Examining The Evolution of the Transition Program
 Preparing Academically Gifted Students for Early Entrance to University

by

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Abstract

The VSB/UBC Transition Program is a Ministry of Education Provincial Resource Program for highly academically gifted young adolescents. Unique to British Columbia and Canada since its inception in 1993, the two-year program is currently housed on the UBC campus and affiliated with University Hill Secondary School. Despite an extraordinary range of hurdles - which are fully discussed and analyzed in this study - the eventual establishment of an early entrance to university program is seen as a remarkable accomplishment of educational leadership and organizational learning involving institutional partnerships, flexible governance and a shared commitment to academically gifted young people.

The study examined the complexities of implementing a unique educational innovation for academically highly gifted young students in a university setting and in a provincial context which has not traditionally favored support for the highly gifted. The study had two phases. An historical narrative traced the development of this innovation and described how the current program model evolved in response to student needs. Documentary evidence based on original documents and interviews with program developers, implementers, and participants provided a multi-faceted perspective of the program's complex history and highlighted factors contributing to program success for students, as well as problems encountered along the way. Building upon this narrative, the second phase surveyed and then analyzed the views and expectations of students, parents, and staff as well as program planners at different stages of the program. These various perspectives were used to advance an understanding of how and why this unique program developed as it did, and how its participants variously responded to a wide range of expectations and needs to arrive at the current delivery model.

The study concludes with a discussion of critical issues and documents the strengths and unmet needs of academically gifted students that have emerged over the course of the program's development. It culminates by providing an understanding of key elements related to program success for gifted youth together with recommendations for future program development and a broader array of programs and services for academically gifted students in secondary schools and post-secondary institutions in BC. The study ends by encouraging more support for educational innovations that respond to the developmentally unique needs of all students, and a commitment to on-going short term as well as longitudinal research on the Transition Program and its graduates.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... iii
List of Tables .................................................................................................................. viii
List of Figures ................................................................................................................ x
Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................... xi

CHAPTER I Introduction ................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Origin of the Study ................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Gifted Education Context ..................................................................................... 2
  1.3 Motivation for Program Development .................................................................. 3
  1.4 Rationale for the Study of an Innovative Program .............................................. 4
  1.5 The Uniqueness of the Transition Program ......................................................... 5
  1.6 Research Design Considerations ......................................................................... 6
  1.7 Research Methodology ......................................................................................... 8
  1.8 Practitioner as Researcher ................................................................................... 8
  1.9 Organization of the Study .................................................................................... 9

CHAPTER II Review of Current Literature. ................................................................... 12
  2.1 Conceptions of Giftedness .................................................................................. 12
  2.2 Cultural Attitudes Toward Giftedness. ................................................................. 12
  2.3 Definitions of Giftedness. ................................................................................... 14
  2.4 Definition of Giftedness in British Columbia ..................................................... 17
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Characteristics of Gifted Students.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Educational Practices for Gifted Students.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Research on Academic Acceleration</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Early Entrance to University Programs</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Educational Policy and Giftedness</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter III The Transition Program's Evolution</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Critical Elements Supporting Gifted Education Program Development in Vancouver</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>The Need for a District Early Entrance to University Program</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Exploration of Program Models</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Development of an Institutional Partnership</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Assumptions Underlying a Program Model</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Program Approval in Principle</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Negotiating Funding for Program Implementation</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Initiating Program Implementation</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1993-1994 The Start-Up Year</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>The Initial Program Design</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Liaisoning Between UBC Professors and Transition Program Staff</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Developing Professional Knowledge: Gifted Education And Related Student Needs</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Transition Program Parents</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Changes in Program Staff</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>Provincial Resource Program Status</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>District Changes and Leadership Challenges for the Transition Program</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>The Program's Struggle for a Clear Identity</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>Program Learning Culminates in Reframing of Program Structure</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>The Conceptual Framework Response Document</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>Relocation to the UBC Campus</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>Articulation of Program Delivery Promotes Development of Program Stability</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>The Challenge of New Staff</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>Implementation of the Revised Program Structure</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>The Challenge of Change</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter IV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Semi-Structured Interviews</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Complexities and Limitations of the Data Gathering</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Analysis of Survey Data</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Discussion of Findings</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Needs</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivation to Apply</td>
<td>.121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretation of Student Needs</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitions of Success</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter V

Reflections on Program Learning with Recommendations

5.1 Program Development as Program Learning

5.2 Learning as Part of Program Culture

5.3 A Learning Model for Development and Growth in the Transition Program

5.4 Learning as a Precursor of Change

5.5 Organizational Learning and Program Change

5.6 Influences on Program Development

5.7 Leadership as Teaching

5.8 Teaching as Learning

5.9 Policy as Leadership

5.10 Emergent Understandings, Issues, and Directions

5.11 Recommendations

5.12 Concluding Thoughts of Practitioner as Researcher

References

Appendices

A. List of Transition Program Study Abbreviation and Source Documents

B. Topics for Transition Program Students - Block E (1993-95)


D. Transition Program Surveys with Cover Letter
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent Survey</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering Committee and Administrator Survey</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Survey</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Survey</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBC Instructing Professor Survey</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey Cover Letter</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Survey: Rating of Program Elements by Program Participants</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Survey: Recommendations for Program Improvement from Students</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Celebrating Diversity - Igniting Potential Graphic</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Needs of Gifted Students</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Student Characteristics Related to Student learning Outcomes</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Needs of Secondary Gifted Students</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>An Overview of the Transition Program Framework 1998</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>In What Ways Is The Transition Program Unique</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Transition Program: Articulation of Program Needs</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>Summary of Needs</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Transition Program Development: Milestones</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>Transition Program Development and Research Activities</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>Focus Groups: Transition Program Students</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>Participation in the Data Collection Process</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>Program Years Represented by Student and Parent Data</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>Student Enrolment by Age</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>Student Enrolment by Grade</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>Transition Program Student Enrolment 1993-2002</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>Years of Transition Program Involvement of Survey Respondents</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>Survey Respondents Represented by Year and Enrolment</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>Categories of Student Response to Survey</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>Differences Across Participant Groups</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>Differences Across Parent Groups</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>Differences Across Student Groups</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>Educational Settings of Students Prior to Enrolment in Transition Program</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>Summary of Student Needs From Transition Program Students</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>Summary of Student Needs From Staff</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>Summary of Student Needs From Parents</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>Career Directions of Some Transition Program Graduates: By Faculties</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>Summary of Perceptions of Student Success From Students, Parents, Staff</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>Gifted Education Catalyst Ideas Influencing Program Development</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>Implications of Developmental and Categorical Approaches to Intelligence</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Transition Program Design</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Students Needs Addressed Within Transition Program According to Students</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>First Stage of Program Integrity: Congruence</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Second Stage of Program Integrity: Success</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>The S Curve of Development</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Four Factors Influencing Transition Program Development</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>Program Goals and Related Best Practices</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1993 the Vancouver School Board, in partnership with the University of British Columbia, initiated the VSB/UBC Transition Program, an innovative program designed to support academically gifted adolescents prepare for early entrance to university and subsequent successful university study. In 1995 the Transition Program was accepted as a Provincial Resource Program and funded by the Ministry of Education. Increasingly successful, the Transition Program continues to be unique in British Columbia and Canada. Indeed, it has been described as 'the best kept secret in education'. This study is designed to discuss and analyze the development and organization of the Transition Program and examine the complexities of implementing a unique educational innovation for academically highly gifted secondary school age students in a university setting.

Origin of the Study

As the Transition Program matures, the partnering institutions, program staff, participating students, and their parents are eager to understand how the program has evolved, how it has responded to student needs, and how it can be improved. Given the early stages of implementation of the Transition Program, the institutional partners requested that a formal evaluation of the program be undertaken once the program has been stable in its operation for several years. This study presents a foundation for further research including program evaluation and longitudinal studies by providing a documentation and analysis of the complex issues involved in the Transition Program's design, development and implementation. The study articulates the Transition Program's theoretical foundations and its conceptual framework and documents the "learning journey" which has led to the program's current operating model. Documentary evidence and interviews with program developers, implementers, and participants provide a multi-faceted perspective of the program's history and highlight the factors that constitute program success for students. Data collected from students, parents, and staff about their experiences with the Transition Program provide insights into why students choose and are eager to participate in this educational alternative, why they remain with the program, and how they view their experiences and their goals once they have graduated from the program and enrolled in university. The results of this study will provide new understandings and promote dialogue with respect to early entrance to university program development, Transition Program improvement, program replication, and future research on education for highly gifted learners.
Gifted Education Context

The Transition Program as an identifiable program for academically highly gifted adolescents represents a lighthouse project for gifted education in British Columbia and Canada. Historically, school districts have found it extremely difficult to create programs for this student population despite the articulation of gifted education as part of Special Education policy in all provinces of Canada. In earlier decades, British Columbia explored the introduction of full-time classes for gifted students (Gibbon, 1981; Hunter, 1981; Kettle, 1985). These classes have been historically referred to as "major works programs". However unlike Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and London, Ontario, where such programs were initiated in the 1930s and continue to the present day, full-time classes were discontinued in British Columbia in the late 1960s.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, a more open climate for gifted education developed in Vancouver as a result of the combined influence of the parents' organization, The Gifted Children's Association of BC, the work of the members of Vancouver's Representative District Advisory Committee for Gifted Education, including a small number of enrichment teachers and school administrators, and the support of a number of school trustees and senior management officials in the Vancouver School Board. These factors, together with exceptional leadership, contributed to the inception of Vancouver's current gifted education initiatives including the Transition Program. For example, Vancouver's Elementary Gifted Enrichment Education model was approved by the Vancouver School Board one year after the establishment of the Transition Program and currently serves over 1500 elementary students annually.

Nonetheless, gifted education remains a politically contentious issue, one which critics describe as elitist. This claim is supported by the assumption that these students neither need nor deserve society's support or assistance. Whether it is the smallness of this student population, the lack of training and knowledge about students with gifted abilities within teacher training programs, education systems and the general public, or the invisible nature of the needs of these students, programs for gifted students are not a high priority for school districts. Current educational philosophies of inclusion and neighborhood schools are often interpreted unilaterally without acknowledging that the least restrictive environment for the gifted learner is rarely the regular classroom. Common sense dictates that the more "academically developmentally advanced" (Keating, 1991, p.70) the individual student, the greater the extent to which the individual's educational needs require differentiated curriculum and instruction. The delivery system for mass education is severely tested by children who enter kindergarten reading six or more grades above their age peers (Gifted Education Primary Referral, 2001). Often there is a reluctance to recognize that these children have advanced their academic skills and understandings through their own efforts and as a result of a curiosity fueled by the ease and speed with which they can process new and increasingly more complex information. While it is the articulated role of the education system to provide an appropriate and on-going response to each child's developmental learning needs, in the reality of schools and classrooms it continues to be difficult to identify and respond to learning needs that are atypical, often invisible and not readily met within standardized age-grade curriculums. The most common practice is to provide gifted students with some enrichment opportunities, which are added to, and often an extension of the delivery of the regular curriculum in the classroom as time and opportunity permit.

Funding for gifted education is critical to the development of appropriate programs for this student population. As it is for all areas of special needs students, funding is targeted to learning
needs, which cannot be met in the regular classroom setting. When the understanding of gifted student needs and the creative responses appropriate to these needs are not matched with the political will to address them, the result is limited support and therefore limited funding for gifted education programs and services. It is, therefore, very important to have exemplars available to highlight the needs of gifted students and to demonstrate the most effective ways in which they can be supported in the education system. Just as seven year old Justin Chapman, described as having successfully participated in first year university coursework, raises interesting questions when he makes a presentation to educators on age discrimination at the National Association for Gifted Children Conference (Chapman & Silverman, 2000), the Transition Program stands as an important example of the type of educational practices that can support academically highly gifted adolescents. Through its existence, the Transition Program encourages the practice of academic acceleration, enrichment, curriculum compacting with differentiated instructional strategies and grouping of similarly developmentally advanced peers to optimize learning for this student population. It also affirms the usefulness of a well-organized identification of the exceptional abilities and talents of all secondary students in Vancouver, as well as surrounding school districts. Transition Program graduates, through their choices of career paths, inform us about the range of contributions they will be able to offer society in their future roles as citizens and leaders. Concerns that gifted education is for the privileged and that it will increase the socio-economic inequalities in our society are eased by the integrity and commitment to learning and helping others displayed by many of these students who represent a range of cultural, ethnic and socio-economic groups within our society. By embodying the standards for gifted education programs developed by The Association for the Gifted (1989) the Transition Program is important, not only for the service it provides for students, but also for the model of best practices for gifted students that it exemplifies for secondary schools in British Columbia and Canada.

Motivation for Program Development

Examining the Transition Program from the perspective of why it was developed is important. Answers to the why question can contribute to our efforts to understand the decisions that have guided the program's evolution. These understandings are also helpful when considering how the Transition Program functions within the context of educational programs within the school system.

According to Shadish, Cook and Leviton (1991) educational programs are social interventions within a larger social problem-solving context. From this perspective it is possible to ask the following question. For what social need or problem is the Transition Program a solution? The answers to this question help to describe the Transition Program within the school system as well as within educational policy-making.

To begin to address this question it is necessary to clarify current understandings of the concept of giftedness and specifically to articulate the educational needs of academically gifted adolescents. The ways in which the needs of this student population are understood should be reflected in the program's structure and functioning. The priority society places on addressing the needs of these students should be evident in how the program is valued, developed and supported, whether by its students, their parents, the staff, professional associations,
management, institutional representatives or members of the community. The program's struggles to develop and improve services for students reveal both a process of social change and the ways in which this program may influence how this student population will be nurtured through future education program development.

The above question also suggests that the program's integrity should be measured by the coherence of its elements with respect to student needs. This coherence should be evident throughout the program's structures, for example, identification system, goals, curriculum, recognition and rewards. In addition to orienting the program's structures, the understanding of student needs should be apparent in how the program delivers instruction, support, counseling and evaluation and how it communicates with students and parents. It is through this lens of students' needs that a deeper understanding of the Transition Program and the complex challenges inherent in its delivery, improvement, and evolution can be brought to the surface and made available for discussion. It is hoped that this study can contribute to on-going dialogue among staff, current and alumni students and their parents as well as program management and institutional partners in order to encourage development of a "communiversity" (Marland, 1971). Community articulation of new challenges can stimulate the generation of more creative responses to increasingly more interesting and more complex questions about learning and the development of talent and abilities of young people.

**Rationale for the Study of an Innovative Program**

The establishment of an early entrance to university program for academically gifted adolescents can be seen as a unique accomplishment of educational leadership involving institutional partnerships, flexible governance and a shared commitment to academically gifted young people. The story of the program's development and implementation represents an intense and demanding learning journey for its students, parents, staff, planners and administration. As an educational innovation it has moved from conception through various phases of implementation in response to the demands and understandings generated by the pioneering efforts of participants. These efforts have provided the program with a rich legacy of tales of extraordinary perseverance and sensitive problem management. It is also a narrative of organizational learning wherein individuals examine educational philosophies and long standing practices in the face of both new challenges and evolving understandings.

This study examines why this educational innovation developed and how it has both challenged and contributed to the education "conversation" where parents and students and educators variously act as policy makers, policy interpreters, program implementers and consumers. Throughout the program's history, the voices of students and their parents, staff, administration and program planners have played an important role in demanding improvements that have transformed the program's structure and clarified its goals.
The Uniqueness of the Transition Program

The VSB/UBC Transition Program is unique in a number of ways. It is the first program of its kind in British Columbia and Canada. Secondly, it was designed to meet the needs of a specific group of students within a statistically rare and commonly misunderstood population, namely, the academically developmentally advanced adolescent. These are academically gifted students who choose to seek early entrance to university. Thirdly, the program has evolved within a tri-institutional partnership involving the Vancouver School Board, the University of British Columbia, and the British Columbia Ministry of Education. The program is also noteworthy in that collaborative efforts among educators, students and their parents have profoundly influenced the flexibility of the program and its responsiveness to specific student needs.

The student clients of this program, the academically highly gifted adolescents who are ready for advanced levels of study and who are motivated by the desire to achieve early entrance to university, have been described as intellectually underserved (Gross, 2000; Keating, 1991). All secondary schools are responsible for providing programs that meet the educational needs of their students. Many schools have programs or accommodations that address the enrichment needs of motivated and highly able but not specifically gifted students. For example, a range of enriched and honors courses, Advanced Placement (Grade 12) courses, academic competitions, electives and extra-curricular activities is commonly available in BC secondary schools. Acceleration has been informally available within disciplines on a case by case basis (e.g., mathematics, languages). Some secondary schools offer specific alternate programs at the junior grades (8, 9, 10) in which the curriculum is enriched and in some instances is presented so that three years of study within a discipline can be completed in two years. Some schools offer mini-schools which operate as a school within a school, where one class per grade affords a smaller school setting and the traditional academic focus is augmented by community service, citizenship activities, enrichment, and extensive field trips. The International Baccalaureate Program (IB) which consists of a preparatory year in Grade 10 and a two-year program of challenging courses in Grade 11 and 12 offers an internationally developed curriculum for age/grade appropriate students. While these programs and opportunities attract gifted students they are not specifically designed to address the developmental and educational needs of academically gifted students or to support their goals of early entrance to university. Their program coordinators typically look for a diverse group of applicants that demonstrate above average achievement and are age/grade appropriate but not specifically gifted (Specified District Alternative Head Teacher Meeting, November, 2000). While discussions with program coordinators about the needs of gifted students are ongoing, it remains up to the individual student to negotiate accommodations within courses and programs. There appear to be no other programs in Canada that have been developed specifically for this student population who share a commitment to the goal of early entrance to university. In practice, the Transition Program is assisting a group of students who are the most intellectually underserved within the secondary schools of the province.

Critical to the Transition Program's development and implementation has been the need to develop a better understanding of the nature and needs of the participating student population, and to translate these understandings into practices that enable gifted adolescents to achieve their goals of early entrance to university. Discussions with representatives of participating stakeholders elucidate why this program of intensive study is attractive to these students and why
the opportunity to enter university early is so compelling. Students offer insights into how they make sense of their experiences, how they reflect upon their choices in making further decisions about study and careers, and how they wish to live meaningful lives. Out of respect for the motivation, courage, and efforts of these students, the program design and delivery has remained open to improvements that support the various ways in which students learn, both as a group of exceptional ability students and as individuals with both unique strengths that need development and other areas that require special assistance and support. The development of effective teaching and learning practices has demanded a conscientious examination of the different ways in which these students learn and develop and change. Understandings related to these questions have been explored through gifted education literature as well as best practices.

Both theoretical studies and current practice recognize that the development and implementation of effective teaching-learning practices for this student population are not readily available within mainstream education. Special educational practices for gifted students have often been stigmatized by labels of elitism or dismissed as radical, challenging, as they do, many traditional views of teaching and learning. Teaching to, and learning with, gifted students requires more than the modification of current educational practices; what seems to be required is the introduction of practices that more closely match the different ways in which each student learns and develops. This study speaks to the uniquely different needs of the academically developmentally advanced or gifted adolescent and discusses how these needs can be understood and addressed in general education practice.

Research Design Considerations

The research process is designed to be sensitive to the goal of the study, to the voices of participants, particularly the student population who participated in the developmental journey of the program, and the field of gifted education. The goal of the study is to develop a deeper understanding of the complexity of the implementation issues of the Transition Program and to illustrate the problem framing and problem solving which modified it over the course of its nine years of operation. Identification and articulation of the issues impacting program development require an understanding of the program events, including perspectives of people involved in the program experiences, and how related program decisions have been made. Listening to the voices of participants involved in a program that is focused on meeting the needs of a statistically rare population (recognized as special needs learners within the policies of the British Columbia Ministry of Education) requires a methodology that appropriately represents the range, diversity and different needs of the students.

The depth of understanding that is important for the purposes of this study as well as future research and program evaluation and replication is facilitated by multiple data gathering methods. Turner, Hartman, Nielsen and Lombana (1988) suggest that multiple data gathering methods afford closer communication with program participants, build trust in the findings, and allow the researcher to engage with participants in different ways, which increases an understanding of the project and the questions under discussion. Data from a variety of approaches also allow for the voices of more of the participants to be encountered, recognized and valued. These different opinions complement one another as the study describes the
program's effects and ensures that issues of stakeholders influence recommendations for future study and improved practice (Silky & Readling, 1992).

Researchers in gifted education also point out that programs for gifted students present a number of unique and specific challenges. Program goals are often complex and individualized, standardized measures are ineffective, and behavioral objectives have been too vague, narrow and otherwise inappropriate for this population (Tomlinson, Bland, & Moon, 1993). Tomlinson (1993) cautions that there is a tendency to view program success in terms of student attainment of higher test scores and to focus on short-term goals, failing to recognize the long-term goals of the program. Although quantitative designs can provide information about outcomes of the program—such as students’ GPA, scholarships, and academic careers within university settings—it is important also to use qualitative measures. This is especially significant in a program that has undergone massive reorganization and is still considered to be in the implementation stage of its development. Outcome data are more commonly associated with program evaluation, which focuses on decisions based on a program's worth or merit. Qualitative approaches "assist in understanding the processes in which gifted learners and their teachers are involved, help in establishing meaningful hypotheses for further study, and avoid the error of oversimplification of complex settings and procedures" (Tomlinson, Bland, & Moon, 1993, p.181). For example, Janesick (1989) recommends collecting three kinds of data: baseline data about the research setting, process data which describe what happens, and values data which yield information about stakeholders' perceptions regarding what is important. The use of multiple data gathering methods including, in this case, document analysis, surveys, focus groups, and interviews with various groups and individuals representing current students and program graduates and their parents, staff, administration, program planners and members of the Transition Program Steering Committee, provides access to the complex range of perspectives and understandings of participants involved in programs for gifted adolescents.

A related consideration of the research design is gifted education's marginal position in relation to the field of education and educational policy-making. Borland (1996) has described gifted education as a field of practice that traditionally depends on the disciplines of psychology and the other social sciences to generate knowledge to inform the practice of working with able students. He also points out that as a field, gifted education is not well represented in mainstream educational literature. Research on gifted education programs has been limited, and critical concepts have not penetrated society's conversations about education. In addition, gifted education has typically challenged traditional education structures and embedded beliefs about how schooling is organized and delivered, how students learn and what they are ready to learn. Contributing to this marginal status of gifted education are popular understandings of giftedness, which are often misinformed and based on myths and stereotypes. The misinformation and myths of the popular culture are often linked to perceptions that programs for gifted students are elitist. It is important, therefore, that the research on the Transition Program's development includes the perspectives of those affected by their participation in the program to demonstrate how the program meets the needs of this particular population, and show that these needs are significantly different from typical students and hence cannot be addressed in a regular classroom.
Research Methodology

In light of these research design considerations a variety of research methodologies was used. First a narrative of the program's evolution was constructed. Using historical documents from the program's records, including notes, memos, meeting minutes, enhanced by information obtained through interviews with the range of program decision-makers and participants, the story is told of how the program came to be established and how the perceptions and issues surrounding the program emerged over time.

Secondly a combination of survey, focus groups and interviews was designed to examine how program students, parents, staff and administration as well as program planners and developers have viewed the program from their various experiences and perspectives. An initial survey was sent to current students and program graduates, and their parents as well as to staff and administration and Steering Committee members. Focus groups and special meetings and interviews were used to follow up with representatives from these groups and to obtain in greater detail their perspectives on their experiences with the Transition Program.

