
- Memorizes well.
- Is highly alert and observant.
- Is pleased with own learning.
- Gets A's.
- Is intense.
- Enjoys self-directed learning.
- Manipulates information.
- Is an expert who abstracts beyond the field.
- Guesses and infers well.
- Anticipates and relates observations.
- Is self-critical.
- May not be motivated by grades.

The BHM Quest program is a school-within-a-school program for highly gifted students. The purpose of the program is to provide challenging academic experiences for students who require a greater degree of enrichment and/or acceleration than can normally be provided through differentiation in the mixed-ability classroom. Students in the program are accelerated in mathematics and science. Curriculum in English and social studies is highly enriched. Hands-on and technology-based curriculum are emphasized. Students are not necessarily assigned more homework than students in other classes, but the homework is matched to the challenge level of the course content and to the students' abilities.

Students are selected based on several admission criteria. Parents and teachers contribute information about an applicant, and student test scores are required as part of the application. Test scores reviewed include Measures of Academic Progress Growth (MAP) which is used to determine student achievement levels, and the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) which is used to determine student ability levels. The CogAT is administered at school to students who apply for the program. Students considered for admission show a pattern of scoring in the mid to upper ninetieth percentile on MAP and MCA testing in reading and mathematics, and score in the mid to upper ninetieth percentile on the CogAT. Parents and the student's current teacher will also complete a perceiver form of gifted characteristics. Applicants can also submit other information, such as IQ test information, IEP or 504 plans. A recommendation team reviews all of the applications and makes decisions on student qualifications for the program.

Our program has forty-four students in the multi age elementary program at Parkside Elementary, fifty-seven at BCMS and eighteen in grade nine. Five of the students are open enrolled from surrounding districts. These five students do not include families who have moved to the district or returned to BHM after enrolling somewhere else upon acceptance into the program.

An evaluation of the Quest program was done using an evaluation model from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) during the 2021-22 school year. Surveys included questions to evaluate the effectiveness of Quest's Curriculum and Instruction and how Quest addresses student's affective needs. Three groups were asked for feedback: 1) current students; 2) parents with students currently in Quest; 3) past students (students from grade ten through the first graduating class of 2017). A group of stakeholders with various perspectives was assembled to consider the data and come up with possible next steps to consider. The group included:

Pam Miller - Director of Teaching and Learning
Rob Nosbush - High Potential Services Coordinator
Jenina Rothstein - Elementary Curriculum Specialist/member of original proposal team
Jeanna Miller - Principal of Parkside Elementary Quest location
Amanda Lawrence - School Board Member
Chrissie Estrada, Mattie Winger - Parent (Elementary)
Anne Jungwirth, Mustafa Akram - Parent (Secondary)
Caleb Hultmann, Olivia Eby, Gavin Juenke (Previous Quest Students)

BHM QUEST PROGRAM STRENGTHS

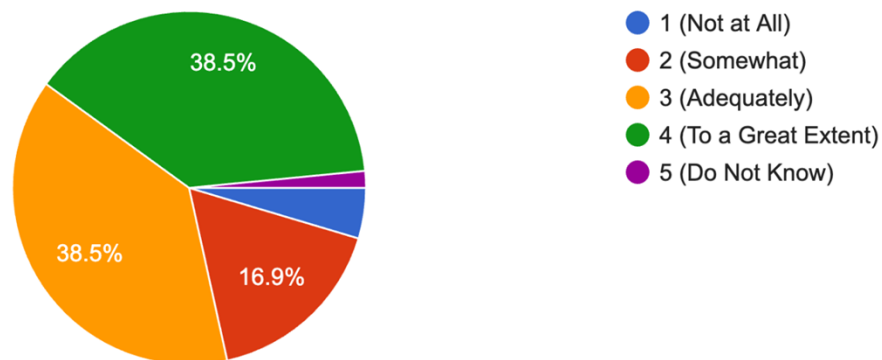
Strengths were determined using the BHM Core Values as the measure.

Screenshots of survey questions which identified areas where we have been successful in helping gifted students to learn are included under the BHM Value. Each is followed by the survey from which it was taken.

