

Kilt creates a stir, then an educational opportunity

By **BROOKE NELSON**

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WEST HAVEN — Gavin McFarland isn't a cross-dresser, he's Scottish.

The 14-year-old Hooper lad was told he could be mistaken for a cross-dresser, though, when he wore a kilt to school Wednesday for a school project.

"I was kind of surprised," Gavin said. "No teachers had gotten mad at me for it. A lot of them thought it was really cool." Kilts are traditional Scottish apparel, generally worn by men, often for formal or special occasions.

Gavin had worn the kilt last week and was wearing it again this week as a prop for an

art project he was working on, receiving several compliments from teachers and classmates.

Partway though the day he was told by Rocky Mountain Junior High principal Craig Jessop that wearing the kilt could be misconstrued as cross-dressing and he needed to change.

Gavin removed the kilt and for the rest of the day wore the shorts he had been wearing underneath.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with it," McFarland said.

Weber School District officials said Jessop will issue a personal apology to Gavin. Jessop did not return phone requests for an interview from the Standard-Examiner.

"We certainly do not consider wearing a kilt, especially for a school project, as cross-dressing," said district spokesman Nate Taggart.

"We recognize the kilt as a display of

Scottish heritage."

The boy's parents said they were disappointed by the principal's decision, especially after the more than 40 hours his mother, Paula McFarland, had put into hand-sewing an authentic kilt from Scottish material.

"It's ridiculous," Paula McFarland said. "A kilt is a distinctive garment. Nobody mistakes it for a skirt."

Gavin's father, Preston McFarland, hopes the incident leads to discussions and education about Scottish heritage, an important part of the history of Weber County.

"I'm just kind of shocked," he said. "Living in Utah, so many of our ancestors are from that area."

Ben Lomond Peak was named by Scottish settlers and Ogden boasts a high school where students are encouraged to wear kilts

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Gavin McFarland is proud of his Scottish kilt and Scottish heritage.

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