The combination of these aspects of the research design extends understanding of the Transition Program's framework, current operation and future potential. Elements critical to program improvement are identified through patterns of struggles and successes which emerge as the record of the program's operation unfolds. The examination of the program from the various perspectives of those who have lived the program experience is facilitated through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Both aspects of the research design complement one another and together provide an understanding of the Transition Program which can serve stakeholder groups who are committed to program improvement and future development as well as the development of alternative programs and services for this particular student population.

Practitioner as Researcher

An added contribution to this study is information about the role of practitioner as researcher. While this duality of roles highlights issues of objectivity, administrative confidence, autonomy, balance and potential for utilization, it also brings to the research activity the benefit of a familiarity and understanding of the program concept, setting, and development. Interactions between the processes of research and practice decrease concerns about objectivity and facilitate administrative confidence in the authenticity of the story as presented in the study. Combining the stance of researcher and the stance of practitioner has increased problem sensing. Usher, Bryant, and Johnston (1997) describe reflection in action as "a practice of generating theory, which speaks back to and revises action" (p.145). The opportunity to use theory to inform and to alter thinking about practice, to explain practice through the lenses afforded by theory and to see the limitations of theory and the variability of practice within these contexts has significantly influenced the program's development.

As a practitioner researcher, I have been involved in the development and implementation of the Transition Program since its inception. In addition I am a member of the first cohort of an innovative doctoral program in educational leadership and policy at The University of British
Columbia where I am simultaneously completing this study and working for the Vancouver School Board with responsibilities for gifted education (K-12) as well as the early entrance to university program. I am therefore uniquely positioned to discuss the dynamic interplay between theory and practice as issues and concerns for the Transition Program have arisen and been resolved during the course of both programs. Doing research in action and on action has enriched my experience of program development and stimulated the research process that seeks to understand the phenomenon. Similarities between the intensive learning experiences of the Transition Program students and my own combined study and work program are also acknowledged.

To limit potential researcher practitioner bias the historical narrative of the Transition Program has been reviewed by three educators involved in the program's administration and management over the course of its development. The integrity of the program's story has also been strengthened by having three members of the Transition Program's Representational Steering Committee including a Transition Program parent, a university professor and a representative from the Gifted Children's Association of British Columbia review the written discussion.

Organization of the Study

From its original conception as part of a secondary school operation, the Transition Program has been reframed as a pre-university program and relocated to the UBC campus. The process by which the program's conceptual framework and infrastructure have been modified is illustrated through the narrative describing the program's evolution and is referenced through literature on early entrance to university programs and the research on the nature and learning needs of gifted students. Throughout the implementation of the Transition Program, decisions at three levels, namely, policy interpretation, program leadership and teaching practices, have resulted in changes that have significantly influenced the program's development and stakeholders' experiences.

The focus of this study is to enhance an understanding of the program's development according to its mandate, which seeks to address the needs of a unique student population as effectively, comprehensively, and flexibly as possible. The study has two phases. The first phase is an historical narrative of the Transition Program's development and a detailed description of its implementation. Based on original documents, interviews and personal notes, the historical narrative traces the development of this innovation and describes how the current program model has articulated and responded to student needs. Building upon this narrative, the second phase surveys and reports the views and expectations of students, parents, and staff. These various perspectives are used to enhance an understanding of how and why the program developed as it did, and how its participants variously responded to a wide range of expectations and needs to arrive at the current delivery model. The discussion of the study examines what has been learned from the experiences within the Transition Program and how these understandings can contribute to program improvements, more sensitive educational policies for the highly gifted and further development of intra-institutional multi-level programs.

The historical narrative is preceded in Chapter Two by a review of recent literature about the concept of giftedness. Current research is examined which speaks to the definitions of academic
giftedness and the educational and developmental needs of academically gifted adolescents interested in early entrance to university. Research on best practices with respect to addressing the needs of a gifted student population is followed by a review of studies on early entrance to university programs. This section also includes a discussion of educational policy-making in British Columbia as it relates particularly to gifted education.

Chapter 3 describes the evolution of the Transition Program, including its phases of development and political origins based on historical documents and interviews with key participants. It articulates the program's structure, including governance and funding. It describes the struggles of staff and administration as they sought to discern how gifted students learn and to refine program elements so that they might better serve student needs and program goals. The narrative illustrates the increasing clarity and coherence that gradually developed with respect to the program's conceptual framework and program delivery practices. It describes how the unique aspects of the program emerged and how the program has built on these unique elements to support on-going improvements. Program development is discussed in terms of critical ideas and catalytic events that influence the implementation of this innovative program particularly in the areas of policy, leadership and teaching decisions.

Chapter 4 examines the perspectives of participants who experienced the program at different stages and from different roles and responsibilities. The voices of participants provide perspectives that complement the program narrative by looking at the program experience from the inside out. The chapter summarizes the data collected through the questionnaires, focus groups and interviews that took place during the course of the study. The survey was designed to elicit information about how student needs were originally conceived, and how these needs were subsequently addressed in the program. It included questions about the perceived effects of the program, its critical elements, what constituted success for students in the program and how the program might be improved. The survey was sent to all students who had spent a minimum of one full year in the program as of November 1999 (n=114). It was also sent to parents, members of the original planning committee, the current Steering Committee, program staff and liaison university professors. Following the survey, two focus groups of current program parents and one focus group of program graduates were conducted to elicit more detailed and in-depth responses to some of the questions presented in the survey. Specific issues included what the program experience contributed to the lives of the students, the decision-making related to entering, continuing, or not continuing in the program, and how both students and their parents defined success and what they anticipated would be gained from the program experience. Interviews were also held with individual parents, administrators, current students and program graduates to clarify their perspectives on particular aspects of the program. The information from the survey, focus groups and interviews extended understanding of students' needs and provided more detail with respect to the struggles that characterized efforts to address these needs. The diversity of various student and parent perspectives has shed more light on the complexity of issues and needs that have influenced program development. The perceptions of students, parents, and staff who have experienced the program at different stages of its implementation are discussed in relationship to the program's evolution.

The final chapter discusses the learning process within the Transition Program and what has been learned about the program from the perspective of three critical elements: leadership, teaching and policy. The link between innovative practice and educational policy-making is discussed in reference to the program's development and the larger question of the purpose of education.
These reflections underscore that it is the values embedded in the principles that guide educational policy-making which need to be held up to the light of our collective understanding. As educators concerned with the future of our society, we can use this understanding to refine our educational practices so that they more clearly demonstrate our respect for the needs of all learners, including the highly academically gifted learners. This respect for the needs of all learners suggests that we are responsible for the kind of action advocated by Hannah Ahrendt (1958), an action described as moral decision-making. Our moral agency requires that we weave the fabric of educational change in service of a future global community characterized by shared peace and well-being. As this pattern of change manifests respect for the unique needs of individual learners it will generate flexible program designs that encourage the expression of the diversity of gifts and talents of our youth regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity or socio-economic backgrounds. Not only does the Transition Program substantiate student outcomes characterized by advanced achievement levels, higher motivation and interest in learning, and long term educational and career attainments, but it also suggests that "effective attention to developmental diversity could then well become a model for education for all children, not just for the developmentally advanced" (Keating, 1991, p. 81).

The study concludes with a discussion of critical issues and the pattern of strengths and unmet needs of academically gifted students that have emerged over the course of the program's development. Recommendations for current and future developers of programs for academically gifted students follow from this discussion. These recommendations relate to Transition Program improvement and replication with suggestions for a broader array of programs and services for academically gifted students in secondary schools and post-secondary institutions in BC. Future program initiatives to serve the needs of the academically gifted learners within the Transition Program as well as the larger community of secondary schools are also highlighted. The study ends by encouraging more support for educational innovations that respond to the developmentally unique needs of all students, and a commitment to on-going short term as well as longitudinal research on the Transition Program and its graduates.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE

"Giftedness is arguably the most precious natural resource a civilization can have."
R. J. Sternberg

"Talent is elusive, fragile, manifold, scintillating—like aurora borealis on a cool September evening."
J. Hersey

"Why aren't you asking the really important question: what does it mean to be gifted?"
Transition Program Graduate
Comment on the Survey

Conceptions of Giftedness

The term gifted is commonly used to describe students with exceptional abilities. However, the term has also been criticized because it implies that exceptional abilities or aptitudes are given from some source. In some respects it is the sense of something being given to some but not all that has contributed to negative attitudes toward those who possess exceptional abilities. Related to this perspective is the assumption that the achievements of such individuals have resulted from having innate ability as opposed to having applied intensive effort. This idea is especially prevalent with academic abilities where the talent is not readily visible, its development is not well understood and there is little understanding of the personal challenges faced by the individual who is ultimately responsible for expressing his or her exceptional abilities. It is therefore important to address the understanding of the term gifted from a broader perspective so that its use may be de-mystified and become less problematic and so that attention can be usefully focused on the educational developmental needs of this student population.

Cultural Attitudes Toward Giftedness

Hunsaker (1995) has suggested that many of the problems that face educators who are providing education for the gifted are the result of cultural attitudes towards individuals who display exceptional ability, and not the result of the educational implications of the term. From his review of cultural attitudes toward exceptional individuals from early civilizations including Sub-Saharan Africa, Egypt, the Middle East, China, Meso-America, Greece, Rome, and Renaissance Europe, he identifies five themes for examination: (1) diversity of gifts (2) sources of giftedness (3) development of gifts (4) distribution of gifts and (5) attitudes toward giftedness.
In relation to the diversity of gifts, Hunsaker (1995) postulates that "what is considered as gifted behavior is culturally embedded and is usually linked to what a society sees as necessary for its survival" (p. 262). Noting how Tannenbaum (1983) categorized human abilities into four types specifically related to society's perceived survival needs: scarcity talents essential for future survival (e.g. leadership); quota talents for day-to-day survival (e.g. medical skills); surplus talents which beautify (e.g. artistic abilities); and, anomalous talents that entertain us, Hunsaker concludes that each society must take responsibility for how it defines the exceptional abilities that it needs to survive.

Hunsaker's second theme focuses on sources of giftedness. He indicates that most cultures view the source of giftedness as external to an individual, often as a gift from God. Modern society tends to view the source as a genetic gift, though the powerful influence of environment upon the development of talent is also widely recognized. While some abilities are readily recognizable, there are many more cases of giftedness that are identified because the environment has focused attention on the search for giftedness in individuals. For example, in countries or cultures such as Israel where young people are considered the nation's greatest natural resource (Herman, 1999), the education system places a priority on offering extensive support for the identification and development of talent and abilities to the highest possible levels.

Hunsaker's third theme examines how special abilities are developed. The responsibility for developing human abilities has been viewed differently over time and cultures. For example, the current perspective in British Columbia is that the development of an individual's abilities is the responsibility of the home, school, and society, as well as the individual. The achievement of giftedness, according to Hunsaker (1995), is a "label for history to bestow; the educational responsibility is simply to develop the talents that are there" (p. 264). This perspective is important because it clarifies for students, their parents and teachers that the education system is not responsible for how the achievements of an individual may be received by society. Equipping the student to be an effective learner, providing opportunities for the development of talents, and supporting the productivity of the student are among the ways in which school systems can serve students. It is the work of the partnership between the school and the home together with the ongoing support and encouragement of society that are responsible for the development of abilities of our youth.

Hunsaker next examines beliefs about the distribution of exceptional abilities. Early cultures often linked perceived giftedness to social status and gender. Today's North American society tends to regard the special education of students with gifted potential as elitist despite extensive research that has shown that students possessing gifted abilities are found in all cultures, all socioeconomic levels and among both males and females. The result is an on-going political struggle between excellence and equity. Providers of gifted education emphasize the importance of addressing the educational needs of all students. Potential abilities that are not developed are at risk of being lost to the society that needs them (Clark, 1988). Alternatively, the damage to an individual who is denied the service may result in a cost to society. Clearly the identification of abilities is not an end goal in itself, just as having gifted potential is not commendable in itself. It is the development of these abilities and the intensive work that is required to develop abilities to their highest levels that deserve recognition and support.

Finally, Hunsaker comments on attitudes toward giftedness, including the educational implications of cultural attitudes toward giftedness within societies. He re-emphasizes that the
term gifted is a culturally embedded term used to refer to people’s abilities and our attitudes toward them. He suggests that the considerable knowledge that has developed in both the psychology and physiology of human abilities has begun to affect our thinking about giftedness. In order for giftedness to be culturally valued it is important to educate society about human abilities and the kinds of educational needs that must be met if those abilities are to be developed and actualized. It is this conversation about development of abilities and talents within and across all groups and societies which can generate understandings and support for those individuals throughout all societies who are challenged to find expression for their talents in ways that are satisfying to them and others.

Educating society about human abilities needs to be supported by a clear understanding of giftedness. Sternberg and Davidson in Conceptions of Giftedness (1986) provide a comprehensive review of various conceptions of giftedness, concluding that giftedness “is something we invent and something we discover. It is what one society or another wants it to be” (p.3). The ways in which we conceptualize giftedness, therefore, can change over time and place. The reality test which society applies to a definition of giftedness is usefulness. “If the definition of giftedness does not include utility, valuable talents may be wasted, and less valuable ones fostered and encouraged. It is thus important to us all to understand just what it is we and others mean by the concept of giftedness” (Sternberg & Davidson. 1986, p.3).

One of the educational implications of the concept of giftedness as a representation of the values of a particular culture at a particular time in history is that it allows for a degree of plasticity and fluidity in the interpretation of the term, thus encouraging flexibility in the way in which gifted education practices are developed. It suggests that there is no one right way to define giftedness or to approach the identification and programming for gifted students. This is important because it invites educators to consider alternative approaches to these issues in practice, focusing primarily on the question of how the education system can nurture special talents of young people.

Definitions of Giftedness

The ways in which society views giftedness have been substantially influenced by developments in psychology during the past century. Francis Galton’s belief that madness accompanies genius was challenged with the development of the Stanford Binet Intelligence Test, which Lewis Terman used to launch his landmark study of over 1000 gifted children in 1916. Terman's study marked the birth of the traditional category-based model of gifted education. The conceptual basis for this model of gifted education is the general mental ability construct (Hoge, 1988; Hoge & Cudmore, 1986). This view assumes a “clear and unified category of gifted children, most readily identified as individuals scoring high on tests of general intellectual ability such as IQ” (Keating, 1991, p. 54). According to this model, general intellectual ability offers the broadest operational definition of giftedness and the most defensible approach to identification. It also claims that stable and replicated empirical findings offer support for the robustness of the "g" factor of intelligence. The assumption follows that this kind of intelligence requires special educational programming.
The most common form of programming to flow from the traditional category-based model of
gifted education is enrichment. Enrichment is a form of curriculum modification that has been
designed to broaden student experiences and extend thinking within a discipline. Enrichment is
generally associated with more interesting approaches to curriculum and instruction and more
varied resources. While it is appropriate for all students and provides stimulating learning
experiences for those with above average abilities, it is a necessary but insufficient response to
the educational needs of the academically highly advanced or gifted student. The more advanced
the student, the greater the need for curriculum and instruction that is conceptually complex,
focused on patterns and relationships within and across disciplines, and presented in ways that
are both more flexible and faster-paced than can be offered in the typical classroom.

Historically the category-based model of gifted education has been useful in “calling attention to
the reality of significant developmental advancement [of gifted students]. Documentation of the
extent and range of this diversity has provided the groundwork for arguments that education
must be differentiated” (Keating, 1991, p.70). Given the categorical structure for special
education funding across Canada, school boards and agencies have readily encoded the category-
based definition of gifted education into their documents. As a result, today there are many
Canadian school boards that acknowledge the need to accommodate gifted students (Keating,
1991, p. 70). This is not to say that there are many school districts that are actually funding
gifted education programs, except in Ontario where gifted education is mandated.

There is a range of problems with the category-based view of gifted education. There is little
agreement on the theoretical interpretation of the "g" factor and little research to validate the
construct of general intelligence as an enduring trait of an individual. A related corollary, the
notion that general intellectual ability is developmentally fixed rather than plastic, is not
corroborated by recent research (Frasko, 2001; Keating, 1991; Rea, 2001; Ritchhart, 2001). The
category-based model of giftedness calls for a cut-off score, which cannot be justified on
theoretical grounds. Also it is difficult to use this definition to determine specific educational
needs of identified students.

While there is considerable disagreement about how to uncover the sources of observed
differences in cognitive performance, it should be emphasized that there is consensus on the
reality of the observed differences (Keating, 1991). The existence of students who demonstrate
abilities well beyond the range expected according to age is undisputed.

Another important contribution to the concept of giftedness came from the work of Guilford in
the 1950s (Guilford, 1967). Guilford’s factor analysis of intelligence led to the Structure of
Intellect (SOI) model, which he presented to the American Psychological Association at their
annual conference in 1957. The SOI model identified divergent production, subsequently
referred to by others as “creativity”, as a specific component of intelligence. The recognition of
creativity as one aspect of intelligence opened the door to the consideration of an array of
complex psychological factors, for example, motivation, emotional development, risk-taking,
resilience, curiosity and tolerance for ambiguity.

More recent work in the area of creativity recognized that divergent production is only one
aspect of creativity and other factors that are not as clearly measurable by standardized tests are
equally important. Such factors include originality, elaboration, fluency and flexibility of
thinking. The Osborne-Parne’s Creative Problem Solving Model (Parnes, 1967), for example,
illustrates that creative thinking must be used in combination with critical analysis for productive thinking about complex problems to occur.

A broadening of the understanding of giftedness has taken place during the intervening decades searching both to identify a larger talent pool as well as to develop a closer match between program goals and definitions of giftedness (Clark, 1997; Davis & Rimm, 1997; Gallagher & Gallagher, 1994). One example of the broadening of the definition of giftedness is the work of Gardner (1997) who is best known for his theory of multiple intelligences which defines different ways in which a person can display giftedness: logical/mathematical, musical/rhythmic, verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, body/kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal. A different perspective is described by Sternberg's "triarchic theory of intellectual giftedness" (Sternberg, 1985, p. 223). Sternberg describes how intelligence functions in relationship to three variables: (1) an individual's internal mechanisms, (2) an individual's experience in using or applying this intelligence, and (3) the solving of problems that are meaningful from the perspective of the individual's culture or frame of reference. In a search for a more practical definition Renzulli (1986) generated a three-ringed definition of giftedness based on above average but not necessarily superior intelligence, creativity, and task commitment. His definition highlighted the importance of student production as a demonstration of giftedness and a measure of giftedness. The work of these and other researchers has identified different perspectives and features of giftedness. As a result the term is no longer narrowly measured in terms of an intelligence quotient. A number of leading researchers in the field now call for multiple measures for the identification of giftedness (Clark, 1996; Gallagher & Gallagher, 1994; VanTassel-Baska, 1984 & 1998). These various contributions to the discussion of the definition of giftedness are useful as programs move from legislated conceptual definitions of giftedness to the operational definitions that are expressed in identification processes and procedures.

The usefulness of the definition of giftedness was put into perspective in the United States by a grant-supported study which produced the National Report on Identification of Giftedness (Richert, Alvino, & McDonnel, 1986). This report, based on input from over forty researchers in the field, recommended that any identification system for giftedness should be comprehensive, defensible and equitable. Critical elements of an identification plan included multiple kinds and sources of data related to key elements of abilities, skills, creativity and motivation. The broadened definition of giftedness has thus moved the identification of giftedness from the snapshot view of ability as measured by IQ to the development of a student profile based on a variety of sources and kinds of data. A significant contribution to the student profile in ideal circumstances is a psycho-educational assessment where a psychologist administers and interprets results from various assessment tools and other data including developmental history, student interview, teacher observations, and samples of student work. In consultation with other professionals a student profile is constructed. Students' cognitive, academic and creative potential and performance are explored together with student interests, learning style preferences, and goals in order to articulate areas of student strengths versus areas of lesser strengths. The combination of standardized assessment instruments and curriculum-based assessment used to describe achievement and performance suggest a range of learning trajectories for the student in terms of academic growth. These trajectories are based on the baseline of learning outcomes described for each subject and grade level according to the Ministry of Education. The result is a clarification of learning needs based on current achievement and future goals and an examination of program options that would be most satisfying and useful for the student.
Johns Hopkins' Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth identified another aspect of this process. Analyzed data are presented to both student and parents and a counseling approach supports them in understanding how to interpret the information and implications for career paths and program options. Students supported by parents have opportunities to explore these options by visiting programs, enrolling in short courses and developing long-term plans related to personal goals and career interests. The counseling component is an important element since it places students in the position of ownership of choices and encourages them to view programs as opportunities to achieve goals. Engaging students in the development of their talents and abilities and achievement of related educational goals occurs as a result of a dynamic link between definition of giftedness, identification process and programs. The process of working to articulate the nature, needs and options for a student who is challenged to develop his or her potential giftedness requires practitioners as well as psychologists trained in gifted education and sensitive to the intensity and the struggles of the gifted learner.

**Definition of Giftedness in British Columbia**

Today British Columbia’s Ministry of Education defines gifted students as follows:

Gifted and/or talented students are those students who possess demonstrated or potential abilities which are extraordinary and which lie beyond the ability levels anticipated or expected within the regular programs. Their capabilities are prolonged and may be demonstrated as general intellectual, creative and specific academic. Capability may also be demonstrated in the areas of leadership and the visual/performing arts. Gifted learners often demonstrate outstanding abilities in more than one area. Many talented children, however, also exhibit cognitive weaknesses or learning disabilities. They should not be expected to have strengths in all areas of intellectual functioning. (Special Education Policy Manual, 1995, E-17.)

The Ministry provides funding for students receiving services under this definition within Function 1.32 of the Fiscal Management System to a maximum of 2% of district enrollment.

The above definition describes the parameters within which school districts are expected to identify potential abilities in students and to develop programs and services that respond to these students’ specific developmental and educational needs. The definitions used by specific program models must be based on the provincial definition and must demonstrate the link between identification procedures and program delivery.

Given this general policy definition from the Ministry of Education, who are the students that are described as academically gifted? In addition to demonstrating exceptional general intellectual abilities, these students must be demonstrating specific aptitudes and skills in academic areas. The challenge for school districts is to operationalize the conceptual definition provided by the Ministry of Education using a variety of kinds and sources of student data. This process typically includes achievement measured by standardized tests as well as records such as report cards and awards. The measure of intellectual ability is generally accepted as the learning profile
described as a result of the assessment tools and data collected within the psycho-educational assessment. From this information a student may be identified as a gifted learner; however, the application of abilities to learning tasks and the achievement of learning goals involve other aspects of the individual which are important to consider when moving from the identification of students to program recommendations.

It is helpful to look at a recent view of gifted education, which also has its roots in the landmark Terman (1925) longitudinal study, *Genetic Studies of Genius*. While Terman's work used the intelligence quotient as the defining variable for intellectual giftedness, the decades of follow-up studies on his research population laid the groundwork for more in-depth understanding of the subjective and circumstantial factors that affect the expression and development of giftedness. This more recent conception is referred to as the developmental model, also known as the domain-differentiated developmental model (Matthews, 1997). The model shifts perspectives from the metaphor of abilities to the metaphor of development (Keating, 1991). It focuses attention on how abilities are evoked, sustained, nurtured and brought to bear on the tasks at hand. Giftedness is defined as developmental advancement. The focus is on the way in which cognitive activity becomes integrated with the social-emotional development of the individual over the course of time and experience (Keating, 1991). The developmental model makes fewer assumptions about fixed mental structures, is more defensible because it is linked to curriculum assessment, and aims to provide instruction appropriate to a student’s developmental levels.

The developmental definition of giftedness is well suited to the identification of academically gifted students, the clarification of their educational and developmental needs, and the determination of whether these needs can be best met within the structures of the Transition Program. It helps to describe the process of determining which student profiles match the goals and the structure of the program. It facilitates discussion of the delivery of the program by making explicit how the elements of the program relate to one another. It encourages identification of what the students already know and what they next need to learn and what help or support would be most appropriate for them. It also helps to identify where linkages are weak, not well understood, or lacking in the program's theoretical foundation, thus, promoting discussion of related concerns as well as solution ideas. The developmental model of gifted education will be articulated as part of the Transition Program's conceptual framework in the next chapter.