BHM Core Value: We are in the business of lifelong learning. All of our actions must be measured by our success in achieving this goal.

1. To what extent are you adequately prepared for your current coursework or job.

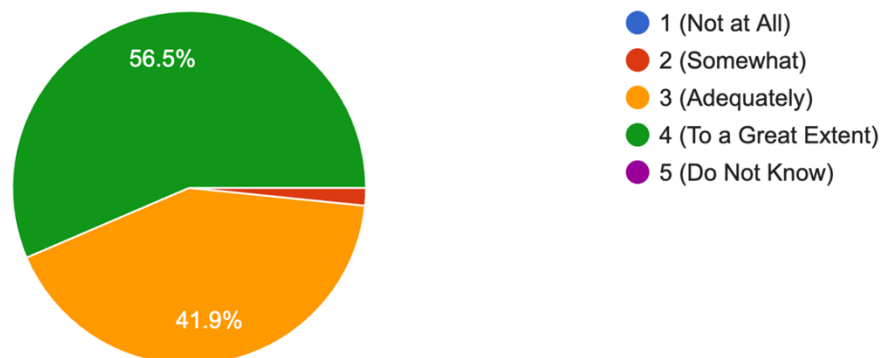
65 responses



(Former student survey)

2. To what extent is participation in Quest meeting your child(ren)'s academic needs?

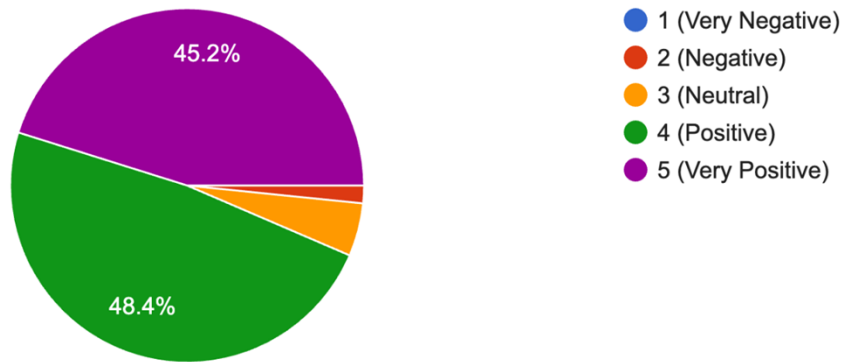
62 responses



(Parent survey)

3. What is your overall perception of Quest?

62 responses



(Parent Survey)

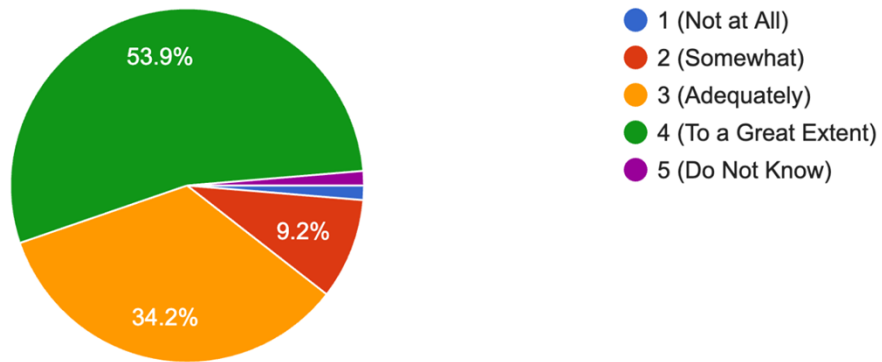
BHM Core Value: Maximizing learning requires innovation, risk-taking and the ability to change.

There are only eighteen full time gifted programs in the state of Minnesota. The vast majority of them are only elementary age programs. Only two of these public programs extend past Quest's ninth grade end. These are both in districts much larger than ours.

BHM Key Results: All students demonstrating academic growth and success.