**Characteristics of Gifted Students**

Characteristics of the academically gifted student have been extensively described in the gifted education literature (Benbow & Stanley, 1983a; Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1983; Feldhusen, Van Tassel-Baska, & Seeley, 1989; Gallagher, 1975; Hollingworth, 1926; Kanevsky, 1999; Renzulli, Smith, White, Callahan, & Hartman, 1976; Tannenbaum, 1983; Torrance, 1975; Witty, 1930). Behavioral characteristics of students who are academically developmentally advanced are typically used to identify students who may benefit from gifted education programs. These characteristics play an important role in the interpretation of student learning needs. It is through an understanding of student learning needs that differentiation of curriculum for the gifted student can be addressed. The behavioral characteristics are linked not only to the cognitive needs but also to the social-emotional and developmental needs of the individual learner.
VanTassel-Baska (1998) offers one example of the relationship of characteristics, learning needs and curriculum for the gifted. It is these derived needs which drive delivery of curriculum content and instruction within gifted education programs. (See Table 1.0.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.0 Needs of Gifted Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>Basic cognitive skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
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<td>Creative thinking</td>
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To be challenged by mastery-level work in areas of strength and interest.
To be challenged by exposure to new areas.
To be challenged by the opportunity to see interrelationships.
To be challenged by experiences that promote understanding of human value systems.
To be challenged through discussions with intellectual peers.
To be challenged by activities at complex levels of thought.
To be challenged through opportunities for divergent production.
To be challenged by the opportunity for real-world problem solving.
To develop organization, time management, and study skills and the habit of sustained effort.
To understand, appreciate, and learn how to use effectively their intensity and sensitivity.
To develop creativity and understand its potential in relation to social responsibility.


Research has also provided a list of student characteristics related to student learning outcomes (Ysseldyke & Christenson, 1987). (See Table 2.0.) When the behavioral characteristics of academically gifted students are organized according to the categories of student characteristics related to student learning outcomes, it is easier to recognize and understand gifted student profiles. The research on student characteristics sheds more light on the complexity of the decision-making involved in identifying and programming for students with unique educational and developmental needs. Student characteristics and student learning outcomes provide lenses that assist in the interpretation of student learning needs and the kinds of programs that would best serve individual students.

Understanding the characteristics of gifted learners has been confounded by popular myths and stereotypes. Misinformation combined with misinterpretation and over-simplification of behaviors of individuals has made the needs of these students less readily available and less understood. Assumptions underlying these myths include ideas such as the following: gifted students are advanced not only cognitively but socially and emotionally, they are all high achievers and able to cope and succeed in a regular classroom environment without assistance or support, and they are good role models for other students (Berger, 1989; World Council for
Gifted and Talented Children, 1997). Researchers have played an important role in debunking popular myths by elucidating how the nature and needs associated with giftedness are manifested through behavioral characteristics and how the experience of giftedness can be understood, for example, through the lenses of gifted students using techniques such as conceptual mapping (Kunkel, Chapa, Patterson & Walling, 1995). Myths and related assumptions have been reframed by research to reveal more clearly the kinds of needs that are common to this student population. Enhanced understandings of the characteristics of gifted learners and their related needs are integral to the development of appropriate educational programs and services and the differentiation of curriculum and instruction.

|| Table 2.0  Student Characteristics Related to Student Learning Outcomes |
|---------------------------------|
| • Cognitive and affective entry behaviors |
| • Abilities (cognitive, psychomotor, psycholinguistic, etc.) |
| • Prior learning or knowledge |
| • Level of skill development |
| • Ability to understand instruction |
| • Motivation |
| • Task persistence |
| • Learning rate |
| • Time needed to learn |
| • Attentional set |
| • Individual differences in locus of control, achievement, motivation, cognitive style, conceptual tempo, anxiety, attribution patterns, attitudes, etc. |
| • Learning styles |
| • Cognitive types |
| • Naturally occurring pupil characteristics (race, sex, physical appearance, etc.) |

Ysseldyke and Christenson, 1987

An extension of the research on the characteristics and nature and needs of gifted learners has been the development of knowledge about special populations within this group. These populations have been identified in terms of degree and kinds of giftedness as well as with respect to other factors such as culture, race, class and gender. Questions have been raised with respect to how identification processes and program delivery have contributed to the under-representation of different populations of gifted students in gifted programs and a range of approaches have been suggested to address this issue (Bernal, 2002; Borland, 1989; Borland, Schnur, & Wright, 2000; Ford, Harris, Tyson & Trotman, 2002; Frasier & Passow, 1994; Frasier, Garcia & Passow, 1995; Kitano & DiJiiosia, 2002).

Research on gifted girls has suggested that girls may be particularly at risk when it comes to talent development, a concern that is important to understand to help programs deal with their commitment to achieve gender balance (Noble, 1994; Reis, 1989; Silverman, 1989). Noble (1989) has categorized barriers to the development of talent in females in terms of three sets of problems: interpersonal obstacles, socio-cultural barriers, and interpersonal factors. Interpersonal obstacles include rejection from family, teachers and peers, and underestimation of abilities by families. Socio-cultural barriers include inadequate academic preparation and double
messages. Interpersonal factors include self-doubt, and disclaiming the label of giftedness. Examples of particular concerns which may impact on girls within the context of the early entrance to university program include math anxiety, inadequate career aspirations and low self-esteem (Kerr, 1994). Kerr (1985) has confirmed that Gilligan's (1982) conclusions about females also apply to gifted girls in that they make life decisions based on relationships rather than on principles and goals, that between the ages of 11 and 17 they are at risk for declining self-esteem and confidence, and that critical events can significantly influence their decisions to achieve and to lead. In order to develop their abilities gifted girls need to take responsibility for the development of their own talents and to accept guidance (Kerr, 1994; Reis, 1995; Noble, 1994). The guidance provided for girls needs to include specific and meaningful explanations about the kind and degree of their giftedness in comparison to areas of lesser abilities. Guidance includes a variety of role models and mentors and the raising of career aspirations through the exploration and development of a wide array of talents (Milgram & Hong, 1997) and extensive career exploration opportunities (Fredrickson, 1986).

From their study of gifted adolescent females Shoffner and Newsome (2001) suggest that gifted adolescents can progress rapidly in identity development and that the process of identity formation is supported by exploration and tentative commitment to career opportunities. They conclude that "exploration of the world of work, one's interests and abilities, and various educational paths toward possible careers should start early for these youth" (Shoffner and Newsome, 2001, p.209). Educational programs play an important part in this process by discussing nontraditional and challenging career options at an early age. Contributing to the development of appropriate educational programs for gifted females is the model of female talent development generated by Noble, Subotnik and Arnold (1996). The model articulates the importance of context and support to the successful development of talent for women.

Research on special populations of gifted students has also shed light on particular combinations of characteristics which influence student achievement. Combinations of characteristics need to be carefully reviewed when students are being considered for acceptance into programs that are exceptionally academically rigorous and fast-paced. Examples of such populations are students who possess particularly outstanding areas of strength and other areas that are relatively less developed albeit in the gifted range. Student profiles may also include issues stemming from English as a Second Language, cultural views about education, and indications of dual exceptionality such as giftedness and learning disabilities. Learning how to deal with both the "invisible gifts" and the "invisible handicaps" which may include aspects of learning differences that act like disabilities is inherently part of the challenge faced by many gifted students (Silverman, 1989).

In addition to characteristics and needs of special populations within gifted students, researchers have focused on developmental aspects of giftedness. Social-emotional development for gifted learners has been explored through Dabrowsky's Theory of Emotional Development known as Positive Disintegration (Nelson, 1995; Piechowski, 1986, 1991, 1998). Through the concept of over-excitabilities, the characteristics of gifted students have been framed as behaviors whose interpretation can change the response metaphor of the student as well as significant others, including educators, from behavior management to talent development. Research has also articulated vulnerabilities associated with the asynchrony experienced by gifted students (Brown, 1984; Powell & Haden, 1984). Examples of internal vulnerabilities include unevenness in development, inner experiences and awarenesses qualitatively different from the norm, and stress
associated with self and others who do not live up to their standards (Roedell, 1984; Silverman, 1993). One of the challenges for gifted students, according to Silverman, is having to deal with the paradox of possessing advanced ability to generalize and anticipate possibilities which can generate greater equilibrium and stability on the one hand, while on the other hand, discovering the greater disequilibrium of practice where rules don't always fit and perceptual miscues can interfere with effectiveness of decision-making. In addition these students can be handicapped by their high capability which sometimes results in unique learning styles that do not allow them to fit well into the behavioral norm of their age peers. Creatively gifted students, for example, can be challenged to understand and develop both their academic strengths as well as their creativity in ways that enhance both (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). It is also common for these students to experience some level of stigma because of their giftedness (Cross, Coleman, & Steward, 1993). Finding positive relationships with both age and ability peers influences how these students see themselves in the world and how they can behave toward themselves and construct positive futures with others (Cross, Coleman, & Steward, 1995). The understanding of giftedness and the opportunity to experience appropriate educational interventions that support their related needs are critical to the positive attitudes these students internalize about their work and their goals (Gallagher, Harradine, & Coleman, 1997; Howard-Hamilton, & Franks, 1995).

The challenges of development that begin early for gifted students are often further exacerbated by the onset of adolescence. Gifted adolescents trying to deal with issues such as perfectionism, high levels of self-criticism, problems in relationships and meeting external expectations of others such as parents and teachers can be at risk for dropping out of school, eating disorders, insomnia, and suicide (Colangelo & Peterson, 1993). As an alternative to hiding giftedness and trying to be like other people, it is recommended that gifted students have a supportive environment that affirms intelligence while exploring affective and social development. Support for heightened emotional sensitivity as well as the differences in construction and organization of their mental structures includes human relations and leadership skills needed for the exercise of their talents (Blackburn & Erickson, 1986) as well as wisdom needed for academic planning (Colangelo & Kerr, 1990), both of which can be significantly lacking for gifted students who are "smarter about coursework than about themselves" (Colangelo & Peterson, 1993, p. 111). Recommended approaches include peer group developmental counseling which differs from the problem solving orientation of regular secondary counseling and involves a trained leader who has knowledge of both gifted adolescence and group dynamics (Colangelo & Peterson, 1993). Within a structured situation that is psychologically safe, where confidences are respected, risk-taking is supported, no grades are given and students are inherently valued as the individuals they are as opposed to their performance, students explore self and typical issues for gifted students.

The way in which students experience their giftedness and respond to its challenges within the context of the other influences in their lives can affect how they thrive and the kind of support they may need in an intense, academically rigorous and fast-paced program (Cross, Coleman, & Steward, 1993; Gallagher, Harradine, & Coleman, 1997; Hollingworth, 1926; Howard-Hamilton & Franks, 1995). Efforts to address these issues within the identification process suggest criteria which include the following: motivation, self-management, parent support, self-esteem, organization abilities, resilience, work ethic, career interests, and openness to reflection on action. An understanding of the complex profiles of characteristics, interests, abilities and needs of the highly academically gifted adolescents is important to the development of identification systems and delivery of programs designed to support realization of their potential.
Educational Practices for Gifted Students

Best practices for the student population identified with abilities in the gifted range are based on educational and developmental needs. Specific program needs of gifted adolescents articulated by Olszewski-Kubilius and Limburg-Weber (1991) include: academic challenge, continuous progress in talent areas, opportunities to preview college studies and college life, opportunities for adult-like work, instrumental and expressive rewards, and social support. (See Table 3.0).

Practices that respond to the needs of gifted learners require differentiation of the standard curriculum in terms of content, processes, instructional approaches, products and learning environment. Differentiation is designed to support students' learning styles, learning goals and learning needs and has been described in a range of models (Colangelo & Davis, 1991; Feldhusen Van Tassel-Baska & Seeley, 1989; Kanevsky, 1995; Maker, 1982a, 1982b; Maker & Schiever, 1989; Renzulli, 1986; Shore, Cornell, Robinson & Ward, 1991; Ward, 1961).

Maker and Orzechowski-Harland (1993) describe differentiation of curriculum with reference to Berliner (1986) who uses catastrophe theory to suggest that several differences of "degree" are able to affect a difference in "kind". "When several quantitative differences (e.g. in content, process, product, environment) are combined, they result in a different type of curriculum. An appropriate educational program for the gifted is one in which many possibilities for differentiation exist, and several are combined to fit the needs of individual students--resulting in a qualitatively different curriculum" (Maker & Orzechowski-Harland, 1993, p.110). In other words when the content, processes and products of a curriculum are both accelerated and enriched to significant degrees, the interaction creates curriculum that is qualitatively different (Schiever & Maker, 1991). This interaction is a function of pace of learning, conceptual complexity and interdisciplinary connections expressed as meaningful, creative and useful products. These authors use enrichment to refer to curriculum as well as program delivery services. Enrichment with respect to curriculum describes more varied educational experiences enhanced by some modifications or additions. An enriched program offers students curriculum that is greater in depth or breadth than is generally provided. Three approaches to enrichment are described as process-oriented, content oriented, and product oriented. From the program delivery perspective, a key element of an enrichment program is found in the articulation of a systematic plan for a wide range of opportunities designed to extend student learning according to goals defined by student needs.

Similarly acceleration is commonly used to describe service delivery and curriculum approaches. Acceleration as a service delivery model includes early entrance to kindergarten or to college, grade skipping, or part time grade or course acceleration. These options offer standard curricular experiences to students at a younger than usual age or a lower than usual grade level. Acceleration as a curriculum model involves speeding up the pace at which material is presented or providing conceptually advanced curriculum at an earlier age with expectations of mastery. The use of acceleration with gifted students results in a number of benefits, including improved motivation, confidence, and scholarship, prevention of lazy mental habits, early completion of professional training, and reduction of the cost of education.
Table 3.0 Needs of Secondary Gifted Students

• Experience Academic Challenge

"...main components of success in adulthood are persistence, determination, and hard work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1985; Ochse, 1993; Winner, 1996)."

"If academically talented students do not experience academic challenge and, therefore, never learn how to study and persist at learning, they may falter in college. It is imperative that academically talented students have educational experiences that challenge them, make them reach new goals intellectually, and require them to study."

Means: Advanced content; Accelerated pace of instruction; Increased rigor via cross-disciplinary curriculum; Opportunities for in-depth independent study of topics of special interest

• Continuous Progress in Talent Areas

"Gifted students need to be allowed to make steady, continuous progress at a pace appropriate to their rate of learning in all academic subjects. For gifted students of any age to be adequately served by the educational system, the boundaries between different levels of schooling (that is, between middle and high school, and between high school and college) need to be seamless."

Means: Eliminate age or grade as a basis for restricting access to courses; Use criteria such as readiness, completion of prerequisites, challenge level; Use alternate means and sites outside of school

• Opportunities to Preview College studies and College Life

"It is critical, both for their motivation to attend college and for their successful adjustment to college, that students acquire this knowledge through experiences during high school that preview college life."

Means: Summer or weekend classes; Academic year courses; Workshops and seminars on college campuses

• Opportunities for Adult-like Work

"Students involved in communities of practice (Lauren Sosniak, 1998) are allowed to enter adult worlds of real-life activities, becoming incorporated into the communities as novice but contributing members (e.g. as members of a laboratory research or newspaper production team)."

"Sosniak's research showed that these adult-work activities were an essential component of the talent development of creative producers, with benefits that include access to professional standards, social support, and apprenticeship types of learning experiences."

Benefits: Students acquire specific types of knowledge, learn about careers/fields of study; student motivation & interest increased.

Means: Internships and mentorships; Working on real problems in real work situations with real audiences

• Experience Instrumental and Expressive Rewards

"Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993) wrote about the need for school learning activities to have both instrumental (future long-term payoffs such as entry into medical school) and expressive (immediate feelings of enjoyment & engagement) rewards."

Means: Institutional policies and partnerships

• Experience Social Support

"Many academically talented children feel different from other children. They may feel that other students in their grade do not share their interests and desire to achieve. Both school-aged children and adolescents may have a great deal of difficulty with these feelings, and they may even hide their abilities in order to fit in socially. (Buescher & Higham, 1989)."

"Social experiences with other academically talented students who share their interests and aspirations can help inoculate gifted students against a negative peer culture. (Olszewski-Kubilius, 1998)."

The support of peers for intellectual achievement is especially critical for gifted females and students of color (Olszewski-Kubilius & Grant, 1996; Olszewski-Kubilius, Grant, & Seibert, 1993)."

Means: Residential Summer Programs; residential high schools; Early college


24
The practice of acceleration involves a number of strategies including compacting curriculum, gap-based instruction, using advanced concepts as organizers and optimizing cross-disciplinary linkages. These approaches are effective for the gifted learner and are considered appropriate for the students selected for the Transition Program. However, educators and parents alike have questioned the value of academic acceleration. Keating (1991) cites Benbow and Stanley (1983) and Kulik and Kulik (1984) in arguing that research on acceleration shows "widespread opposition to accelerative options, despite their strong track record in field-based educational research" (p. 78). Given the importance of acceleration to the design of the VSB/UBC Transition Program it is important to examine research related to academic acceleration.

**Research on Academic Acceleration**

Academic acceleration has been practiced in a large number of ways from early entrance to school, grade skipping, fast-paced classes, advanced placement, and concurrent studies at a university or college (Copley, 1961; Gold, 1982). Pressey (1949) defined acceleration as "progress through an educational program at rates faster or ages younger than conventional" (Cited in Southern & Jones, 1991, p.1). A more recent definition of academic acceleration is offered by Paulus (1984), "[educational] flexibility based on individual abilities without regard for age" (p. 98). This definition suggests criteria for acceleration include demonstrated high achievement and ability to move more rapidly through standard instructional programs.

A range of instructional interventions have been developed to support academic acceleration. While Passow, Goldberg, Tannenbaum, and French (1955) list eight options, more recent discussions have generated more options. Gallagher (1985) has described seven major methods with respect to academic acceleration. Subsequent work has included nine recommendations from Davis and Rimm (1988) and thirteen strategies and interventions identified through the work of Kitano and Kirby (1986). Southern and Jones (1991) summarized fifteen instructional interventions designed to facilitate acceleration.

One of the challenges in employing these options is in determining the degree or extent of differentiation of curriculum in the intervention. Factors which need to be taken into account according to Southern and Jones (1991) include: age discrepancy between student and academic peers, extent by which instructional time is reduced, and the degree of maturity required of the student. Radical acceleration is used to describe skipping of more than two grades, completing of year long courses of study in very short time periods, or entering a level of school more than two or three years ahead of chronological age peers.

A second challenge lies in recognizing the difference between two kinds of students who may be candidates for acceleration. The difference is sometimes described as administrative recognition and active intervention. The first group consists of students who are already achieving at a level higher than chronological age peers. Interventions for these students need to recognize the

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already achieved potential of the students by providing them with workable administrative provisions. These interventions should provide "adequate 'credit' without subjecting the student or the school system to negative consequences" (Southern & Jones, 1991, p.4). An example of this kind of intervention is placing the student in a program with older peers. Documentation of superior performance and determination of whether the student is able to perform at a level equal to that of older students, whether the student has sufficiently advanced skills and attainments and whether achievement in this setting will be at least as good if not better than in previous settings are concerns relevant to making such a decision.

The other group of acceleration candidates is composed of students who have the ability and inclination to work through the curriculum at a faster pace. These students are accelerated on the basis of their ability to learn faster and to handle conceptually advanced material more easily. For these students interventions include fast-paced course work, telescoping of grades and curriculum compacting. As well, engagement in their educational programs demands a significantly higher level of work, a higher level of performance and different expectations with respect to interactions with other students. It is critical for the students engaged in radical interventions that all potential negative consequences of acceleration are explored. Southern and Jones (1991) emphasize that "(t)here must be assurance that those candidates most likely to benefit from such a radical departure have been identified and that adequate documentation of benefits of the process are provided to justify its application" (p. 5). These two purposes of acceleration are often not distinguished in the research on acceleration and often not understood by staff, program developers, students and their parents.

Southern and Jones (1991) also provide insights with respect to the practice of academic acceleration in the United States from the early part of the twentieth century. Historically, placement of younger students with older students was considered a saving both in terms of student time and local tax money if students could be educated more efficiently. Uniformity of the grade structure was already becoming apparent in the early part of the twentieth century (Pressey, 1949). But the emergence of four factors affected popular beliefs about the importance of students remaining with their chronological age peers (Southern & Jones, 1991). The first was mandatory attendance for all children based on concerns for child welfare and employment conditions for minors. The second was increased educational expectations among employers and the general public. The third factor was the rise of developmental theories in child psychology that suggested children of similar ages were more alike than different in their readiness for learning. The fourth factor was the huge increase in the number of students being educated, leading to the institutionalization of skills and knowledge and a more rigid scope and sequence of knowledge and skills. As a result of these social and economic factors, bureaucracy within schools developed a logic for placement that confirmed the most convenient placement structures, namely age grade placements. It was only with the advent of World War II that priorities began to change and early entrance gained increasing prominence. With the baby boomers came another change of emphasis focusing on redressing social injustices and providing for the educationally disadvantaged. Southern and Jones (1991) argue that a new wave of national studies (Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1988; National Commission on Excellence in Teacher Education, 1985) suggesting that schools are "expecting less and less of students and that certain students are receiving increasingly inadequate education" contributed to a renewed interest in gifted education. With this interest has come the development of early entrance opportunities for gifted students. The focus of most acceleration research has been more on whom to accelerate rather than whether acceleration is an
appropriate intervention. There continues to be some uncertainty, as well as differing perspectives on the practice of radical acceleration and unanswered questions about which practices work best for which students. It is within this broad picture of acceleration that the Transition Program has its roots.

Studies on academic acceleration report that “(w)ell-designed programs using academic acceleration obtain uniformly positive results both educationally and in terms of life outcomes (such as reported satisfaction and achievement)” (Keating, 1991, p. 78). Karen Rogers (1996) identified twelve approaches in her study of academic acceleration and confirmed the benefits of acceleration for the gifted students she studied. Similar reports are found in longitudinal research on academic acceleration at the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY) at Johns Hopkins University (Swiatek, 1993). Research on the Early Entrance Program at the University of Washington, Seattle, provided additional evidence of the successful achievement and social development of these students (Janos, Robinson & Lunnenberg, 1989; Noble, Robinson & Gunderson, 1993). Noble followed up the initial work of the former study using the same students and comparison groups and reported similar findings.

One criticism of research on academic acceleration is that it has not considered the achievements of accelerated students when compared to equally able students who do not choose acceleration. One such study is the ten-year longitudinal follow-up of ability-matched accelerated and unaccelerated gifted students by Swiatek and Benbow (1991). The study focused on the academic and psychosocial concerns about acceleration and found them to be not well founded. With respect to the academic concern about gaps in knowledge, it was determined that “the accelerates were able to perform as successfully as the non-accelerates, even though the accelerates were at least 1 year younger” (Swiatek & Benbow, 1991, p. 536). Similarly the concern that these students would "burn-out" was discussed on the basis that the “accelerates did not appear to slow their college educations, take time off before pursuing graduate studies, or plan to curtail their educational pursuits. When academic variables as a whole were considered, the performance of the accelerates appeared to be slightly stronger than that of the non-accelerates” (Swiatek & Benbow, 1991, p. 536). Similarly the psychosocial/attitudinal variables indicated that accelerated students were as well adjusted as non-accelerated students. The study concluded that acceleration can be recommended for students who are highly gifted and who desire acceleration. Students who do not wish to be accelerated should not be pressed, and those who do should not be denied the opportunity, provided that they meet the criteria for acceptance into the program. These criteria include ability and skill measures, standardized tests and curriculum assessments, motivation, social-emotional readiness and resilience. Readiness has included consideration of age, stamina, and general health.