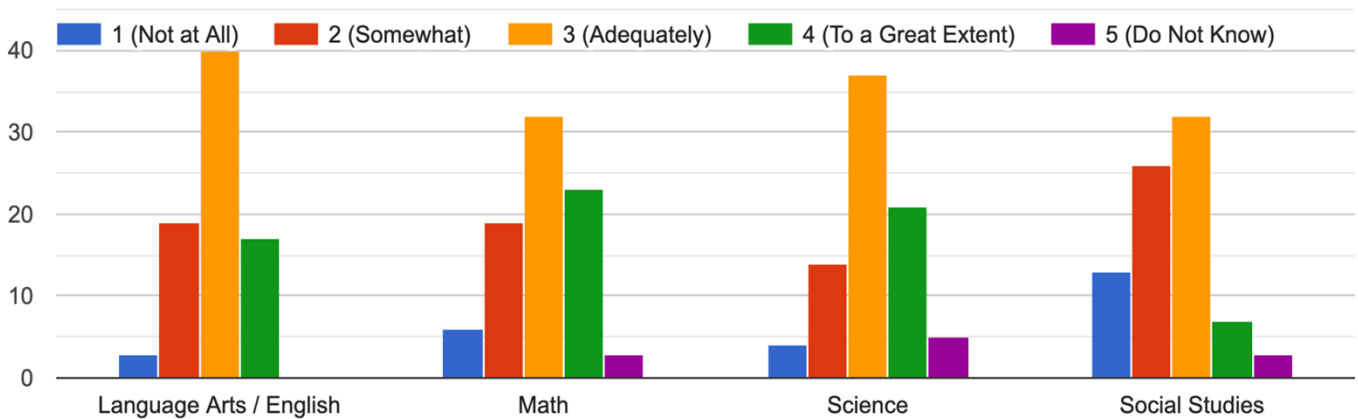
9. Does Quest develop critical thinking skills?

76 responses



(Current Student Survey)

1. During your time in Quest, do you feel the program has challenged you in each of the following subjects?

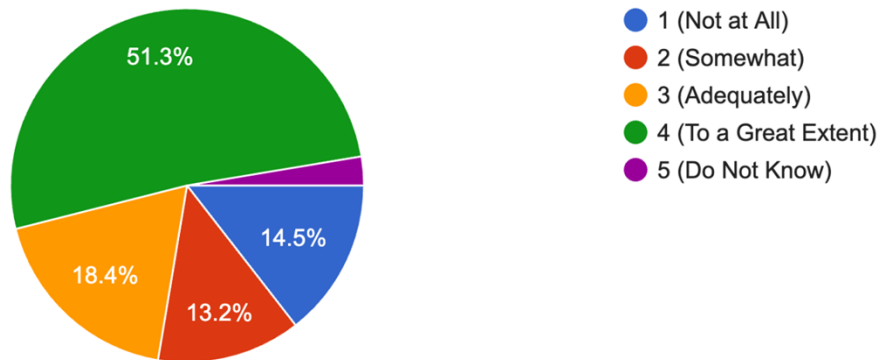


(Current Student Survey)

BHM Core Value: Safe, comfortable environment for everyone in our schools.