Not only did the above researchers find that acceleration does not harm students, they also clarified a number of positive effects of acceleration. Documented benefits of acceleration include increased efficiency, increased effectiveness, recognition, increased time for careers, increased productivity, increased options for academic exploration, exposure of the student to new peer groups, and administrative economy (Southern & Jones, 1991).

It is clear from the research of Swiatek and Benbow (1991) and the extensive reports of Southern and Jones (1991) that academic acceleration as a programming option for students possessing the requisite ability and motivation is both defensible and useful. The ways in which acceleration is implemented in the Transition Program need to be examined together with the attitudes to
acceleration of students, teachers, and parents. There are still many teachers, principals, parents and students who are uncomfortable with academic acceleration. Negative attitudes toward acceleration are largely based on rigid notions of social and emotional development, anecdotal information, past practices that are not comparable to current approaches, and the challenges inherent in choosing an educational alternative that is different from the regular classroom experience.

Research on accelerated students such as those found in an early entrance to university program discusses the concerns related to academic advancement as well as the psychosocial concerns that often arise when students begin to explore the options of acceleration of one or more years. With respect to academic acceleration there are two common concerns. One is the potential burn-out of students who are placed with other students not of their chronological age (Compton, 1982). The second concern is that acceleration may lead to knowledge gaps or poor retention of material learned at an accelerated rate (VanTassel-Baska, 1989). These concerns were examined in the Ten-Year Longitudinal Follow-up of Ability-Matched Accelerated and Unaccelerated Gifted Students by Swiatek and Benbow (1991). They suggest that the "risk of burnout is offset by an even higher risk of underachievement due to boredom" (p. 528). Underachievement and boredom may lead to maladjustment and difficulties such as social withdrawal or lack of self-discipline (Paulus, 1984). Swiatek and Benbow (1991) note that a number of studies of accelerated students have not found any gaps in knowledge. Accelerated students do not exhibit deficits in knowledge or achievement. Potential gaps, which might be due to grade skipping, are avoided by careful evaluation of student progress within advanced courses.

The psycho-social concerns for students in the multi-year accelerated program such as the early entrance to university Transition Program are often expressed as a question: can this student adjust to the new setting? From their review of the literature, Swiatek and Benbow (1991) summarized the following psychosocial concerns: (a) gifted students have deficient or retarded psychosocial development and will not fit in with classmates; (b) gifted students enrolled in special programs will lose the ability to function in the larger world of average people; (c) the social acceptance of the gifted students will be jeopardized by being in an accelerative program that emphasizes differences between gifted and average students; (d) special educational opportunities lead gifted students to become conceited and self-centered; and, (e) self-concepts of gifted students will suffer.

Studies around the psychosocial development of gifted students do not support the first four concerns. Research does demonstrate that most gifted children are psychosocially mature, even surpassing average children. They are also shown to be popular. It is suggested that while self-concept may decrease in accelerated programs this may be due to a more realistic view of the student's abilities and may be short-term (Powell & Haden, 1984). The predominance of findings is that "...most gifted students have strong personal resources and are unlikely to experience psychosocial harm from acceleration" (Swiatek & Benbow, 1991, p. 529).

Studies of other early entrance to university programs suggest that, on average, participating students achieve higher grades and more academic honors, enter graduate school early and go on to complete advanced degrees and enter professions earlier (Noble, Robinson, & Gunderson, 1993). Longitudinal studies suggest that early graduates go on to lead effective adult lives. While the literature around early entrance to university or college is limited by relatively small samples, there are general indications to support the appropriateness of this option for students.
who both demonstrate advanced abilities and are highly motivated to participate in this program for their own reasons related to career and learning goals. Repeatedly the literature suggests that the key variables of these programs are the intellectual challenges and the opportunities to work within a motivated and equally able peer group (Robinson & Noble, 1992). The research does not suggest that these students experience no difficulties, nor that they do not require support at various times and for various academic or social difficulties. Program structure and staff, including counselors and psychologists, need to provide support for the students who experience these difficulties (Olszewski, Kuliede, & Willis, 1987). In their review of student perceptions of early college entrance and the effect of skipping high school years on their social, emotional, and intellectual development, Noble and Drummond (1992) reported that the students who graduated from the Early Entrance Program at the University of Washington were "...unanimous in their satisfaction with their choice to forego both high school and the senior prom, a satisfaction educators, parents, and counselors should not overlook" (p. 110). Examples of this adjustment related to feeling accepted by regular-age college students, being generally well regarded by professors, and feeling well prepared for university level work. Janos, Robinson and Lunneborg (1989) concluded that “pronounced wishes for college studies by highly motivated, well organized, and academically ready young people argue convincingly for programs designed to facilitate this option” (p. 516).

**Early Entrance to University Programs**

Early entrance to university is an option supported by most colleges and universities in the United States. Typically Canadian universities examine such applications on a case by case basis. The University of British Columbia allows students sixteen years of age to enroll in a limited number of courses in the category of concurrent studies. Some exceptions have been allowed on a case by case basis. Benbow and Stanley (1983) and Swiatek and Benbow (1991) suggest that an increasing number of innovative programs designed to foster academic talent development using an early entrance to college model have been initiated. The Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University (Internet Site, Center for Talent Development, Northwestern University, 2001) identified eleven early college entrance programs at various institutions in the United States. Most of these programs consist of after school, weekend and summer courses.

Boothe, Sethna, Stanley, and Colgate (1999) described eight early entrance to college programs, five of which were fully residential and three described themselves as mostly residential. Tuition and board and room costs per student ranged from a low of $3,105, which rose to $8,568 for out-of-state students, to a high of $30,000. Need-based funding was available for all eight programs while six institutions used merit-based funding. All programs provided college courses only but graduates were able to receive credit most often for a high school diploma or options such as an associate degree from the college. Curriculum addressed core courses, thematic options, high school requirements or a combination thereof. Of these four private and four public institutions offering programs of either two years or four years in duration, gender equity was practiced except for PEG (Program for the Exceptionally Gifted) at Mary Baldwin College which was designed to serve high school-based gifted females. Enrollment across these programs ranged from a low of 40 to a high of 390 students.
Typically early entrance programs allow students to simultaneously complete high school course requirements while taking college classes. The majority of programs admit full-time students one or two years early. Very few programs admit students as much as three or four years earlier than usual. Other options available for gifted students in the United States include residential high schools developed specifically to serve this population.

One of the most well known university-based initiatives to promote the academic ability of children and youth throughout the world is The Johns Hopkins University where in 1971 Julian C. Stanley founded a program known as the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY). The program functioned primarily as a summer outreach program. Stanley designed and developed the talent search model that is currently used to identify gifted young people in various university sites in the United States. The students, some as young as Grade Six age, take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) designed for senior secondary students. Through this process of off-level testing, highly gifted adolescents are identified and educational options including access to university courses are made available. The program is designed "to inspire young people by offering distinctive educational opportunities that nurture intellectual abilities, advance academic achievement, and enhance personal development" (Internet Site, Center for Talented Youth, Johns Hopkins University, 2001). Their current range of programs offered to support young people's academic talents in the liberal arts includes in-school and out-of-school programs in mathematics, the sciences and the humanities while students continue completion of regular secondary school. To validate the talent search process and support SMPY's continuing development, a longitudinal study of the students that have been identified as highly gifted was initiated in 1972 (Swiatek, 1993). Follow-up surveys periodically sent to identified students have suggested that academic acceleration is often an effective educational approach to address the educational needs of these students in that almost all students do not appear to suffer from knowledge gaps or burn-out and report successful academic achievement and satisfaction with their accelerative experiences (Swiatek & Benbow, 1991).

The Transition School and the Early Entrance to University Program offered at the University of Washington in Seattle offer a one year full-time program of studies designed to prepare academically gifted students for early entrance to university and a second year in which the early entrance to university students (EPPers) are provided with academic advisement and support as well as a space for meeting and studying. The University of Washington's program of instruction and support for students who are committed to a goal of early entrance to university was the model which most closely paralleled the resource base available to the original planners from the Vancouver School District when they were exploring how to address the needs of academically gifted adolescents interested in attending university early. The program in Seattle, while unlike the Vancouver model in that the Seattle model had developed as a university-based initiative and operated on endowment, tuition and scholarship funds, represented an attractive alternative education program compatible with program models serving special education students in Vancouver. Its design, proximity and the welcome extended by its administrator and staff to examine their program made it the model of choice for the developers of the VSB/UBC Transition Program.

In a summary of research regarding early entrance to college programs, Olszewski-Kubiluis (1995) affirmed the need for these kinds of programs and the success achieved by students who chose to enroll. Program designs varied in response to the particularities of their various contexts. Thus, best practice defined by the program in Seattle, for example, was not necessarily
available to the program developers who were working under the guidance of educational policies in British Columbia. An understanding of the educational policy-making process in the British Columbia context is thus important to an understanding of decision-making of the VSB/UBC Transition Program developers, administrators and staff.

**Educational Policy and Giftedness**

Without an educational policy, gifted education tends to be left to chance and other political considerations. In Ontario, gifted education is mandated by legislation as part of the general Special Education policy. However, unlike the other areas of Special Education which have memoranda to articulate and clarify how particular student populations are to be defined, identified and served, gifted education has no such statements in their policy documents (Ontario Ministry of Education, Special Education Policy, 2001). As a result, the decision to offer programs and services for gifted students and the nature of these programs and how students are identified is left up to the individual school district (Personal Communication, Joanne Lee, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2002). The lack of specificity in education policy in Ontario limits availability and access to programs and services needed by gifted students.

Public policy not only reflects what a society values but also how social structures are expected to function so as to facilitate the expression of these values through daily living. Ball (1990) suggests that policy serves as the "authoritative allocation of values...operational statement of values (and) statements of prescriptive intents" (p. 3). Policy, suggests William Jenkins, is the "...set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve" (Cited in Howlett & Ramesh, 1995). Most current policy tends to frame social problems amenable to social intervention in terms that are politically acceptable, reasonably feasible and that encourage maximization of limited resources. Government decisions to enact a policy may be related to whether the issue is recognized as a social problem, as one within the government's purview to solve, and also within the government's capacity to affect. The problem-solving processes within policy-making have been described as "messy realities of influence, pressure, dogma, expediency, conflict, compromise, intransigence, resistance, error, opposition, and pragmatism" (Ball, 1990, p. 9). The challenge of policy-making, therefore, is "...to retain messiness and complexity and still be penetrating" (Ball, 1990, p. 9). Public policy with respect to education of gifted students thus reflects the way society understands and values the development of the abilities of the exceptional student. It outlines how public funds can or should be used to address the educational needs of this student population.

The articulation of the need for gifted education within education policy is important for several reasons. Talent that is not developed is a loss to society as well as to the individual. Since the population in question is small and the required interventions specialized, it is important that direction to act on behalf of these students comes from educational policy makers who are committed to talent development for the sake of the individual as well as society, who understand the challenges inherent in that development and who are prepared to stand up for the needs of these learners when it comes to the distribution of resources in public education.
Implementing policy with respect to the needs of gifted students affects society in significant and positive ways. Numerous consequences and spin-offs of gifted education can be found in the regular education curriculum, including the expansion of options and flexibility for student learning that supports society's vision of lifelong learning as articulated in the British Columbia Ministry of Education's report entitled A Legacy of Learners (Sullivan, 1988). While gifted students and their parents advocate for gifted education policy, it is ultimately society that benefits from the contributions which these students have to offer over a lifetime of productivity. Experience has shown that if the needs of gifted individuals are not addressed, they can be marginalized, ignored, or only brought to attention through crises, for example, the suicide of individuals who find themselves isolated, frustrated and alone in their differentness and their intensity. What is the cost of the cure that is not discovered, the groundbreaking discoveries that are not made, the great literature that is not written, and the insightful understandings that have not been realized and shared? This is the question that policies supporting gifted learners must address, according to Gallagher (2001), educational researcher in gifted education and mental handicaps whose substantive work on both ends of the spectrum of students' educational needs has brought him recognition within the international community of educational researchers.

Within a democracy where equity is a key value, there has been particularly vocal criticism of gifted education and related educational policy to provide for difference. It is important that educational policy articulates support for the development of talents and abilities of all students while at the same time recognizing that differences within this range of abilities represent very different kinds of needs, which ultimately require different educational programming responses. The belief that addressing the needs of the gifted learner is elitist affects policy despite current research that documents the different learning needs of the gifted student and that measures the positive effects of practices such as flexible pacing, advanced placement and radical academic acceleration. Equity defined as "sameness" fails to acknowledge the unique needs of individuals. Fairness lies in addressing differences in individual needs as equally important and equally deserving of resources and support. Thus understanding the different needs of gifted learners is critical to equitable distribution of educational opportunities and resources. Gifted education policy must be responsible for negotiating an understanding of the educational needs of gifted learners and articulating the social value of education that is designed to address these needs and support the development of talent and abilities of young people.

To understand how this commitment to address the needs of the gifted learner comes to be reflected in policy, it is helpful to consider how policy is made and translated into practice. By its very nature, policymaking takes place in different contexts. Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) suggest three policy contexts: text production, influence, and practice. Through text, policy articulates definitions of giftedness and procedures and standards for identification. Text provides tools for program development: conceptual, instrumental and legitimization (Rubenson, 1991). The responsibility for producing policy as text lies with the provincial governments in Canada.

While educational policy is an expression of the values of the people, it is also open to the influence of the people who make up the society, most notably educational consumers -- students and their parents. As guardians of student needs and student rights and through their questions and participation in educational decision-making, parents as well as other groups and organizations are able to influence policymaking as well as policy interpretation. To influence policy effectively, parents need to learn how to access networks and engage effective advocacy strategies.
Lastly, policy is articulated through the practices of educators on a daily basis. Through their interpretations of policy, practitioners place emphasis on the perspectives and ideas which are meaningful to them. The daily experiences of students in a classroom are significantly shaped by the policy interpretations generated by teachers whose decisions are supported by professional autonomy.

Different policy contexts generate policy debate and interpretation. Through a process of sharing perspectives and looking for commonalities, the various policy actors, such as students, parents, educators, and administrators from all levels of organization, establish a foundation from which program infrastructure can be developed. Ball (1990), for example, identifies three dimensions of education policy making: economic, political, and ideological. These dimensions function autonomously as well as in relationship to one another. For example, with respect to the funding and valuing of gifted education, the funding priorities (economic dimension) are negotiated through patterns of governance and influence (political dimension) using arguments based on views and beliefs central to gifted education and the society (ideological dimension).

In British Columbia, the Ministry of Education develops and distributes policies for Special Education. Gifted education is a category within Special Education and gifted students are described in terms of their special needs. The current public policy on gifted education as articulated in the Ministry of Education’s Special Education Services’ Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, (Ministry of Education, 1995) “Students Who are Gifted”, provides an operational definition of this student population with stated requirements for identification and assessment, program differentiation, evaluation and reporting, and personnel.

Gifted students are considered to be those who “possess demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of exceptionally high capability with respect to intellect, creativity, or the skills associated with specific disciplines” (Ministry of Education, 1995, E-17). The definition acknowledges that these students typically possess an “extraordinary intensity of focus in their particular areas of talent or interest...(and the possibility of) accompanying disabilities” (Ministry of Education, 1995, E-17).

BC’s Special Education policy also sets out the program parameters for gifted education. These include appropriate identification and appropriately differentiated service on a regular and ongoing basis. The more extraordinary the abilities of the student, the more necessary it is to expand options beyond the regular classroom. Every identified student requires an appropriate educational program (Individual Education Plan) to articulate his or her educational needs and the means by which these needs will be addressed. Through the Ministry’s definition, gifted education is thus recognized and legitimized as a category of special education. The official policy outlines how gifted students will be identified and served in our schools and in this way provides the tools for program development that are conceptual, instrumental, and offer legitimization to the field of gifted education practice (Rubenson, 1994, p.152).

The policy also offers incentives. In exchange for meeting the requirements delineated in the policy together with the general education policy requirements, a school district is allocated supplemental funding for up to 2% of total student enrollment. This funding is subject to audit by the Ministry of Education; school districts are required to list the names of students who are receiving service and to demonstrate how this service meets Ministry requirements. The penalty
for failing to provide programs is the withdrawal of funds. Thus the policy is permissive rather than mandatory but it provides incentives -- financial reward -- for program development. Current leaders in the field suggest that gifted educational practices serve a larger percentage of the population, as much as 10 to 15% of the population (Gallagher, 2001). It has been argued that the 2% cap on gifted education funding is not an appropriate match to the service levels needed by this population within school districts (Gifted Children’s Association of British Columbia, 2001).

The Vancouver School Board (VSB) has a gifted education policy that flows from the Ministry of Education’s policy. The VSB policy (1988) articulates a commitment to full development of abilities of every student to his or her fullest potential, both as an individual and as a member of society. The policy goes on to explain that this commitment to the development of individuals -- intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally -- is valued for the sake of the individual as well as for society as a whole. The Board’s goal is the development of defensible and comprehensive educational programs for gifted learners, Kindergarten through Grade Twelve. Two requirements for the development of gifted education programs have also been articulated by the Board (1994): (1) equity of access for all students in all areas of the city; and (2) programs must respond to the diversity of educational needs of this student population.

Essentially the Ministry of Education’s policy on gifted education, supported through the distribution of funds, determines the limits of service, namely who constitutes the target population, how many, under what conditions, how and for what purpose they will be served. The policy outlines the parameters within which service will be recognized and accountability will be required. What is missing from the policy text are the views of the students being served (or not), their parents, and the implementing educators -- those who interpret policy and deliver programming to students. The rational economic paradigm requires that only objectively measurable concepts are included in written policy; what is absent is the ambiguity, complexity, instability, value-conflict and uniqueness that characterize the phenomena of practice (Schon, 1983).

Education policies developed by the Ministry of Education form the basis for local school district policy. School district policies, once removed from the professional bureaucrats of the Ministry of Education, have the additional responsibility of responding to the values and beliefs of the local community. Flexibility in the translation of policies is critical to their implementation. The Vancouver School Board’s gifted education policy, for example, speaks to the values of equity, respect for persons and social justice, but addresses these values within a context of an urban environment with complex issues of inner city schools, First Nations students, higher numbers of special needs students and multi-cultural populations with significant ESL (English as a Second Language) needs. The service models developed for the Vancouver School District reflect these values and these environmental realities.

The structure for funding education policy on giftedness is also important. Inherent in this structure is the value placed upon gifted education programs and services as well as the accountability for the use of funds. Funding for gifted education is often a target of criticism. One perception is that funding in gifted education is draining funds from other areas of special and general education needs. In reality, government funding for gifted education is very limited in comparison to all other areas of Special Education funding. At the same time the funding cap of 2% provides inadequate funding to address the required service levels described in the policy.
One result is that only minimal levels of programming for gifted students can be supported; there are limited incentives to develop creative options given a climate where competing needs vie for school district funds. In contrast, programs and services receiving targeted funding on a per identified student basis are viewed as more fundamental to society, are more readily accepted as an appropriate use of public funds, and enjoy prominence and priority on the education policy agenda.

Gifted education’s status in the policy arena can be linked to the role of education policies in society in general. These various policies indicate the value placed on the education of our potentially ablest future citizens. It is reasonable to expect that society supports the development of the potential abilities of all people including gifted students to the fullest extent possible so that society may benefit from the most creative, insightful, productive problem solving of its citizenry.
CHAPTER III

THE TRANSITION PROGRAM'S EVOLUTION

At first people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done.
Then they begin to hope it can be done. Then they see it can be done.
Then it is done and all the world wonders why it was not done centuries ago.

-- Frances Hodgson Burnett

Dr. Stanley Blank, Professor Emeritus at The University of British Columbia, stated in his comments at the official UBC opening of the Transition Program (UBC, Sept. 30, 1999) that during the thirty or more years he dedicated to gifted education, he dreamed about the creation of an early entrance to university program. However the realization of that dream occurred only when a series of critical elements came together in British Columbia. These key elements included experiences of academically highly gifted students successfully pursuing radical academic acceleration, strong and vocal parent advocacy, substantive gifted education knowledge to support program design and implementation, leadership committed to addressing the needs of this student population and to encouraging political will within a new climate of support for gifted students, and collaboration among numerous articulate individuals to enable the creation of institutional partnerships. The result was the establishment of the Vancouver School Board/University of British Columbia Transition Program in 1993.

Critical Elements Supporting Gifted Education Program Development in Vancouver

Prior to 1987, gifted education in Vancouver schools was focused on enrichment in the regular classroom (Gifted Education Report to Director of Student Services, VSB, 1988). (See Appendix A for list of Transition Program study abbreviations and source documents.) Leadership for enrichment programming in schools was provided by a series of district consultants. During the late 1970s and early 1980s a small number of elementary schools used flexible staffing to create school-based enrichment centers staffed part-time by a cohort of exceptionally creative and dedicated teachers. As of September 1987, a total of 13.3 teacher positions were deployed in twenty-seven elementary schools to create enrichment programs (Gifted Education Report to Director of Student Services, VSB, 1988). Four secondary schools offered district programs for high achieving students: International Baccalaureate Program, Churchill Secondary; Challenge Program, Hamber; Arts and Athletics Program, Magee; and, Enrichment Program, John Oliver. A number of secondary schools offered options for gifted and highly able learners such as honors and enriched courses, challenge examinations leading to acceleration by grade within some subject areas, and Advance Placement Examinations and concurrent studies (secondary and university) at the senior secondary level (Gifted Education Report to Director of Student Services, VSB, 1988). Extracurricular activities and electives were also considered a source of enrichment for capable students.
Parents of gifted children clamored for support from the school system in the early 1980s, and in 1982 a group of parents from Vancouver and Richmond came together to find peers for their children and to address their concerns about the need for the school system to respond appropriately to children with gifted abilities (Baum, 2002). They formed the Gifted Children's Association of British Columbia (GCA) which was formalized as a society in January of 1983; their first presentation to the Vancouver School Board took place in 1984 during a daunting period of economic restraint. The Vancouver School Board meanwhile had been replaced by an appointed trustee (as a result of disagreement with the provincial government over resource distribution). The parents expressed their concern about the lack of infrastructure for identifying and serving gifted students within the context of provincial audits for Special Education, specifically the 2% funding designated for the gifted student population. The appointed trustee responded by indicating there was a committee working on enrichment and offered to place a GCA representative on this committee. Parent representation on district committees was not common practice at that time, but when a new Director of Student Services took responsibility for the area of gifted education in 1984, she encouraged parent participation within both committee work and professional development opportunities. The opening up of communication between the Gifted Children's Association and the Vancouver School Board went on to nurture the supportive partnership that has enhanced program development for gifted students in Vancouver for almost two decades.

In 1984, Dr. Jean Moore, the new Director of Student Services, paved the way for the establishment of a new position, District Support Teacher for Gifted Education. She describes the creation of this position as one of her most difficult tasks during her tenure as Director (Moore, 1997). Not only were budget considerations an issue as was the case when any new position was discussed, but also the needs of gifted students were not widely recognized among educators and the general public. However, she was supported by the District Advisory Committee, Enrichment Center teachers and a small group of principals and classroom teachers together with parents particularly associated with the Gifted Children's Association of BC who had all advocated for the position (DAC Minutes, VSB, 1987). Contrary to common practice, which was to hire experienced classroom teachers from within the district for district positions, the successful applicant was new to the school district and had extensive training and experience in gifted education. This background in working with gifted learners proved helpful to the district's articulation of the range and diversity of needs of gifted students. It was also instrumental in extending the focus of effective practices for gifted students from classroom enrichment to an array of programs and services designed to nurture both the identification and the development of students' potential abilities and talents.

The creation of a position for gifted education for the Vancouver School District meant that the area of gifted student needs was given an articulated legitimacy (Rubenson, 1994). The nature and scope of the work took on specific definition, and subsequent efforts to develop programs and services for gifted students validated the support of the Board as well as Senior Management. An experienced Enrichment Center Teacher explained that at the time of the creation of this position, the use of the term gifted as an area of student needs was almost non-existent (Herman, 1997). With its creation and the selection of a candidate with extensive gifted education training and previous experience working in a district position, the Director opened the door to the development of programs and services for the gifted and highly gifted students K-12 within the school district.
The first task of the District Support teacher was a review of gifted education in the Vancouver School District to stimulate program development. This review resulted in a paper identified as Gifted and Talented Education: A Position Paper, VSB, 1987. The Director of Student Services directed the District Advisory Committee for Gifted Education (DAC) to use this review to discuss how to address the unmet needs of gifted students in Vancouver (DAC Minutes, VSB, 1987). The result was a five-year District Plan for Gifted Education. This action placed the needs of gifted students squarely on the education agenda for the district.

The critical starting point for the Transition Program was the presentation of this Five-Year Plan for Gifted Education to the Vancouver School Board in the spring of 1988 (VSB Minutes, 1988). It requested Board support for the development of comprehensive, defensible, and equitable programs and services to enable the nurture of those with gifted abilities in Vancouver students from Kindergarten through Grade Twelve. Comprehensive programming was described as "adequate and appropriate learning experiences for a particular individual, when and how that experience can and should be accelerated, when and how that experience can and should be enriched in depth and/or breadth" (Passow, 1987, p. 15). Equity of access to programs for gifted students from all areas of the city was highlighted as a priority. The district's commitment was to insure that appropriate services and programs would be available to address the gifted learner needs in all Vancouver schools. In accordance with the Ministry of Education policy for Special Education, the Five-Year Plan defined students with gifted abilities as individuals with exceptional talent in areas of intellectual, academic and creative production. Its adoption by the Vancouver School Board in 1988 was an important milestone (VSB Minutes, 1988). It provided the school district with an updated gifted education policy, set a climate of support for gifted education initiatives, and revitalized efforts to develop appropriate responses to the needs of this student population. The policy provided the foundation for written goal statements, a practice that had been acclaimed as the best predictor of "substantial" gifted education programs according to the 1985 National Survey conducted by the Sid W. Richardson Foundation (Cox, Daniel, & Boston, 1985).

With this support from the Vancouver School Board, the District Gifted Education Advisory Committee was able to initiate pilot projects while helping schools identify gifted students and develop appropriate programs and services to meet student needs. The first priority was to develop programs and services for elementary gifted students. Professional development opportunities were organized for teachers and administrators at both the district and school levels. A handbook, Identification Guidelines for Gifted Education (1988), was developed and circulated to all Vancouver schools and an array of services was articulated through a Gifted-Enrichment Education Continuum.

The Need for a District Gifted Education Early Entrance to University Program

At the time when the Five-Year Plan for Gifted Education was presented to the Vancouver School Board there were no district programs specifically designed for identified gifted students. Elementary enrichment programs were school-based and staffed through flexible or discretionary staffing, an additional limited staffing that was distributed by Human Resources according to a formula based on the size of the school's student population. Each school submitted a plan for the use of additional staffing to address unmet student needs within the school. The plan
required the support of both the school staff and the school administrator. In a small number of schools Learning Enrichment Centers (LEC's) were staffed in order to offer pull-in programs for students referred by classroom teachers. There was no district initiative to provide gifted education at the secondary school level although every secondary school demonstrated a keen interest in attracting high achieving students. Several secondary school administrators were exploring the possibilities of modifying their programs to attract gifted and talented students (DAC Minutes, VSB, 1988). There were a number of secondary educators who attended district inservice sessions and two schools that organized a professional development event to focus on gifted and highly able learners (Gifted Education Year End Report, VSB, 1988). Secondary schools tended to function autonomously under the leadership of school administrators and individual student needs were subsumed under the management of the school community and school culture, neither of which articulated the needs of gifted students as a priority.

Discussion of an early entrance to university program began at the District Advisory Committee for Gifted Education, stimulated by the cases of two Vancouver students who were enrolling in university at the ages of 13 and 14 (DAC Minutes, 1989,1990). One high school student was accelerated to senior level science and mathematics while in Grade 8 and eventually enrolled at Simon Fraser University after successfully completing the Grade 12 International Baccalaureate Program Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. He had not yet received credit for English and Social Studies at the Grade 10 (or 11 or 12) level and as such could not qualify for early entry to the University of British Columbia. This issue proved to be particularly problematic for all gifted students wishing to enter the university. Simon Fraser University, on the other hand, offered him four years of scholarship tuition and did not require that he complete high school graduation requirements. He thus entered university at age 14 in 1989. A second student was identified as gifted as a result of his intense interest in Physics in Grade 5, an interest that the parents explored with a Physics professor from The University of British Columbia. While still enrolled in elementary school, the student was invited by the neighborhood secondary school principal to try out some high school courses in Mathematics and Science. The student subsequently enrolled in David Thompson Secondary's gifted enrichment program as an early entrant, an uncommon practice at the time. Through the school's support and a process of academic acceleration, the student achieved high school graduation at the age of 13 (1990). He enrolled at The University of British Columbia where the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Science personally mentored him (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1991).

At this stage the idea of early entrance to university was linked to an awareness of an unmet student need. While concurrent enrollment for individual senior secondary students was an occasional practice in a number of secondary schools, there was a strong tradition of age-grade placement of students in both elementary and secondary schools (TP Notes, VSB, 1993). It was startling for some educators and parents alike to see that students could handle advanced academic studies, thrive within the challenge of the experience and continue on to successful university work. There was also a sense of dismay that these students who were choosing to do so were obliged to navigate a path through bureaucratic structures that were not organized to support their choices, and they were doing so against popular tradition and with little encouragement or help except for a very few individuals along the way.

Discussions at the District Gifted Education Advisory Committee focused initially on the difficulties faced by the first student who completed only Grade 12 Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry before entering university. The unevenness of development of academic skills,
particularly communication skills cultivated through the study of English and History, was discussed in terms of long term success in university studies. Concerns were expressed about a lone student at age 14 navigating the university system without peer or social support. The committee agreed that both academic and social-emotional support should be available for students motivated to achieve excellence while pursuing acceleration of their academic studies. Suggestions to address the needs of these students included an intellectual peer group, mentors, counselors and teachers who understood how to support them given their special issues; there was also discussion of a system of academic advisement, advocacy and support to assist with the unique challenges early entrants would face by virtue of being so much younger within the university setting (DAC Minutes, VSB, 1989).

In the fall of 1989 two members of the District Advisory Committee for Gifted Education were on the organizing committee for the Third Canadian Symposium for Gifted Learners held in Vancouver. One of the invited presenters, Dr. Nancy Robinson, spoke about the early entrance to university program located on the campus of the University of Washington, Seattle. Dr. Halbert Robinson started the program in 1977 with two students, one of whom was his daughter. Dr. Nancy Robinson then became the program's director in 1981 (Robinson, 1990). The success of the University of Washington's approach to supporting academically motivated and gifted adolescents to achieve early entrance to university was subsequently shared with the District Advisory Committee. Members were unanimous in their support to explore a similar program initiative for the academically gifted secondary student population in Vancouver (DAC, Minutes, VSB, 1989). As a consequence, the Director of Student Services initiated discussions with the principal of University Hill Secondary about using that secondary site for the establishment of a program to support early entrance to university (TP Notes, VSB, 1989).

**Exploration of Program Models**

To gain information, a small group of teachers and administrators visited the Early Entrance to University Program and Transition School in Seattle in the spring of 1990 (TP Notes, VSB, 1990). The group included two Churchill Secondary School staff members who had worked closely with the student who had entered university before completion of high school graduation. Administrators included the principal of University Hill Secondary and the newly appointed Associate Superintendent for the Jericho Area who was a past principal of University Hill Secondary School (Moore, Notes, VSB, 1989). Both administrators supported the idea that University Hill Secondary, which is located on the edge of the UBC campus, would be the optimum site for the new initiative. They saw the advantages of such a program both for students and for the school district as well as in enhancing the climate for academic excellence of this school in particular (TP Survey, VSB, 1999). Mary Lynn Baum, representing the Gifted Children's Association of BC on the District Advisory Committee and the District Support Teacher for Gifted Education, completed the visitation team. Visitors observed classes, spoke with enrolled students and program graduates, and met with the counselor for these students, Dr. Kathleen Noble, and the program administrator, Dr. Nancy Robinson. Dr. Noble had been hired as the psychologist, academic adviser and assistant director for the early Entrance Program in 1989. As a result of this visit there was a feeling that the Seattle model could be modified and "Canadianized" so as to contribute a similar resource to British Columbia and Canada. The Committee reported that there were "...no similar models of this kind of program directed
specifically to this target population in Canada. The interventions that do occur are unique to individuals; they are not developed programs" (Moore, Notes, VSB, 1992).

Through the gifted education literature and written communication, the Advisory Committee also explored several other early entrance to university program models. The best known was the Program for Mathematically Precocious Youth (PMPY) at Johns Hopkins University. That program's structure consisted of university summer classes primarily in mathematics. Students as early as Grade 6 who scored exceptionally high on the Scholastic Aptitude Test were invited to participate in the program. The program was administered through the university. Opportunities to enroll in advanced university mathematics courses were provided for those students who demonstrated exceptional success in the summer program. While the PMPY model pointed to the specific needs of mathematically precocious students, the committee determined that the range of student needs and goals for a BC early entrance to university program would be more comprehensively addressed by a program model similar to the one at the University of Washington, Seattle (DAC Minutes, VSB, 1989).

The result of these experiences was a clearer identification of the needs of secondary academically gifted students, a recognition that these needs were not met within existing programs and a commitment to explore alternative ways to address these needs. Gifted Education policy supported the development of appropriate programs and services to address the educational needs of this student population; however, the political reality was that a number of key decision-makers were not yet aligned with this perspective.

Development of an Institutional Partnership

In September of 1990, the principal of University Hill Secondary continued discussions with the Director of Student Services about the development of an early entrance to university program for his school. It was clear that a facilitative partnership was needed between the Vancouver School Board and The University of British Columbia. To facilitate the development of that partnership, the principal of University Hill Secondary contacted Dr. Dan Birch, Academic Vice-President of UBC, who requested that Dr. Patricia Vertinsky, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Education at UBC and also a parent of students attending University Hill Secondary School, initiate further discussions (Moore, Notes, VSB, 1990). A meeting organized at University Hill Secondary hosted by the Principal and with the Director of Student Services as Chair included representatives from UBC, VSB, and GCA (Gifted Children's Association of BC). This group became the Advisory Committee for the Early Entrance to University Program and subsequently has become known as the Transition Program Steering Committee. The founding members of the institutional partnership between the Vancouver School Board and the University of British Columbia were Dr. Jean Moore, John Minichello, Mary Lynn Baum, and the District Support Teacher for Gifted Education from the Vancouver School Board; and Dr. Patricia Vertinsky, Faculty of Education, Dr. David Holm, Faculty of Science, and Dr. Paul Tennant, Faculty of Arts, from The University of British Columbia (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1990). At this time Dr. Holm was mentoring Ryan Hung, the young man who had graduated from high school and entered university at the age of 13. He offered his experiences with Ryan and several other students to help the Committee understand the challenges faced by these students, their potential
for high level achievement as well as their needs as younger students who entered university early.

Over the course of several meetings the partnership between the two institutions, the Vancouver School Board and the University of British Columbia, was developed and the program design process initiated. Dr. Vertinsky undertook to encourage the university's support and the President confirmed his commitment to the development of this program. The first formal support for this initiative from UBC was the establishment of a 0.25 FTE position that would provide a university liaison role to support coordination of this program with UBC (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1991). Dr. Stanley Blank, Professor Emeritus of Educational Psychology with the Faculty of Education, joined the committee as the liaison with the President's office. A letter of support from Dr. Dan Birch to the Chairman of the Vancouver School Board outlined the university's support for this initiative (VSB Minutes, 1991).

**Assumptions Underlying a Program Model**

The District Advisory Committee for Gifted Education was united on the need to provide motivated and academically talented adolescents with a program designed to prepare them for early entrance to university. The target population for the program was academically gifted students who had completed a minimum of Grade 7. By virtue of their age and educational levels, these students were assumed to be similar to high achieving secondary students (TPSC, Minutes, VSB, 1990). It was anticipated that they would be competent in academic learning skills, possess gifted cognitive abilities, and be motivated to achieve early entrance to university (TP Notes, 1989). They were expected to be committed to the intensive work required to achieve their goals. The Committee unanimously supported the importance of an intellectual peer group for these students as well as a program of accelerated academic studies (DAC Minutes, VSB, 1990). Situating the program at University Hill Secondary School was expected to take advantage of the existing infrastructure of the school system, including school administration, counseling, facilities such as the gymnasium, science labs and library as well as the culture and climate of a small secondary setting (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1990). Close proximity to the university campus would allow students to participate in on-campus activities, visit classes and enroll in courses as they were ready to do so. It was also argued that the secondary school setting would be safer than a campus location and less intimidating for students.

There was considerable discussion about whether the students should need to meet the requirements of both high school graduation and university entrance (Notes, Steering Committee, VSB, 1990). Unlike the University of Washington Transition School, where entrance to university was guaranteed for students who were selected for the program and who successfully completed the one year of academic preparation, no such guarantees were available for the students enrolled in the Canadian program. Neither the University nor the Ministry of Education policies articulate specific recognition or support for the exceptional achievement of highly academically gifted students who choose to achieve early entrance to university. The policies that do exist relate to concurrent studies and have a minimum age requirement of 16 (Notes, Steering Committee, VSB, 1990). Therefore, the 13, 14, and 15 year old students enrolled in the early entrance to university program would be competing for scholarships as well as for university entrance and early placement in courses of choice with all British Columbia
Grade 12 students who would be an average age of 18 and would typically have completed five years of high school. The committee recognized that these students would be working against existing tradition by entering university early and that planning needed to occur to overcome the penalties that might befall them by virtue of their age, regardless of the merit of their unique accomplishments.

The committee recommended that the design for the VSB/UBC Transition Program consist of a two year academic preparation program with a third year available for full-time studies or concurrent studies at the University of British Columbia or any other university open to early entrance students (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1990). Long term goals included receiving funding from the Ministry of Education for this program as a Provincial Resource Program, providing early entrance to university based on the recommendations of the secondary teachers and university staff that worked with the students, modifying high school graduation so as to make it attainable retroactively rather than prior to university entrance, and recognizing the acceleration of the students as a "saving" of educational funds which could be translated into university tuition for the school years "saved" by the student (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1991).

Program Approval in Principle

Beginning in 1990 Vancouver's Director of Student Services had initiated preliminary discussions about an early entrance to university program with the Director of Special Education at the Ministry of Education, Dr. Shirley McBride. Dr. McBride supported the program concept but looked to the Vancouver School Board and The University of British Columbia to develop the program and commit their support (Moore, VSB, 1995).

In April of 1990, the Director of Student Services, as a member of the Vancouver School Board's Senior Management Team, presented her colleagues with a summary form of the program concept at one of their regular meetings (Notes, SMT, VSB, 1990). The recommendation of the Senior Management Team was that exploration of the concept was to be continued and a further report brought back to the group. This decision was a reflection of political and practical priorities as well as the response to the concept. The concept represented a challenge to the traditional organization of schools and had implications for existing practices and future program development. At a time when budget considerations were the priority for Senior Management, the most that could be hoped for was the introduction to the idea and future opportunity for discussion. The concept's credibility was enhanced by support from the secondary school administrator as well as from UBC's President's Office. The combination of support proved critical to future negotiation.

To keep the concept moving forward, in September 1991 the Principal from University Hill Secondary received funding from the Director of Student Services for two blocks of staff time to explore and plan school-based programming for academically gifted students for the 1991-1992 school year (Moore, Memo, VSB, 1991). The 0.28 FTE or two timetable blocks funded through the Gifted Education budget enabled a teacher at University Hill Secondary to work with the District Support Teacher for Gifted Education on program planning for gifted students enrolled at University Hill Secondary. Advanced Placement Music and student learning experiences with the UBC Drama Department were initiated (Moore, Notes, VSB, 1991).
The Director of Student Services chaired a strategy planning session on October 25, 1991. At the meeting attended by University Hill Secondary's principal and teacher, the Gifted Children's Association/District Advisory Committee representative and the District Support Teacher for Gifted Education, a timeline for implementation of an early entrance to university program targeted for September, 1992, was developed (Moore, Notes, VSB, 1991).

During this period of waiting for authorization to present a formal Transition Program proposal to the Board, concerns were being raised by Vancouver parents about the decline in gifted programs, particularly in elementary schools in the Vancouver School District. As a result, the Board requested a report on the status of gifted education programs and services in the district. A survey mailed to all elementary and secondary administrators requested feedback regarding the categories of giftedness most commonly served, current service delivery models, current and desired staffing and resources, and satisfaction with present levels of service for gifted students. Follow-up calls to all administrators collected responses to all survey questions. The responses indicated "a strong support for gifted education as a district initiative where the planned approach is supported by appropriate funding for staffing, resources, inservice, and the tools and materials for delivering appropriate education to these students" (Gifted Education Report, VSB, 1991).

In response to the concerns raised by parents and the results of the survey, trustees at a Committee III meeting of the Vancouver School Board (June 10, 1991) recommended that a review of flexible staffing and its impact on gifted education be conducted in the fall. The report entitled "Gifted Education Services for the Vancouver School District" was presented to the Board in February 1992. The report indicated that in response to continuing budget reductions, staffing allocated to support gifted education in elementary schools dropped from 13.40 in 1990-91 to 5.43 in 1991-92 (VSB Minutes, 1992). It also described the district profile of students receiving gifted education services or enrolled in programs demonstrating the effects of the loss of special needs staffing in schools in terms of the dramatic decrease in gifted education programs and services. It linked these reductions to the Five-Year Plan and the Board's commitment to support gifted education K-12.

The report concluded with seven recommendations to restore services. Five of the recommendations required additional funding. Recommendations one through five requested support for the following: a program planning guide for schools, continued funding of school-based pilot projects, designated staffing for school-based contact persons in each school, district programs and resource teachers to support students whose needs cannot be appropriately met within the regular program, and congregated full-time classes for highly gifted elementary students. Recommendation Seven read: "The Vancouver School Board reaffirms its support of educational programs that are appropriate for gifted and highly able students in Vancouver schools" (Gifted Education Report, VSB, 1992).

The Transition Program proposal was strategically embedded within the 1992 Gifted Education Report as Recommendation Six. Recommendation Six proposed that an early entrance to university program be established to support highly gifted students with appropriate peers and academic preparation to insure success. "This program would function in conjunction with The University of British Columbia and with the support of the Ministry of Education. It would be the only program of its kind in Canada" (Gifted Education Report, VSB, 1992). One of the
attachments to the report was the letter of support for the early entrance to university program concept signed by UBC's Provost and Academic Vice-President (VSB Correspondence, 1992).

The Board passed recommendations six and seven thereby approving in principle an early entrance to university initiative. The proposal now had legitimacy, and planning could proceed in a substantive way. Although it provided no funding, at least it opened the door to an exploration of funding options.

Negotiating Funding for Program Implementation

The 1992-1993 school year was focused on obtaining financial support from the Ministry of Education as well as the University of British Columbia. The Transition Program Advisory Committee approved a three year financial plan for program implementation, anticipating support from the Vancouver School Board, the University of British Columbia and the Ministry of Education (Minutes, Steering Committee, VSB, 1992). The University of British Columbia funding included the time of four professors from the disciplines of History, English, Mathematics and Physics at .25 FTE each for a total of one full-time professor. Dr. Blank's .25 FTE position as UBC Liaison would also be continued. The Vancouver School Board would be responsible for the site, resources, staffing, governance and administration of the program, and student identification and counseling support.

A meeting was held in Victoria in the spring of 1993 with Dr. Shirley McBride who invited representatives from the Treasury Board as well as members of her staff responsible for provincial resource programs and gifted education (Transition Program Meeting Notes, Victoria, 1993). Dr. Dan Birch, representing the UBC President's Office, attended with Dr. Stanley Blank. Representatives from the Vancouver School Board included Dr. Jean Moore, Director of Student Services, the new Principal of University Hill Secondary, Tom Grant, and the District Support Teacher for Gifted Education. The case for the program for early entrance to university was presented as a partnership initiative from the two institutions. The Ministry of Education was asked to provide support in principle as well as operating funds. Despite considerable enthusiasm for the program from all quarters, the committee was told that no monies were available. Alternatively it was suggested that the program apply for consideration as a Provincial Resource Program, the structure of which would provide funding for program staff and operating resources (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1993). Meanwhile the Director of Student Services continued negotiations with Senior Management for a portable to house the program at University Hill Secondary and two blocks of teacher time to provide on site program support (Moore, Notes, 1993).

The Steering Committee meetings abated while negotiations for financial support were underway. During this time there were doubts about whether the program would ever be implemented given the challenge of finding resources for an initiative that challenged traditions and addressed the needs of a very small population of students. These doubts, however, were balanced by an enthusiasm for the concept and the conviction that the positive effects of the program would not only serve enrolled students and society at large but would influence the identification and programming for high ability students in the regular classroom.
Initiating Program Implementation

It took an act of courageous leadership to move the program concept into implementation. In May 1993, the Director of Student Services, with the Board’s support but with no indications of funding from the Ministry and no space available at the school, designated funds to move a portable to University Hill Secondary for September 1993 (Moore, Memo, VSB, 1993). She subsequently advised the District Support Teacher to locate appropriate students for the program that would commence in September. Collaborating with school and district staff to identify possible candidates the District Teacher organized psycho-educational assessments through the services of a district school psychologist. The identification of candidates became a pivotal step in the process of program implementation.

Criteria for identification of students who were academically developmentally advanced or gifted had been previously articulated in the VSB Gifted Education Identification Guidelines and Ministry of Education policy. To be effective and defensible, the identification system for the Transition Program needed to offer equal opportunities for all interested students to access the program and to provide a comprehensive overview of each applicant's abilities and skills, educational needs and goals in order to determine the applicants for whom the program would be an appropriate match. The screening and assessment process needed not only to identify the cognitive strengths available to the student to respond to the intellectual challenges of a rigorous academic program but also to identify other aspects of the student learning profile including those areas which in some cases might make the pace and the intensity of the program problematic for the student. A consistent set of minimum standards for screening of Transition Program applicants was articulated with the expectation that refinements would occur over time through the operation of the program and collaboration of district and program staff supported by the experiences shared by students and their parents. Initial criteria included measures of intellectual ability, academic performance, motivation, and stamina. Students participated in psycho-educational assessments and an interview with district staff in the presence of their parents with whom portfolios of students' best work and documentation of their achievements and interests was shared. A minimum score of two and a half standard deviations above the mean on an individual cognitive ability test, either the Stanford Binet IV or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for children - Third Edition (WISC III) was established to identify the applicants that would be further reviewed by a screening committee.