1. Does participation in Quest help you develop meaningful friendships?

76 responses

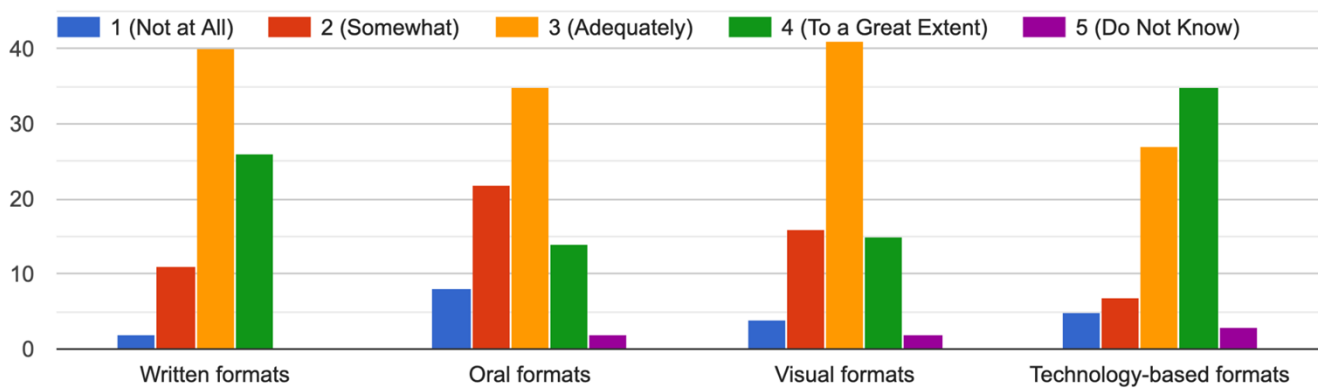


Survey)

(Current Student

BHM Core Value: Increase student learning and expand instructional strategies by implementing technology.

6. Do the Quest classes help you develop the ability to present information in a variety of formats?



Survey)

(Current Student

BHM Key Result: All staff have a critical role in enhancing student development.

The following were quotes from the previous student survey. Respondents were given the opportunity to write a note to a teacher in the Quest program. The responses were then separated and forwarded on to each teacher. The things written showed the role which they played in these gifted students' lives.

"I would like to thoroughly thank you for completely changing the trajectory of my math career and providing a very safe space for learning."

"They had a huge impact on my academic life. Their passion for teaching made a huge impression on my participation in class."

"She managed to get 4th grade me, who would barely write 2 sentences for writing assignments, to get rather good at writing, and at the end of my 2 years having her as a teacher, I found it easy to complete any writing assignment that was assigned to me...If it weren't for laying the groundwork, I do not think I would be nearly as good of a writer as today."

"He was by far the most influential teacher I ever had. I would not be the open-minded, optimistic person I am today if it weren't for him."

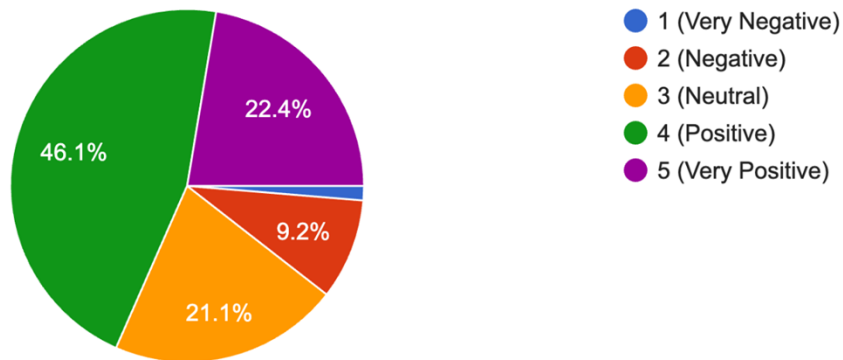
BHM QUEST PROGRAM LIMITATIONS OR CHALLENGES

Perception

The Quest program faces a challenge from the perception of the program and the understanding of why gifted students need specialized programming. Questions three and four highlight the difference between how students in Quest perceive the program and how the same group answered how those outside of the program think about Quest.

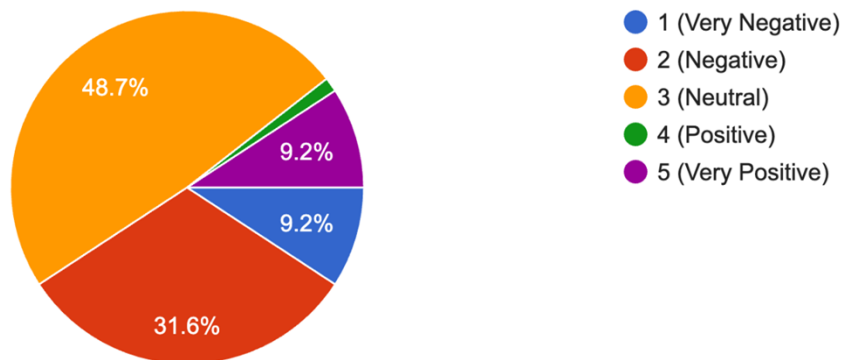
3. What is your overall perception of Quest?