While these minimum standards offered guidance to the identification process, the assessments of initial applicants revealed scores three and in some cases four standard deviations above the mean on individual intelligence measures. Dr. Donna Haqq, the District School Psychologist primarily responsible for assessments for the Transition Program, explored various measures to determine an effective approach to the identification of candidates who would benefit from the program and successfully handle the challenges of a rigorous program of academic acceleration. The resulting in-depth individual learner profiles became a means to help staff understand the uniqueness of students' strengths, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities and their need for support and coping strategies in some cases. Scores also often surpassed the 99th %ile minimum for achievement testing in mathematics, reading, and writing suggesting that applicants were six or more years beyond the skill development typical of students of their chronological ages. Complementing formal measures of abilities and skills, academic readiness in terms of
organization and time management skills, work ethic, and a high interest in complex ideas was assessed informally through the psycho-educational assessment process as well as through the personal interview, samples of student work, past report cards, and references from previous teachers. Motivation was also reviewed through this process and identified as a critical factor influencing student success. Through discussions of students' career interests and personal reasons for applying to the program, students and parents were alerted to the notion that students who applied to the program at the behest of parents and not because of personal interest were less likely to succeed. The interview also included discussions of the importance of stamina from the perspective of physical health and social-emotional resilience. The program was distinguished from high school and five years of secondary school curriculum mastered in two years. Instead students and parents were counseled to view the program as a university preparation program that involved intensive fast-paced learning, and depended on positive peer relations and parent support as well as individual perseverance and willingness to learn, to ask for help and to accept criticism. Students were encouraged to explore their identities as pre-university students. The innovative nature of the program encouraged students and parents to view themselves as collaborators in the program's development and to work together with staff to improve the program for future participants. A condition of acceptance to the program included residence within the Lower Mainland with either parents or relatives. Concerns about transportation were inevitably discussed as factors influencing the decision to enroll in the program. These initial considerations within the identification process became more transparent as program staff worked with students and translated new understandings into effective practices within the program.

While the process of identifying students within the Vancouver School District was the focus of intensive effort during the month of June 1993, information about the program circulated through the community. Parents with students enrolled in private schools called for information about the program. A number of parents brought their children forward for interviews and discussion about the establishment of an early entrance to university program. Some of these students had previous psycho-educational assessments while others were undertaken in June and a number were scheduled for August.

The Principal of University Hill set up a meeting with the heads of the academic disciplines in his school at the end of June. He introduced them to the District Gifted Education Teacher and invited them to listen to the plans for the early entrance to university program that would be initiated at the school in the fall (Grant, VSB, 1993). Interest was balanced with skepticism about the establishment of a program without consultation regarding program design and implementation particularly with staff who would be responsible for working with the new students. There was a general sense that programs implemented without time provided for planning by the staff were doomed to failure (TP Notes, VSB, 1993). The Principal indicated that the number of students who would be participating in the coming year would be few in number. He encouraged staff to consider having a few of these students in their classes and to use the year as an opportunity to learn as well as plan for the program's future.

As a result of the meeting three teachers from University Hill Secondary accepted an opportunity to interview candidates and engage them in curriculum-based assessments in late August in order to identify appropriate placement in senior secondary classes. By the start of the school year in September 1993 six students had accepted the invitation to enroll in the first year of the Transition Program at University Hill Secondary School (TP Records, VSB, 1993).
1993-1994: The Start-Up Year

The introduction of the Transition Program to the staff at University Hill Secondary in September 1993 sparked an informal debate that questioned the merit of an early entrance to university program. The very nature of the program challenged the status quo by introducing the idea of academically gifted students and radical academic acceleration. Prevailing assumptions within the debate included the idea that every student needs a high school experience and that the optimum setting for social-emotional development to occur for the adolescent is the high school setting. Such assumptions made it difficult for staff to understand the perspectives of students who shared a goal of early entrance to university. The implementation was also challenged by a history of skepticism and distrust of district initiatives by experienced staff. Teachers referenced proven past practice to critique the introduction of the innovative program and changes to traditional practices. Parents were questioned by various individuals about the wisdom of "rushing" their children through secondary school social development, and Transition Program students were sometimes identified as "nerds" by their age peers or viewed as social isolates because they did not choose an active role in the extra-curricular activities of the school (TP Notes, TP Parent Interview, VSB, 1994).

By late fall the group of Transition students numbered seven, of which three were girls. In this atmosphere of newness and doubt, the principal, Tom Grant, provided students and parents with encouragement and support and actively expressed his enthusiasm for the program. His leadership helped both the students and the program staff to focus attention on enjoying the challenge and opportunities inherent in the program and developing effective approaches to new problems as they pioneered the first year of program implementation (TP Notes, VSB, 1994).

The Initial Program Design

The needs of the students enrolled in the program were conceived of as three-fold: academic preparation for early entrance to university, social-emotional development, and physical development and well being (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1993). Physical activity was promoted through gym class and through extra-curricular opportunities like the badminton club organized by one of the teachers or the school's basketball team. Parents were encouraged to support their children's participation in sports and physical activities outside of school. Social-emotional development was supported by the school counselor who made a conscious effort to be available to the students when they needed to discuss their issues.

Academic preparation for early entrance to university was first addressed through academic acceleration. Students had been previously assessed in terms of both academic ability and achievement. Readiness for advanced level work in English, Social Studies, Mathematics and Science had been further determined by the teachers' curriculum based assessment. As a result, students were scheduled into classes at the Grade 9, 10 and/or 11 levels depending on their profiles of abilities, skills, and motivation. Only Physical Education was provided at or near grade level as the timetable allowed. Teachers were encouraged to incorporate the Transition
students into regular classes while recognizing that they would need some support with respect to specific knowledge or skills. Students were expected to keep up with all assignments and ask for assistance as needed. Undertaking advanced level curriculum was deemed to provide enough of an academic challenge for these capable and motivated students. While there was some uncertainty whether the younger students would fit in with their senior secondary classmates, they expressed satisfaction and pleasure with the more serious approach to studies in the senior classes as well as the conceptually more substantial curriculum. The major challenge for most students was in organization and time management.

Teachers were placed in a position of learning how to help the Transition students through a process of trial and error, a process made more difficult by the uniqueness of each of the students. While they all shared a high ability profile, they also had differences in learning style, personality and goals. Student profiles often displayed some uneven development of abilities, skills, interests and social-emotional maturity, often described in the literature as "asynchrony" (Silverman, 1993). Teachers were faced with students who could understand the concepts being discussed and read, but who could have difficulties organizing and presenting information for the purposes of assignments. Students presented strengths in some disciplines and some learning environments and demonstrated weaknesses in other areas or less complex aspects of a discipline. Teachers accepted these younger students into their senior secondary classes, but were not prepared to teach differently for these students. For the most part, it was up to the students to learn how to learn according to the instructional style of individual teachers.

At the request of the Principal and with the support of the Director of Student Services, the District Support Teacher for Gifted Education was scheduled for one block of the timetable to meet with the students three times a week to develop a peer group of mutual support (Moore, Memo, VSB, 1993). Students met in Portable Three (P3) for this block (E). Block E turned out to be the one occasion during the week when the students had opportunities to meet together as an intact group, to discuss their program experiences and reflect on their goals and how they were learning both as individuals and as a group. The equivalent of a home room, P3 became a place to study, relax, eat lunch and play games, humorously described at one time as the 'palace of the procrastinating platypi' (TP Notes, VSB, 1993).

Seminar topics ranged from organization and time management skills to creative problem solving and reflection on their experiences in the program through interactive journal writing. Students completed the Myers Briggs Type Inventory as did many of their teachers, and the results were used to explore learning style preferences and group dynamics. (See Appendix B.) A climate of positive coaching facilitated problem solving with the students as they moved through a program of intensive challenge and radical change. Students were engaged in discussions about the nature of giftedness and different ways of making sense of each other's profiles including strengths, interests, and areas needing more support. They were encouraged to appreciate the uniqueness of each individual and learned how to function as members of a cohort group. Instead of competitiveness as a norm, they made a deliberate choice to believe that enabling each other to succeed was the more empowering and more meaningful approach to their experience of the program's various challenges. Students were also facilitated in developing skills for helping one another. For example, they discussed effective approaches for presenting their report cards and marks to their parents in an effort to respond to one student who expressed trepidation about bringing his first term marks home. Topics discussed included negotiation skills within the education system, winning arguments and effective behaviors, ways to
understand other people's actions, personal learning preferences and choices, strategies to cope with change. (See Appendix B.) As part of this climate of support, students' long term goals and preferred future successes were explored and supported. Struggles experienced along the way were viewed as opportunities for developing strengths and enhancing the sophistication of life skills.

The seminar block played an important role in the lives of these students in a secondary setting where doubts about the appropriateness of their educational path were expressed by staff, students and the secondary culture (TP Parent Meeting, VSB, 1994). It became a safe environment for the development of understandings, skills and strategies that supported social-emotional development. The seminar block confirmed for the students the realization that they were choosing a non-traditional educational path, that they were sharing in the pioneering of a new initiative, and that their role in the process as participant and observer was significant and valued. Their contributions to program development were emphasized. It was equally important for parents to know this perspective was articulated to the students as well as to them, since they too were struggling with how to support their children within this alternative education opportunity (TP Parent Note, VSB, 1994). Parents and students reported that the purposeful expression of encouragement extended to participants by an educator who understood the vulnerabilities, sensitivity and intensity of gifted learners contributed significantly to the development of the peer group and the on-going efforts and perseverance of the students within this exceptionally challenging gifted education program (TP Parents' Report, VSB, 1997).

As one might anticipate, the students typically had achieved high grades in academic work in the regular school setting without significant effort. In their initial experiences with the work in classes that were usually at least two grades above their chronological grade level, the Transition Program students were playing gap-based curriculum catch-up and grappling with standards and expectations for work at a higher level while attempting to master new curriculum as it was taught. As a result their marks initially were not always stellar. Initially this experience was startling and unnerving for these young gifted adolescents. Gradually they learned how to organize their time, focus their attention and adopt effective and efficient learning strategies.

Unfortunately prevailing myths and misinformation about gifted learners dominated. Students were sometimes faced with inappropriate challenges such as, "if you are so smart, figure it out for yourself" (TP Notes, Parent Interview, VSB, 1994). Similarly it was suggested that gifted students can make it on their own and don't need help. In some settings direct instruction was not provided and students were left to struggle to learn on their own. There was also the viewpoint that students with exceptional abilities do not require assistance, with an implied comparison to students who struggle to master the basics. Whether due to lack of information, misunderstanding or misjudgment, these views often prevented students from receiving the kind of support or help they needed. The articulation of student learning needs became a primary challenge for students and their parents as well as for program staff and teachers in the school. Gradually, as students and teachers worked together for significant periods of time, there emerged broader understandings of students' learning needs and teaching approaches that responded more respectfully and effectively to individuals as well as to Transition Program students as a group.

By the spring of the first year of the program, most students were completing at least one Grade 11 course. A number of students were experiencing some level of difficulty with managing the
workload and completing assignments successfully. Two students, together with their parents, consulted with the school counselor and Principal and made the decision to leave the program. In one case the student who had relocated to the Lower Mainland from the BC interior in order to attend the program experienced difficulties related to organization and time management. Despite significant interventions on his behalf, the counselor and his parents agreed that living in another city without the support of parents was too demanding. As a result this student left the program near the end of the school year and returned to his neighborhood school where he went on to achieve exceptional success (TP Correspondence, VSB, 1995). In the second case, one of the girls decided to discontinue the program at the end of the first year because she felt the intense academic focus demanded more time than she was prepared to give. In particular she wanted more time for elective courses and extracurricular activities and chose to enroll in a combination of Grade 11 and 12 courses for the following September (TP Notes, VSB, 1994).

**Liaisoning Between UBC Professors and Transition Program Staff**

During the first year of the program, the four university professors who would work with the Transition Program were identified: Dr. Jesse Brewer, Physics; Dr. Charles Humphrey, History; Dr. Judy Brown, English; and, Dr. Roy Douglas, Mathematics (TP Notes, VSB, 1993). The UBC Liaison Coordinator and the District Gifted Education Teacher organized an introductory meeting between the university and secondary school staff in the fall of 1993. The discussion focused on how the curriculum might be compacted for an accelerated program and the kinds of support that the university professors might provide. Invitations to visit the program were extended to the professors, and relationships between the individuals from the same disciplines began to develop. Several of the professors and teachers made immediate plans to work out schedules for visits and teaching time. In other cases there was a lack of follow-up on both sides due to time constraints, the newness of the roles, and a lack of clarity about how to provide effective assistance across institutions and for this particular student population.

Interesting issues emerged gradually from teacher-professor discussions (TP Notes, VSB, 1994). A key question focused on what would constitute the skills necessary for success in university studies within each discipline. Another question regarded the knowledge considered most useful for the student planning to enter university early. Recommendations such as the ability to write on demand, to read critically, to analyze information and to generate interesting questions were gradually translated into practical goals of curriculum delivery and teaching for advanced level understandings, knowledge, and skills. There was a consensus that focusing on the achievement of provincial examinations was a necessary but insufficient goal for the program and for these students who would need to be prepared to achieve high levels of success in university studies. Exposure to the expectations and learning approaches used at the university was part of the experiences that these professors could provide. In the case of Physics, the instructor introduced students to current science research involving a tour of Triumf at UBC, and he took particular time to work with students who were exceptionally gifted in the area of physics (TP Notes, VSB, 1993-95). The university and school History teachers developed a strong professional relationship that resulted in university level seminars in History for Year Two Transition Program students. These seminars have continued to be one of the highlights of the students' experiences in the program (TP Notes, VSB, 2000).
The faculty and teachers gradually built relationships within which they examined, articulated, and refined their understandings of effective teaching approaches and essential learning for this particular group of students. The conversation about student learning needs, the ways curriculum could be presented and the kinds of ideas that could be explored forced a closer examination of pedagogy that was appropriate for these learners. These conversations were further stimulated when interdisciplinary discussions involved secondary teachers from the four disciplines with the UBC professors from different faculties. While the learning needs of students remained the focus of these conversations, it was the students themselves -- their ideas, insights, humor, enthusiasm for learning, remarkable work efforts and dedication to excellence -- who made the teaching experience refreshing and inspired creative responses from their teachers.

The exchanges between the university professors and secondary school teachers proved beneficial for each other as professionals as well as for the students who experienced the results of their collaboration. Many of their informal exchanges increased understandings about the substantial academic growth which these students could achieve in the course of a year of advanced study. For example, at a similar meeting in 1995 one of the professors commented on the youthfulness of incoming students, particularly one student whose feet did not reach the floor when he was seated in a desk. At that point, a senior secondary teacher, who had in previous years expressed doubts about the ability of such young students to master advanced level work, commented on how amazingly quickly these students grow and learn (TP Staff/Professor Meeting, U-Hill Secondary, 1995). Another indication of the impressive nature of the abilities of the Transition students was the welcome extended to them to attend and enroll in the courses taught by these professors at the university. On numerous occasions when Transition students visited university courses, individual professors remarked on the students' insightful understandings and the interesting questions they generated, suggesting that they often demonstrated more advanced level thinking than many first year university students (TP Staff/Faculty Meeting Minutes, VSB, 1997; TP Staff, Interview Notes, VSB, 1999).

Developing Professional Knowledge: Gifted Education and Related Student Needs

Professional development support for the teachers in the Transition Program proved challenging to arrange. The Transition Program students represented an additional assignment for teachers who were already dedicated to teaching assigned courses; their foremost commitment was to the school as a community and to the students in their regular classes. Time available for meetings was limited (TP Notes, VSB, 1994). In these early stages there was also a level of uncertainty about the nature of this new program and questions about the value of approaches such as academic acceleration and curriculum compaction which led to some doubts about whether professional development in this area was necessary or useful. Gifted education was not a familiar topic for most secondary teachers and certainly not one that staff had perceived as important for the school as a whole (TP Interview, Administrator, 1994).

Since 1987, district gifted education initiatives had been focused on elementary students and how to support the development of the gifted individual through exploration of interest areas, personal interest projects, and enrichment to complement an emphasis on academic productivity. Secondary teaching being organized differently, focused on the development of students within content, skills, and understandings of specific disciplines defined according to an age-grade
appropriate structure wherein all students are invited to participate equally as members of the same school community (DAC Minutes, VSB, 1995). Traditionally, in a secondary school, gifted students have been assumed to be synonymous with exceptionally high achieving students with excellent study and work skills, a strong work ethic, and high standards of academic production. Conversations about the needs of gifted learners as special needs students did not typically have a recognized place within the infrastructures and operation of the secondary school culture.

Another challenge inherent in meetings of staff involved with Transition Program students was the discussion of interdisciplinary curriculum. Teachers were involved in discussions of learning and teaching styles and faced with dilemmas such as students who could learn mathematics easily and quickly but who had difficulty with writing assignments. These issues involved an articulation and an examination of how teachers organized and presented curriculum and evaluated student work. It concerned issues such as what skills were common and related to learning how to learn, what skills were unique to a discipline and how student needs could be supported within all disciplines (TP Staff Meeting, VSB, 1994). These questions were not always comfortable ones and discussing them among teachers from different disciplines was often frustrating. One administrator explained that it is not typical for secondary teachers to work as part of an interdisciplinary team (Interview, Secondary Administrator, VSB, 1999). One secondary teacher with over twenty years of teaching experience pointed out that discussions of interdisciplinary curriculum ideas typically occurred only within departments or disciplines and not across disciplines or in multi-disciplinary groups (TP Interview, VSB, 1999).

One very useful opportunity for professional development was the visit to the Transition School at the University of Washington, Seattle (TP Notes, VSB, 1994). A number of staff participated and were encouraged to see a program that had been in operation for almost fifteen years. They spoke with students, met with the teachers, and discussed the program's design with both the Program Director and Administrator, and the Assistant Director and Resident Psychologist. Since the primary interest of teachers was in curriculum delivery, the District Support Teacher organized a Saturday meeting of Transition Program teachers with teachers from the Seattle Transition School. The meeting was held at Vancouver's Student Services location and discussions were organized for the most part by discipline (TP Notes, VSB, 1994).

The significant impact of these events was not on specific aspects of teaching but rather on attitude, credibility, and an understanding of student needs. Teachers were able to explore how curriculum delivery for this student population could be organized. Through these exchanges it became clear that the parameters defining the BC education system, viewed from the perspective of secondary school culture and its familiar traditions, limited consideration of organizational structures and program practices that might be adopted by the VSB/UBC Transition Program. For example, as part of the University of Washington, the Seattle Transition School is able to register students for university, receive funding through an endowment, and allow students to complete high school graduation requirements during their first year of university studies (TP Notes, VSB, 1994). Exposure to this information and particularly to the people involved in the program resulted in more open conversation among the VSB staff about the needs of these students and generated an increased respect for the efforts of the staff within the program.
Transition Program Parents

From the first meeting with parents and students, the Transition Program was described as an alternative educational experience that would evolve through the support and collaboration of all participants including students, staff, and parents (TP Parent Meeting, 1993). Communication between home and school, students and teachers, parents and staff as well as within the home was emphasized. Given the pioneering nature of this initiative, it is not surprising that parents were very concerned about the delivery of the program and the well being and achievements of their children. Both Principal Tom Grant and the District Support Teacher for Gifted Education encouraged the parents to support one another and learn from their children and each other (TP Notes, VSB, 1993).

As a result of their dedication to their children's education and their support for the program, parents held an informal meeting in December 1993. This group was soon to become known as the Transition Program Parents Support Group (TPPSG) and later was formalized as the Transition Program Parents Association (TPPA). The meeting minutes of the January 12, 1994, indicate that the formal aim of the association is "to provide a center for communication among the parents on matters concerning the education of their gifted children" enrolled in the Transition Program (TPPA Minutes, VSB, 1994). Specific goals included facilitation of communication and mutual support among member parents, assisting students and candidates with educational issues, providing a collective channel of communication with authorities and agencies, and interacting with external institutions on matters related to the Transition Program and education of gifted children (TPPA, Minutes, VSB, 1994).

From the time it was established, the Transition Program Parents Association shared information among members, provided feedback and brought concerns and recommendations to the school administrator or Transition Program staff. The parents' voice articulated student needs and lobbied for improvements to program delivery and long-term program development (TP Administrator, VSB, 1994). At the same time this strong voice of a group of parents was contrary to the traditional expectations of secondary schools where students are encouraged to articulate their needs and concerns directly to the teachers or a counselor. Parents, while informed, were not expected to respond to the everyday unfolding of program instruction or related school events (TP Notes, VSB, 1994). Transition Program parents, new to both the school and, in most cases, to a public secondary school culture, were embarking on the development of a special relationship with the program and the school. They found themselves engaging in negotiation, communication strategies for sensitive information, trust building, developing knowledge about how the system worked, and discerning basic ground rules for facilitating change (TP Parent Interview, VSB, 2000).

In order to be effective advocates for their children's education, the parents actively sought to educate themselves about the Transition Program, gifted students' needs, and effective approaches to parenting. A significant number of them visited the Transition School and Early Entrance to University Program in Seattle on February 21, 1996. They invited a variety of speakers to address them at their meetings. They wrote to the Ministry of Education to lobby for university tuition monies based on the shorter time students had accessed the traditional school system (TPPA Minutes, VSB, 1995-99). In subsequent years parents accumulated considerable correspondence with school and district administration in order to clarify the needs of their adolescents and to express their experiences, issues and perspectives as families.
Parents used a variety of means to highlight unmet student needs and to request program changes. In the first year of the program, parents brought their concerns directly to the principal who had created an open door policy for the program's students, staff and parents (TP Notes, VSB, 1993). Parents also came to the school to discuss their children's experiences in the program with the District Support Teacher. But over time as the leadership roles changed, the parents' need for problem solving were directed to meetings with individual teachers and the counselor and then presentations to school administration, the Transition Steering Committee, and the Director of Student Services (TP Notes, VSB, 1994-97). In order to facilitate change individual parents were also advised to document concerns in correspondence with school and district administration.


The massive pioneering efforts of students, parents, staff and administration in 1993-1994 built a broader understanding of purpose and direction for the Transition Program within the secondary school organization. This initial phase of implementation saw the beginning of an intensive struggle to define the needs of gifted students within the secondary school context and within an early entrance to university program. While they were engaging in innumerable discussions about the particular experiences and issues of individual students enrolled in the program, the staff, administration and parents were learning from one another about the various and unique kinds of needs presented by these students. Concerns about productivity and social-emotional development were explored and, as students developed and changed, the articulation of these concerns became more focused and less rigid. The learning process for all concerned was demanding of time, energy, and reflection. It was mostly through a process of trial and error that new understandings and related appropriate practices emerged. These understandings became most evident when they bumped up against existing traditions and practices--their articulation often taking a weighty toll on relationships and emotions within the program, within families, and the school (TP Survey, Parents, 2000).

In 1994 the Transition Program Steering Committee was reactivated (TP Notes, VSB, 1994). The Committee's role was to help the program establish itself within the context of the institutional partnership. While not responsible for daily management decisions, the Committee discussed program issues that were affected by institutional and Ministry policies. These discussions articulated program policies, program goals, and plans to address long term program development. Topics included high school graduation, university entrance, scholarships, program refinements, and issues related to emerging student needs (TPSC Notes, VSB, 1994).

Meanwhile other students had been recruited for the program following psycho-educational assessments, interviews and some curriculum-based assessment. As a result, the second year of the Transition Program, 1994-95, had an enrollment of 12 Year Two students and 20 Year One students (TP Records, VSB, 1994).

With the increase in enrollment in both Years One and Two (1994-95), the program required more staffing support. For electives and physical education the students were enrolled as part of regular classes as best suited their age and development. However, the challenge of addressing
the needs of twenty Transition Program students within regular academic courses was problematic given timetable and contract limitations. It was also deemed important that they work together to develop a supportive intellectual peer culture. As a result, students were enrolled as intact groups for the majority of their academic courses (TP Notes, VSB, 1994).

Year Two students, with the help of their teachers and the school counselor, focused on completing high school graduation requirements and meeting university entrance requirements. The twelve students enrolled in Year Two in 1994-95 would be the first graduating class of the Transition Program; cohort members were committed to achieving excellent results on provincial examinations. This group of students had been affected by the changeover of staff, both with the loss of the previous administrator who had been highly supportive of them and with adjustments to new staff (TP Parent Interview, 2000). Parents carefully watched over the students' welfare and workload. Marks took on a new prominence as a critical variable for measuring achievement and the means for attaining scholarships. Students intensified their efforts to meet teacher standards and manage their workloads in order that they could achieve their goals.

The Year Two student culture changed as students increased their study efforts and examinations approached. A strong bond had developed among them, demonstrated by their commitment to helping one another succeed (TP Student Interviews, 2000). It was clear that the students owned the goal of early entrance to university, and they were taking initiative with respect to preparing for success.

In an effort to assist the program's development, the school principal supported the proposal for part of the school staff's professional development to focus on developing an understanding of the Transition Program. With the support of the members of the school's Professional Development Committee, a panel presentation for the staff took place in the fall of 1994. This panel was composed of parents of students currently enrolled in the program. One parent expressed appreciation for what the program had contributed to the education of his child and for the life of their family as a whole. Emotions ran high as he concluded: "Thank you for giving my son back to me" (TP Notes, VSB, 1994).

The school counselor played a key role in the lives of the students as they completed applications for both Lower Mainland universities and scholarships. The counselor advised students about career paths and provided information about the entrance requirements and courses offered through various faculties. The counselor took responsibility for meeting with a representative from the Registrar's Office at UBC so that applications from Transition Program students could be received with an understanding of the nature of their program, the exceptional abilities of the students and the circumstances of their achievements. This understanding provided a more appropriate and absolutely essential context for the university's review of student marks when university entrance and course enrollment were decided.

Out of concern for these students and appreciation of their efforts, individual staff members working within the secondary school were gradually retooling the infrastructure to address student needs (TP Notes, VSB, 1995). Plans were tentative because it was unknown how much and to what extent students would complete the work required for provincial examinations. Considerable tolerance for ambiguity was required to keep program options open for students. For example, one student from the first cohort requested the opportunity to complete Grade 12 Chemistry in the last half of the second year (TP Student Interview, 2000). The Chemistry
teacher provided support for the opportunity and monitored student progress. A second student who had been enrolled in Grade 10 in a neighboring secondary school joined the Transition Program Year Two students in January and worked intensively so as to be able to achieve high school graduation by the end of June of that school year (TP Student Interview, 2000). These experiments with program flexibility by staff and administration were interpreted by students and parents as tokens of encouragement and respect for the students and their abilities and goals. It was from the experiences within the program's first two years by both students and staff that structures for the program emerged and gradually became articulated as practice.

In November of 1994 the Year Two students agreed to serve on a panel at the first ever Colloquium on the Highly Gifted which was organized by the Vancouver School Board with financial support from the Ministry of Education (Colloquium Report, VSB, 1995). Two well-known contributors to the field of gifted education, Dr. Linda Silverman and Dr. Karen Rogers, presented research-based understandings with respect to academic acceleration and its effectiveness for academically highly gifted learners. The highlight of the day was the panel of Transition Program students who spoke about the intensity of their workload, the development of a powerful bond among their peer group, and their reasons for wanting to attend university early. Following an earlier visit to the Transition Program in Seattle, Jim Nattress, the Chemistry teacher, likened the early entrance to university program to academic boot camp. While the term captured the intensity of the workload, it did not completely explain the intensity of the caring that one of the more reticent students described when she commented in front of her peers, "We love one another" (TP Notes, VSB, 1994). While working hard to accomplish their goals, the students were also supporting each other through the process. Talking about their experiences in a public setting helped students recognize the uniqueness of their educational journey and validated their efforts and goals. Having a real and interested audience helped the students reflect on their experiences and articulate a range of perspectives for their audience and for one another. The response to the panel validated for the students that their decisions were important not only for themselves but also for the range of Colloquium attendees who represented various professional roles, as well as parent and student perspectives from the Lower Mainland and other areas of the province.

Up to this point the implementation of the program had proved to be an intriguing challenge with a steep learning curve. The problems that arose had unique elements that required thoughtful exploration and resolutions that had to be developed on a case by case basis. For the most part, staff, students and parents learned how to make the program effective at the same time as the students were completing required work and exams (TP Teacher Interview, 2000). There was little occasion for reflection because each aspect of the program was new with data that were often incomplete and decisions that were constantly open to discussion and innovation. Communication was critical. Staff found it difficult to meet as part of the Transition Program because the majority of their teaching time was focused on University Hill Secondary School responsibilities with at most two teaching blocks scheduled for Transition Program students. The only constant for leadership and program support was the school principal. Teachers conferred with him about their concerns, and he interacted with every teacher as well as the students and parents as individuals, building a climate of trust within which teachers and students and parents felt supported.
Changes in Program Staff

In the second year of the program, changes in school staff impacted Transition Program delivery. The Chemistry teacher who had visited the Seattle program and afforded Transition Program students exceptional flexibility moved to another school district. Staff also needed to be identified for mathematics and then physics. These changes were limited by hiring practices and organized to address school needs and accommodate program teaching blocks. The new vice principal of University Hill Secondary was given responsibility for the seminar block for the Transition Program students in Year One, and the District Support Teacher was asked to provide ancillary support. The Year Two students were not provided with a seminar block but were given tutorial assistance and planning support from a member of the Year Two teaching staff (TP Notes, VSB, 1994).

In December the school was notified that the principal of University Hill was to be promoted to a larger secondary school commencing in January 1995. The students, their parents and the staff keenly felt the loss of energetic leadership and enthusiastic support for the Transition Program at this critical point. The new administration needed time to develop the experience to respond to the intensity of these students' needs and the fragility of a new program initiative. A change in leadership philosophy also created more instability for the program. It was a credit to the students and their teachers and parents as well as the school counselor that the Year Two students took up the academic challenges and by the end of the school year had met requirements for high school graduation and university entrance including competing for scholarships. Not only were the students pleased with their efforts and their success, but they had earned the respect of their teachers who recognized and appreciated their perseverance and the intensity of the work ethic which students brought to bear on their learning tasks (TP Notes, VSB, 1995). The teachers expressed their enjoyment in teaching the students and in addressing the unique needs of individuals within this group. The first graduating class had generated a template for how the program could accomplish the goal of early entrance to university. Five of the graduates chose to enter university following Year Two in the Transition Program. Of the seven who did not, one spent a year travelling while six enrolled in a regular Grade 12 program.

Parents who had formed an association the previous year in order to bring concerns and suggestions to the administration and to support collaborative problem solving wrote a letter to the Associate Superintendent of the Jericho Area, requesting a full-time coordinator for the Transition Program (TP Correspondence, VSB, 1994). They believed that the coordinator role would provide the students and staff with the support and assistance needed to maximize the learning opportunities within the program. The letter urged that the successful applicant be trained in gifted education, know how to support gifted learners, know how to modify curriculum to support accelerated learning, and be able to provide program leadership, coordination, and communication with parents, staff and UBC.

In anticipation of the need for school-based program coordination, a program coordinator position similar in scope to the Department Head positions found in secondary schools was discussed. A position was posted and two Transition Program staff members who had applied and wished to share the position were successful (TP Notes, VSB, 1995). The teachers represented Social Studies/History and Mathematics respectively. Each teacher was provided with one block of time during the 1995-1996 school year to monitor student progress, organize program events, meet with parents and handle responsibilities for individual education plans and
resource management. Both teachers worked in coordination with the principal. District staff was responsible for program information, recruitment, identification of program candidates, and organization of screening meetings which involved representation from school administration, program staff, school counselor and district staff including the school psychologist(s).

**Provincial Resource Program Status**

In the spring of 1995 the Ministry of Education notified the Vancouver School Board that the Transition Program had been accepted as a Provincial Resource Program (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1995). Educational programs which may be eligible for designation as a Provincial Resource Program include the following: "Unique programs for exceptionally low-incidence populations...when it has been demonstrated that the number of such students is so low and the nature of the special needs so severe as to preclude the operation of a suitable program in most school districts" (Special Education Services Manual, 1995. p. F3). The policy requires that the majority of students enrolled in the program must not be residents of the sponsoring school district. The Transition Program as a Provincial Resource Program would serve qualifying students from any school district in the province. No more than half of the students accepted for the Transition Program are to be enrolled in the Vancouver School District; all other spaces are to be filled by students from other districts and/or private or independent schools. The funding for the Transition Program as a Provincial Resource Program included 2.5 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) staffing and 0.3 FTE for each of counseling and psychological services as well as a resource budget. As a provincial resource program, the Transition Program was to be administered by the Vancouver School District, through the district senior management official responsible for Special Education. This official was also responsible for over-seeing the work of district staff associated with the Transition Program, namely, the District Support Teacher for Gifted Education and the psychologist responsible for assessments in this area. The Director of Student Services was responsible for this program and acted as chairperson for the Steering Committee. Daily management of the program was to be supervised by the secondary school principal.

This change of status for the Transition Program had several positive effects (TP Notes, VSB, 1996). As a result of the funding, additional course options were made available for these students as a cohort group. Ministry funding for the PRP gave a formal legitimacy to the Transition Program. As a Provincial Resource Program funded by Special Education, the program extended its support to include the Ministry of Education as a third institutional partner. This status also enhanced the credibility of discussions about the unique educational needs of gifted students within all schools and across all school districts where awareness of the program was gradually developing.

Clarifying a separate funding source for the program dispelled the misinformation that had created the perception that the core school program had been eroded in order to facilitate the establishment of the Transition Program (TP Notes, VSB, 1995). While this had never been the case, critics of the program had argued this position. Supporters of the program put forward the idea that the school was benefiting in many ways by having an identified academically gifted student population to add to the school culture. These differing viewpoints were part of the learning and adjustment process within the school.
District Changes and Leadership Challenges for the Transition Program

In December of 1995 the retirement of the Director of Student Services resulted in program leadership becoming the responsibility of a new Interim Director (TP Notes, VSB, 1996). The Interim Director instructed a new District Principal to take responsibility for Gifted Education and supervise the work of the District Support Teacher for Gifted Education who provided gifted education leadership and program support for the Transition Program (TP Notes, VSB, 1996). The effect of the loss of the original educational leader behind the Transition Program's establishment coupled with more new school-based management staff who had little experience with gifted students and their parents was to change program-focused decision-making, by default, to secondary school decision-making. In some respects the Transition Program began to look more like a secondary school program (TP Notes, VSB, 1996).

This change in program leadership resulted in a blurring of program goals and understandings. Two distinct perspectives became apparent among Transition Program students and their parents. One view was that the Transition Program offered gifted secondary school students enriched learning experiences within a group of high ability peers. Members of this group wanted stimulating learning experiences but were not committed to the goal of early entrance to university. They were typically inclined to take one or two years of the Transition Program and then enroll in the regular secondary program for Grades 11 or 12 respectively. Students in the second group were unwaveringly dedicated to the goal of achieving early entrance to university. They were interested in the opportunity of engaging, challenging work and enjoyed the press involved in the intense workload as well as the group dynamics within a climate where academic intellectual pursuits were the norm. These students were not particularly interested in the secondary school experience and were attracted to the university's extensive learning opportunities. It became clear that the former group needed a program within a secondary school setting while the latter group needed a program designed to support the intensive work efforts required to achieve the goal of early entrance to university (TP Notes, VSB, 1996).

In March of 1996 the Transition Program Parents' Association prepared a report for the Interim Director of Student Services (Report, TPPA, VSB, 1996). The report was designed to describe the first three years of the Transition Program to the new district administrator and a follow-up meeting was requested to discuss the parents' concerns and recommendations. The report recognized three key resource groups within the program: students, teachers and parents. The importance of the program's existence and a review of its development were followed by seventeen recommendations. The report also articulated parent responsibilities to support students, staff and institutions as well as to support growth of individual parents, families and the program parent community. The report affirmed that nurturing of students required parent involvement and commitment.

More flexibility; social development & bonding; study skills & time management; full-time coordinator; structure accessibility; research; support at the university; teacher training -- gifted students; program guidelines; "counseling"; parental involvement; help for teachers in curriculum development; budget; early entrance to universities; communication between students, school & parents; commitment from University Hill & School Board; evaluation.
While the report addressed a variety of program and student issues, its strongest recommendation was for the hiring of a full-time coordinator who could be dedicated to supporting the program's operation and development and meeting the needs of the students. The parents indicated that the demands of the coordinator role could not be effectively shared nor be handled part time by an individual or individuals who also had teaching responsibilities. They also recommended a return of the services of the District Support Teacher for the students in a format similar to that offered in the start-up year of the program.

In April 1996, the school administrator, in consultation with the Interim Director, posted the position of coordinator with teaching responsibilities (TP Notes, VSB, 1996). Given the restrictions of the hiring process, the position was limited to Vancouver secondary school teachers. Background in gifted education and specific knowledge of academic acceleration, educational and developmental needs of academically gifted adolescents, and early entrance to university programs were not highlighted as a priority. None of the applicants had training or background in gifted education, a limitation that increased the learning demands for the role and became noticeably problematic when it came to supporting program development and delivery.

The successful applicant qualified on the basis of a doctoral degree, a high level of commitment to students, and experience as a teacher in a Vancouver Mini-School but had no previous program coordination experience. The task of teaching science to the Transition Program students was added to four blocks for coordination involving tasks which had previously been undertaken by the two Transition Program staff who had shared the coordinating role the previous year. The coordination responsibilities were not outlined in detail, which made it difficult to initiate effective organization.

Program coordination was also a challenge because staff who taught in the program saw their primary roles as teachers with responsibilities within a specific discipline in the secondary school. The Transition Program staff positions initially had not been posted because no funding was available for separate staffing; instead existing staff in the secondary school had been invited to take on teaching responsibilities within the program. Only one of the teachers had taken a course in gifted education many years earlier and no teacher had experience in teaching students in an early entrance to university program. Teachers by and large were not aware of the nature and needs of this student population and how they functioned as a group and as individuals. The focus for teachers became the curriculum, and students were required to adapt to what was being taught and the way the teacher provided instruction. Staff commitment to program development was, therefore, limited.

The coordinator position was difficult to articulate given different perspectives of the program and the limited time of the staff who were already committed to a secondary school teaching assignment. It was also difficult to initiate the conversation about the unique needs of this student group within the context of an environment where the program was anticipated to function as an extension of a secondary school structure. The culmination of these changes and varied perspectives of the program resulted in decision-making that made the program participants uncertain about goals and directions. Effects on the program included some students discontinuing the program and in some cases qualified applicants choosing not to enroll.
During the period from 1995 to 1997, the Vancouver School District underwent further budget cuts. The Vancouver School Board commissioned an external review of Student Services, and a final report presented in November 1996 recommended downsizing and re-organization. Events at this time included the elimination of the position for District Support Teacher for Gifted Education. The position was subsequently reinstated for one year. When plans for instituting a consultant position for gifted education were changed in the face of on-going budget concerns, the original position was continued. After significant staffing cuts and reorganization of services, most of what had been Student Services and Program Services was decentralized into four Area Learning Services Teams with a limited number of staff designated to provide service through District Learning Services. Many former highly specialized staff accepted new assignments in the new organization while a number of talented staff were lost to the system. Beginning in September 1997 responsibility for gifted education was placed under the direct supervision of the Associate Superintendent of the newly formed Learning Services. The Associate Superintendent contributed standards of excellence, professional integrity, conceptual clarity and an ability to think outside the box to the Transition Program's mandate to meet the educational needs of gifted students. As chair of the Transition Program Steering Committee and as part of the management team for the Transition Program, Dr. Overgaard spearheaded the process of clarifying the program's goals and making the operation of the program more responsive to student needs and more transparent and available for discussion with parents, students, and staff (TP Notes, VSB, 1997).

The Program's Struggle for a Clear Identity

At the time when new leadership was initiated at the district level, there were numerous problems related to program management identified by staff, students, and parents. There were differences of opinion about program decisions being made on a daily basis. There were questions about whether these decisions were addressing the specific educational needs of the students or whether they were reflecting the common sense of the secondary school culture, practices, and management (TP Notes, VSB, 1996). The program was viewed as a secondary school program, as a school within a school. Focus was placed on "normalizing" the students so that they would look more like regular secondary school students. There was little interest in developing the program's response to the special needs of these gifted students. If students failed to meet the standards set by the teachers, they were advised to enroll in regular courses. Students were presented with the goal of becoming "well-rounded" and advised to take more courses over more years in order to develop a broader range of talents and interests (TP Notes, VSB, 1996).

Within the context of exploring why there were students who were not succeeding, choosing to leave the program or expressing disappointment with the narrow academic focus of the program, it was suggested that the process of selection of students needed to be examined more closely (TP Notes, VSB, 1996). Criteria for selection were thus refined to emphasize commitment to the goal of early entrance to university. Discussion focused on taking into account social-emotional development, academic learning skills, and identification of issues that might hinder the student's ability to manage the workload within the program.
Discussion also addressed assumptions that gifted students applying for the program would necessarily be organized, high achieving and equipped with the skills and understandings to be successful within the program. Another assumption that was questioned was whether being gifted carried with it the expectation that the individual should be able to handle whatever internal challenges might accompany the experience of being an adolescent in a program of intensive and conceptually advanced academic studies.

One of the most challenging issues identified by students, their parents and program staff was the asynchrony between the conceptual abilities of these individuals and their social-emotional understandings and skills as well as their physical development. Wide-ranging interpretations of student performance, behaviors, and skills contributed to different interpretations of students' related educational needs (TP Notes, VSB, 1996). The result was that students received a wide range of advice from many different sources. For example, students who qualified for early entrance to university were advised by secondary peers and school culture to take a Grade 12 year at the secondary school to ensure adequate academic and social-emotional readiness for university studies (TP Student Interviews, 1999). Students and parents also articulated a more tangible and concrete rationale for this decision, namely that they could more readily be assured of receiving higher competitive marks that would support their scholarship applications if they remained for a Grade 12 year (TP Parent Interviews, 1999).

Increasingly, Transition Program parents were articulating the ways in which their students were experiencing the Transition Program within the secondary school environment (TP Notes, VSB, 1996). Parents reported hearing discouraging comments made by individuals within the school about the program, individual students, and individual parents. Parents also brought forward questions and issues related to unmet needs of students with respect to program coordination and teaching.

At the May 08, 1996, meeting of the Transition Program Steering Committee, Pat Sparkes spoke on behalf of the Transition Program Parent Association and requested that a member of the parent organization be invited to sit on the Steering Committee to provide the parent perspective as well as facilitate communication with parents (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1996). The following year, two parent representatives joined the Transition Program Steering Committee. These representatives eventually evolved as one parent from the current group of students and one parent representing the parents of graduates of the program.

In January 1997, the Transition Program Parent Association surveyed the parents of students in Year One and Year Two (TPPA, Minutes, VSB, 1997). The survey questions asked for the most positive program benefit, recommended changes, feedback on student social-emotional support, use of tutors, concerns about teaching or other comments. The majority of parents identified the peer group support as the most positive aspect of the program at that time. Most parents suggested program changes should focus on the need for encouragement of students, more information about curriculum and instruction, and more flexibility in the program to respond to individual student needs. A majority of parents also requested proper counseling noting that at the time of the survey neither the school counselor nor the District Gifted Education Teacher had been scheduled to meet with students. Parents noted that a majority of the students in the program were receiving tutoring outside of the program. Most parents indicated a preference for meetings with teachers as a group when reviewing student progress in the program or related concerns rather than to meet with teachers individually. The results of the survey reflected both
the on-going valuing of the program as well as serious concerns about program operation, coordination and curriculum delivery.

At the June meeting of the Transition Program Parent Association the areas of program delivery that did not support the needs of students were raised once again. Parents expected the program to provide a differentiated experience for the students with respect to curriculum, instruction, and program management and organization. They expressed concerns that they were not "allowed to discuss...teachers, curriculum, and teacher attitude" (TPPA Minutes, 1997). Adding to the nature of these concerns was the realization that no one seemed to be in a position to make the changes necessary to address these concerns. The majority of parents articulated their support for the program concept and their support for the student population; the same majority concluded that program delivery issues existed and needed to be understood and addressed by program leadership.

Program Learning Culminates in Reframing of Program Structure

By the 1996-97 school year an enrollment pattern in the Transition Program emerged. It became evident that there was a significant decline in the number of applicants and an increase in the number of students leaving the program after Year One (TP Notes, VSB, 1998). Many of the students who were discontinuing the program were registering in the regular program at University Hill Secondary. Accommodations were made for these students with respect to academic placements that reflected the acceleration experienced during their enrollment in the Transition Program. The move to the regular program did not involve a change in location and often students had the same teachers and the support of the same counselor, and were able to optimize their subsequent year(s) in the secondary school setting. The secondary school staff and administration welcomed the achievement of excellence of these identified gifted students. Many of the students brought exceptional recognition to themselves and to the school through their various talents, personal integrity, response to challenge and commitment to social responsibility.

As a result of a combination of factors, including issues of leadership, roles and responsibilities, instruction, evaluation, student support and unmet needs, the 1996-97 Year Two class was down to nine boys and the 1997-98 Year One class enrolled six boys. Of those six boys, three did not continue into Year Two. Two accepted advanced placement in regular secondary programs and one received a scholarship to study piano and music composition at Berkeley where he relocated and also enrolled in university courses.

The trend toward a larger proportion of male students enrolling and continuing in the program had developed gradually. Initially fewer girls applied to the program often because their abilities had not been previously recognized as exceptional and alternative programs had not been either available or explored on their behalf. Girls were also more familiar with being rewarded for behaving in accordance with expectations of teachers and parents and less familiar and less confident about taking academic risks and pursuing intellectual challenges. Girls often expressed more hesitation about accepting placement in the program, indicating doubt about the validity of the assessment results closely followed by concerns about leaving their friends and being identified as academically and intellectually different from age peers. In addition a number
of factors within the culture of the program adversely affected retention of girls. Differences in social-emotional maturity between males and females at this age were intensified by the larger number of boys e.g. 15 boys and 7 girls in Year One, 1994-95; 14 boys and 6 girls in Year One in 1995-96. As enrollment numbers increased, the Transition Program developed an identity characterized by achievements in mathematics and science by students typified as "nerds". This male dominance was also reflected in both the school and university staff. During the first four years of the program, twenty-seven girls enrolled in Year One, and only seven of those students continued on into Year Two. Twenty girls who completed the first year either chose or were counseled to enroll in a regular secondary program. The issue of gender balance required attention both from the recruitment and selection process and from program delivery elements.

In the preceding year, efforts to understand student needs and enhance program development had been intensified. A major catalyst for this program development occurred December 12, 1996, through Dr. Kate Noble, now Director of the University of Washington program, who visited with the Transition Program students at University Hill Secondary School and talked with them about their program experience, benefits and concerns. Later that day she met with the Transition Program Steering Committee where the current issues were discussed. She advised Transition Program administration, staff, and district staff that to be successful the program needed to be located on the university campus. Her recommendation suggested that location was the answer to many of the difficulties being experienced in the program with respect to student success within the program and at the university. Dr. Noble also understood the need for staff "who were specialized and conversant with the university environment so as to be able to understand the needs of the students and be able to explain the system to them" (Noble, TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1996).