76 responses



4. What do you think the perceptions of Quest are for those who are not affiliated with it?

76 responses



(student survey)

Scheduling

Professional development is a challenge for Quest teachers, especially at BCMS. A Quest class is one period of each teacher's schedule. That, combined with teaching assignments changing over time, creates a challenge to grow teacher efficacy for teaching gifted students.

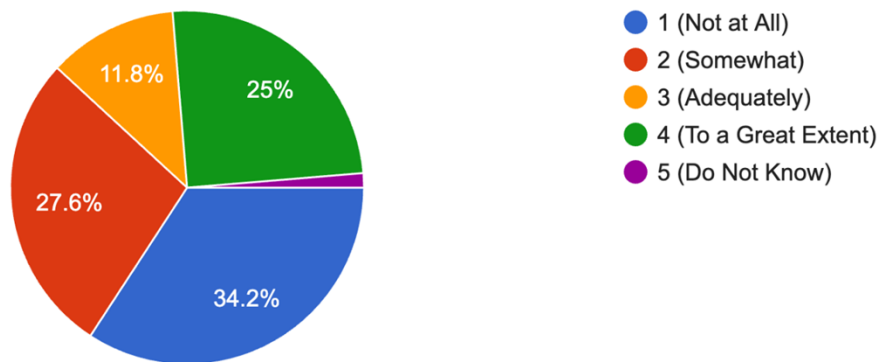
Lack of substitute teachers has led to the majority of teachers being unable to attend professional development opportunities during the school day over the past several years.

Isolation

Because of the numbers of students at BCMS, only one section of each Quest class is available. Students are together for Quest classes, but they are also limited to the class sections available in the non Quest class periods. Students responded extremely high that they love the support of being with other learners like them. They also know that this gives them less interaction with others. The difference between the previous and current student survey shows that changes have improved the problem but it still persists.

8. In your opinion, does participation in the Quest program isolate you and make you miss out on peer connections.

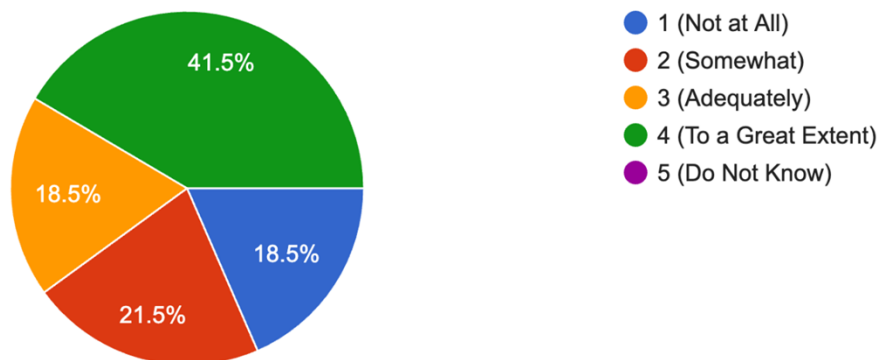
76 responses



(Current Student Survey)

8. In your opinion, did participation in the Quest program isolate you and make you miss out on peer connections.

65 responses



(Previous Student Survey)

NEXT STEPS

To correct the perception of Quest among those not involved the following suggestions have been made:

- Professional Development for non Quest staff using the new early release in locations where the program is housed. (Unfortunately sites have that time scheduled already for the current school year. This will be explored again for next year.)

- Identifying specific counselors at BCMS and BHS in order to allow one person to focus on the specific needs of gifted students.

To address the feeling of isolation the following suggestions have been made.

- In addition to the students who are identified for all subjects, students at BCMS will also be identified in just the areas of Math/Science or English/Social Studies to increase interactions with other students while still being able to be with other students with like learning needs.

- Quest program teachers are looking at class time interactions by working with other classes.

- WIN time options at BCMS

To address the level of perceived rigor for Quest students in Social Studies:

- seek out and provide additional professional development opportunities for Quest Social Studies teachers for increasing rigor and enriching content

- provide curriculum development opportunities to Quest Social Studies teachers for differentiation and challenge-based approaches within coursework