At the close of the Steering Committee's discussions on December 12, 1996, a sub-committee was identified to draft a proposal for the relocation of the Transition Program to the UBC campus for discussion at the next meeting (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1996). The sub-committee consisted of the following members: Program Coordinator, GCA Parent, TP Parent, UBC Liaison Professor, School Administrator and District Gifted Education Teacher. Committee members at the January 17 meeting approved the proposal with suggestions that were subsequently incorporated (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1997). Discussion of criteria for selecting program space included student safety and proximity to libraries, lab space and recreational facilities. The final version of the proposal requesting that The University of British Columbia provide space on campus to facilitate the relocation of the Transition Program was submitted to the UBC President's Office in February 1997.

With some indication that the proposal was receiving support from UBC, the Steering Committee focused attention on program delivery issues that were manifesting as declining enrollment, particularly with respect to girls. In the context of discussions about how student needs could be met through the program's relocation to the UBC campus, Steering Committee members recommended refinements to program organization and delivery. For example, student selection according to the original vision of the program required an emphasis on requisite abilities, skills and work ethic together with a clear commitment to the goal of early entrance to university. The Committee recommended posting of all Transition Program staff positions using criteria and qualifications which included gifted education training and willingness to work together to support program goals. If appropriate candidates through the VSB internal posting process did not become available, an agreement had been negotiated with the union that the
competition would be opened to qualified staff from other school districts. Committee members also discussed the reorganization of program delivery so as to maximize opportunities for students through access to UBC opportunities including visits and enrollment in university courses. Alignment with the university timetable, which was recommended to encourage opportunities for students to participate in university courses, had implications such as flexible work hours for staff and release from the organizational framework defined by the secondary school timetable. The Committee also recommended curriculum reorganization and varied instructional approaches to support development of interdisciplinary curriculum experiences for students together with an emphasis on university preparation rather than high school coverage. Professional development for staff including university courses designed specifically to address their unique needs and related program research possibilities were discussed. Committee members reiterated the need for full-time coordination and academic advisement and counseling available on site.

As a follow-up to these discussions and at the request of the Chair of the Steering Committee, a sub-committee was identified to explore ideas related to the Transition Program's operation on campus. The same members who had worked on the relocation proposal agreed to sit on this sub-committee (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1997). A preliminary description of program vision and goals was presented to the Steering Committee at the meeting held on April 24, 1997. The Committee approved the initial work and contributed further ideas to the development of the document which was targeted for completion prior to the program's relocation to UBC.

Discussions of program relocation prompted a request in March to the Ministry of Education for a budget increase for the Transition Program (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1997). The Steering Committee was pleased, therefore, when the Ministry's representative announced at the meeting on June 6, 1997, that staffing would be increased the next year by 1.0 FTE and that limited one-time funds to support relocation would also be provided. This show of support from the Ministry heralded an increased enthusiasm for and belief in the viability of the program and the worthwhileness of the efforts of the students and their teachers.

The announcement of increased staffing was included in the letter from the Director of the Special Services Branch of the Ministry of Education (TP Correspondence, VSB, 1997). Dr. McBride requested that planning for program evaluation be initiated so that what was being learned from the experience within the program could be documented. She suggested that questions for this evaluation might include the kinds of student outcomes obtained both for participating students and those who had left the program along with the relative impact of the program on the learning and adjustment of exceptional students. These questions further stimulated efforts to understand and extend program development. The Committee recommended that formal evaluation be delayed until the program had developed stability in its new location but that planning for future evaluation begin immediately (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1997).

As an extension of this discussion committee members pointed out that the Transition Program was not well known within the Vancouver School District or within other school districts in the province. The program was also little known at UBC and among parent and community organizations. The Ministry of Education representative recommended documentation of the numerous positive aspects of the program and distribution of this information to a wide range of interested audiences, not the least of which were the institutional partners (TPSC Minutes, VSB,
1997). It was recommended that information about the successes of the program accompany future budget requests.

Also at the June meeting the District Support Teacher presented an outline for what would later become known as the Conceptual Framework document. The committee supported the outline and encouraged the development of the document to support preparation for program relocation.

Following the initiation of the new organization for district and area programs (September 1997), the Transition Program Steering Committee at the October 09 meeting welcomed the new Chairperson, Dr. Valerie Overgaard, Associate Superintendent of Learning Services. At that meeting the District Teacher was given responsibility to complete the draft document with edits from sub-committee members. The process of writing this document was informed by the coursework and development of the research proposal undertaken as part of the District Teacher's graduate program at UBC. In January members of the Steering Committee discussed the document, offering feedback and editorial changes. In mapping out the elements of the program including goals, vision, and identification of candidates as well as program delivery and expectations for participants, the document became the first comprehensive articulation of the program and a reference point for future program development. The document also functioned as a communication tool with students, parents, and new applicants and their parents, as well as new and continuing staff.

To enhance program planning and improvement, the Conceptual Framework was structured as a response document. All interested groups were invited to respond to this articulation of the program design. The Associate Superintendent of Learning Services and the District Support Teacher met with a variety of groups including current staff, current students, graduates of the Transition Program, and parents of current students and program graduates to obtain their input about the articulated program structure (TP Notes, VSB, 1998). Both parents and students indicated that the document gave them a clearer understanding of the program's design and purpose. The Transition Program staff suggested that details of program delivery such as courses, grade levels and timetabling be referred to in more general terms to retain flexibility for the program's continuing evolution. The document articulated the conceptual foundation for the program and suggested operational guidelines, both of which were related to key understandings about the nature and educational needs of academically gifted adolescents within an accelerated program that prepares them for early entrance to university. In some sense the blueprint for the program had been articulated and the scaffolding underlying its structure was now available for critical viewing.

The Conceptual Framework Response Document

The Conceptual Framework '98 document which was shaped by the literature review undertaken for this study was developed to address the Steering Committee's need for program clarity at a time when the program was experiencing a decline in enrolment, particularly female students. This document was informed by past practice and recommended practices of acceleration and curriculum organization described in the gifted education literature. In addition to clarifying the program's scope and goals, the document articulated the minimum entry criteria, the process of identification of candidates, orientation and placement decisions, and responsibilities of program
staff, students, and parents. The document also addressed the program design by representing the three categories of student need: academic development, social-emotional development, and career exploration. (See Figure 1.0.) A wide range of educational experiences was deemed critical to the individual's ability to integrate learning and development.

The Conceptual Framework document described Transition Program students as academically developmentally advanced learners (Keating, 1991). This definition of academically gifted students emphasized the link between academic performance and potential and the program goals of academic advancement through curriculum modification.

The Conceptual Framework document also described curriculum organization according to a domain differentiated model (Matthews, 1997), the categories of which are linguistic, logical/mathematical, and social-emotional. The latter category involves interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence as described by Howard Gardner (1983). The goal of curriculum was development of "integrated expertise" (Keating, 1991) based on content knowledge, critical thinking, creative thinking, and communication skills. The delivery of the curriculum required discipline expertise, curriculum-based assessment, and dynamic assessment. Dynamic assessment involved identifying what students were capable of doing independently and what they could accomplish through escalating levels of assistance from an adult or more able peer. Development from existing mastery to acquisition of new understandings and skills via 'scaffolding' by another is also described as the 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky,
1978). For gifted students whose knowledge and skills can vary widely both within disciplines and between individuals, addressing the zone of proximal development required the development of individual learner profiles and educational plans to articulate needs and suggest appropriate differentiation of curriculum and modification of pedagogy within the context developed by an interdisciplinary team of secondary and university educators.

The description of the program within the Conceptual Framework document clarified how two years of intensive study could provide the students with the skills and understandings necessary for successful university work and at the same time facilitate their achievement of high school graduation and university entrance requirements. Social-emotional development support and career exploration opportunities were also highlighted. (See Table 4.0.)

Relocation to the UBC Campus

In July 1997 two classrooms and a lounge with washrooms located on the second floor of the Auditorium Annex on the West Mall of the UBC campus were confirmed as the new space for the program. Renovations scheduled for the 1997-98 academic year created an office within the lounge area and prepared the classrooms for internet access together with general cleaning and painting. September 1998 was targeted for the program's operation from the campus location.

Despite the open discussions and efforts to minimize the demands of relocation, the move to campus proved controversial (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1998). In 1997-98 the current Year Two students did not wish to leave the secondary school setting and threatened to boycott the decision (TP Student Interviews, 1999). Staff members were uncertain about leaving their classrooms and school resources. From the staff's perspective, travel between the two locations was considered undesirable. The secretarial support and the space available at the secondary school including the science lab, computer lab, and gymnasium would no longer be readily accessible. Interestingly, it was the Year One students who, after one afternoon at the campus location, first recognized the campus location as their own space and readily accepted the pre-university student identity which it had been hoped that this location would promote.

Commencing in September 1998, the Transition Program registered sixteen students in Year One and eleven students in Year Two for the first year of the program's operation on the UBC campus. With heightened anticipation and high levels of excitement students, parents and staff looked out from the Transition Program to the extensiveness of the university's facilities, faculties, and opportunities for learning involving large numbers of students and staff. A new sense of the program's potential to support the aspirations of the students fueled efforts to make things work well within the program and for the students it was designed to serve. For example, it soon became apparent that the larger group of Year One students was not easily accommodated in the smaller sized classrooms. At the same time program staff needed a workspace where course materials could be prepared and resources stored. Whenever the larger classroom at the end of the hall was not in use, Transition Program classes were held there. Over time, as the space remained infrequently used, it became an unofficial classroom for the program. One of the original smaller classrooms became the program's staff room and storage area.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Goal:</th>
<th>To support academic and social-emotional development of students motivated to achieve early entrance to university in order to pursue academic career goals.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition:</td>
<td>Highly academically gifted adolescents with academic career goals, emotional resilience, and motivation to complete advanced level work designed to facilitate early entrance to university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry Criteria</td>
<td>Academic achievement in mathematics, reading, and writing at 99th %tile; cognitive abilities at a minimum of 2 1/2 standard deviations above the mean; student motivation and parent support; match between student educational goals and program goals; students completion Grade 7 minimum &amp; at least age 12 as of December 31 of Year One.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification:</td>
<td>Application followed by interview, psycho-educational assessment, review of student portfolio by screening committee, program visit, and final interview with student and parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum:</td>
<td>Development of sophisticated skills and understandings together with appropriate knowledge to facilitate development of &quot;integrated expertise&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>Compacting, acceleration, seminar and small group instruction, interdisciplinary assignments, group projects, tutorials, gap-based instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>According to personal improvement; comparatively to students in regular class according to chronological age; and, comparatively to expectations for students at advanced grade level(s). Emphasis on development of sophisticated skills and understandings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Student academic achievement and early entrance to university e.g. GPA, scholarships; goal-directed program planning; independent learning skills; confidence and personal satisfaction; positive attitude to self, others, and future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With relocation came other challenges that needed to be addressed. The new space soon proved limiting not only with respect to the numbers of enrolled students that could be accommodated but also in terms of the range of services and program elements that required space. These included counseling students, meetings with parents, small group tutorials, and study spaces for individual and small group use. Returning graduates also needed space to provide tutoring assistance, to mentor and support students, to meet with staff, and to meet together as representatives of the grad peer culture, an important feature of the program's on-going development. Opportunities for guest speakers to meet with all the students as a large group or for visiting students and parents to sit in on classes became difficult to accommodate. Poor quality was noted in terms such as the limited security features available given the flimsiness of
the construction and the general cleanliness and condition of various aspects of the facility such as the floor covering. To be functional the program needed furniture, equipment, and resources for students and staff. The relocation also required staff who had appropriate qualifications such as gifted education training and a willingness to teach as a team in the evolving program model within the university setting (TP Program Administrator Notes, VSB, 1997). Program delivery within the new location also introduced new responsibilities for both staff and administration. Communication systems amongst staff and with the school administrator and district staff were important to coordination of the program operation; communication with students and parents with respect to student progress and developmental needs also required coordinated data monitoring and management through systems, processes and organizational tools. Organizing access to UBC faculties, staff, graduate students, and various resources and facilities presented another challenge.

Ultimately the benefits of relocating the program to the UBC campus proved substantial. Staff positions were now posted specifically for the program located on campus although still listed under University Hill Secondary (TP Notes, VSB, 1998). Dedicated staffing suggested that potential applicants would be informed about the nature of the program and understand and be committed to program goals. From this it was assumed that applicants would be prepared to acquire professional knowledge with respect to gifted adolescents and academic acceleration and be open to collaboration across disciplines as part of a process of on-going program development within a flexible program delivery model. The only position for which re-application did not occur was the coordinator role. Because of the university campus location, students were able to develop a stronger awareness of their identity as pre-university students and their goal of early entrance to university. Staff focused their program planning on instruction, curriculum, and how best to meet student learning needs while preparing them for successful studies at the university. The location provided concrete evidence to support the statement that this program was not five years of high school in two years, and was not comparable to a secondary school experience. Instruction was qualitatively differentiated to prepare the students for provincial examinations and success within university courses.

It is interesting to note that the change in location coincided with the clarification of the program's goals, and that both events happened under new District leadership and new school administration. An openness to understandings of gifted students' needs and a commitment to supporting programming that addressed these needs emerged as significant elements of the new program leadership and administration (TP Management Committee Notes, 2000). Leadership within this innovative program included not only school-based administration and district staff but was also evident informally in staff interactions and through discussion of decisions at staff meetings. Leadership's philosophical stance with respect to gifted students, perspectives on program problem solving and the management of issues related to students, parents, and staff was critical to program development. Leadership facilitated the establishment of a climate wherein staff were encouraged to collaborate, learn, take initiative, and recognize the responsibilities that stem from the teamwork needed to provide the different programming required by this unique group of students. New leadership challenges accompanied these massive changes as new problems emerged in the new environment. Certainly the opportunity to address challenges continued during the next three years, 1998-99, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. The program continued to be challenged not only by new staff, new students and their parents but also by efforts to retain what had been learned through the early years of the program and to keep the program focused on improving how students were supported and served.
Articulation of Program Delivery Promotes Development of Program Stability

Dr. Overgaard described the 1998-1999 school year as a watershed year for the Transition Program (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1999). The opportunity to increase the program's scope and stability was supported by many aspects of the changes that had taken place. The relocation to UBC attracted many more new applicants to the program (TP Notes, VSB, 1998). For the first time, an Orientation Week for incoming students was held at the Transition Program location in June (TP Notes, VSB, 1998). The week provided students and parents with more information about the program and knowledge about the campus location along with suggestions for summer preparation. Heightened interest and a positive climate resulted in six additional students enrolling in the Year Two program while fourteen students registered for Year One. Most of these students had heard about this program through other parents, especially parents who met one another at academic competitions in which their children had participated (TP Parent Interviews, 1999). Publicity had also come from newspaper articles. Four of the five previous program staff members continued working with the program; two of these were full time at the UBC location. The part-time English teacher and the part-time French teacher as well as the 0.3 FTE counselor commuted between their responsibilities at University Hill Secondary and the UBC location. A new full-time staff member had responsibilities for Mathematics and Physics. He offered voluntary preparation sessions in Mathematics and Physics during the summer for interested new students.

In 1998 a new principal was assigned to University Hill Secondary School (TP Notes, VSB, 1998). Her educational philosophy included recognition of unique needs of special education students and an interest in students who chose an early entrance to university opportunity (TPMC Notes, VSB, 1998). She articulated support for both the Transition Program and program and district staff collaboration. She acknowledged the need for gifted education leadership and accepted the District Gifted Education Teacher as a contributing member of the Transition Program staff and encouraged her collaboration with the Program Coordinator as members of the program management team. The principal also acknowledged the importance of program flexibility as the means by which to respond effectively to the needs of the enrolled students. She enthusiastically supported linkages between the Transition Program and University Hill Secondary including speakers, events, social gatherings, assemblies, and team sports.

An official opening of the site on September 30th, 1998 celebrated the optimism generated by the program's relocation. Dr. Barry McBride, Academic Vice-President and Provost for UBC, hosted the event which featured greetings from Dr. Martha Piper, UBC's new President, Mr. Donald Goodridge, VSB's Superintendent, and Susan Kennedy, representing Dr. Shirley McBride from the Ministry of Education. At the ribbon cutting ceremony, Dr. Blank and a Transition Program graduate spoke a few words to mark the occasion. The sense of the program coming into its own and being launched into a new phase of development with the support of all three institutional partners gave renewed energy to staff, students, and parents.

One of the advantages of the relocation was the increased contact with the four instructors from Departments of English, History, Physics, and Mathematics. The location made it easier for
these instructors to schedule sessions with the students and meetings with teachers. Opportunities for students to visit their classes were also more readily arranged.

The Transition Program staff began to work toward increased collaboration. Informal meetings for the three who were full time on campus were facilitated by virtue of their daily proximity. However, communication with staff who resided at University Hill Secondary proved more challenging. One avenue for staff collaboration was professional development that was planned by the staff and focused on program communication and curriculum delivery (TP Staff Meeting Notes, 2000). These sessions promoted discussions of the needs of students as well as the content of the different disciplines and explored ways in which curricular connections could be facilitated by staff.

On the December 9th 1998 professional development day, the Transition Program staff discussed the status of the program, including its needs and its operation and how it addressed student needs. Positive aspects of the program were the "cozy and comfy" space which teachers hoped could be expanded to provide a study center with computer access for students, teacher work area, and counseling space. Staff members were pleased with the access to the UBC recreation facilities which included ice-skating and swimming as well as gymnasium and other physical education facilities. Program needs included science equipment, humanities resources, computers capable of supporting advanced mathematics, and storage space. Teachers suggested that there was a need to consider how to reduce the labor intensiveness of the students' programs and work toward efficiencies in program delivery. When discussion focused on the nature of these students and why they thrived in this kind of program, a senior teacher in the program noted that "academic success within a setting and a climate that allows for social regularization results in student relaxation" (TP Staff PD Notes, 1998). As further explanation he elaborated that "the students are very happy discovering what it is just to be themselves without isolation, intimidation, discrimination." The Transition Program was described as providing a "regularizing" environment for these students because it supported their essential nature, namely intellectual curiosity, fast-paced communication, opportunities for juxtaposition of ideas and humor, enjoyment of conceptually challenging work within a group of similarly able peers and with teachers who understood them.

The teachers also discussed how to enhance the advanced learning abilities of the students. The most experienced teacher from the program explained that he taught to the highest level of complexity and then engaged the students with greater degrees of specificity and detail as needed. One teacher emphasized the need to teach students how to strategize rather than force them to practice skills extensively. Questions about how to compact curriculum and engage the learner in defining and exploring significant questions were also discussed. The teachers recommended that students commit to a full year of the Transition Program to allow them enough time to find out how to work and to decide that it is valuable for them to do so. Teachers commented that students did not realize that there were questions that they could not answer simply by recall or logic. "They need to understand how learning and thinking work, how emotions and the body and brain work in relationship to one another, and how to harness their intensities and abilities so that they can make choices that provide optimum benefit to themselves as well as others" (TP Staff PD Notes, 1998).

It was at this meeting that staff discussed the idea of developing a new course that would support students seeking interdisciplinary connections across their courses and their life experiences.
The new course was called Philosophy of Knowledge and was based on perceptivism. Students would use a particular knowledge framework to reflect on concepts from their experiences and learning; these reflections were to culminate over the two years in an essay as part of Transition Program graduation requirements. Through sharing anecdotes of their teaching experiences and effective approaches to organization of curriculum, teachers developed an openness to each other's ideas and possible ways in which they might work together across disciplines. For example, in discussions of interdisciplinary learning, one teacher explained how enrichment occurs through acceleration of content, compacting and exploring key concepts in depth while engaging students in discussions that require application, synthesis and evaluative levels of thinking.

There was a sense throughout these discussions among staff that this was the year in which to create stability, solidify best practice from the experience of the program at its former location, and look to how the program could be further enhanced by making use of the diverse resources available as a result of the UBC location. The one-day planning experience united the teachers as they grappled with the ideas of integrated expertise and interdisciplinary curriculum. However, the drive to complete courses for graduation and to prepare students for provincial final exams became a priority for both staff and students and further program development was not formalized or documented making it unavailable for examination and decision-making by the staff as a whole.

As a follow-up to discussions about the needs of girls enrolled in the program, the District Gifted Education Teacher, with the support of the Program Coordinator, organized a lunch meeting focused on girls and giftedness in the spring of 1999. The nine girls enrolled in Year One and Year Two met with a number of women from the VSB District Advisory Committee for Gifted Education. Over an informal lunch these aspiring young women talked with these women who represented varied professional roles and career experiences. Introductions were followed by stories that led to further questions. Students were interested in how personal and professional goals were identified and what barriers and difficulties were experienced and overcome during the pursuit of career and personal goals. Advice interwoven throughout the conversations included lessons learned, the importance of taking personal responsibility for talent development, and the value of mentors and intellectual peers of all ages. Students described the occasion as surprisingly interesting and beneficial (TP Notes, VSB, 1999). A number of the girls recognized possibilities for themselves in the women who articulated a passion for work they viewed as meaningful and challenging. At the same time, these women pointed out that it was possible and also deeply satisfying to share their lives with significant others and have families and enjoy the challenge of supporting the development of their children. Voluntary contributions of service to the community were also identified as meaningful parts of the lives of these busy women. The experience was important not simply for the social exchange but for the debriefing and research-based information that was interspersed throughout the discussion. Despite requests from the girls to explore more of these informal sessions, this particular approach was not adopted within the program. However it signaled the importance of particular experiences designed to support the female students within a program that enrolled predominantly male students.

In recognition of the increasing awareness of the program throughout the Lower Mainland, a plan for informing parents and students as well as screening a larger number of applicants was devised (TPMC Notes, VSB, 1998). An advertisement in the *Vancouver Sun* announced an information meeting held at the UBC Transition Program site. A large group screening was held
on a subsequent Saturday morning involving a group ability test, speed processing assessment, and curriculum-based assessments in the areas of Social Studies, English and Mathematics. From this initial screening, the top twenty students were scheduled for psycho-educational assessments. Students were interviewed and were asked to develop portfolios including a letter explaining why they chose this program, recent report cards, samples of work, listing of extracurricular activities, awards and accomplishments. The District Support Teacher, working in collaboration with the district school psychologist, presented the information to the Transition Program's screening committee. Students who had the ability, the motivation, and the work and study skills that suggested they would do well in the program were invited to visit the program for a day or two and to decide if they wished to enroll. Over seventy students participated in the large group screening offered in the spring of 1999, an indication of the program's increasingly positive image (TPMC Notes, VSB, 1999).

### The Challenge of New Staff

Underscoring the importance of staff, the program's developing stability was adversely affected in 1999 by the retirement of the two humanities teachers (English and Social Studies/History), both of whom had been associated with the program since its inception at University Hill Secondary School in 1993 (TP Notes, VSB, 1999). These teachers had developed understandings, organizational structures, curriculum materials and skills with respect to working with gifted adolescents and teaching to support academic acceleration, interdisciplinary learning and curriculum compacting. They modeled caring support and encouragement for students and their parents through various struggles unique to the two years of the program. The confidence and perspective of their experience, their commitment to supporting students in the achievement of their goals, their ability to work as members of a team and to relax and enjoy the students and their learning processes represented an informal leadership, the loss of which was significant for the program.

The posting process proved challenging and required considerable negotiation with both Human Resources and the teachers' union. New staff members were finally in place by October 1999. Both new teachers brought respected teaching abilities in English and Social Studies/History (TPMC Notes, VSB, 1999). They were positive about the new challenges presented by this program. However, there was no formal preparation provided for the staff with respect to the nature of this student population, academic acceleration or curriculum compacting, other than access to current and previous program staff, the Conceptual Framework document, and encouragement to ask questions. The priority for both teachers was to organize their courses, engage with teaching their students, and keep pace with the steep learning curve of their new roles. Learning through experience and previous professional knowledge was viewed as the norm for a new teaching assignment. As a result, knowledge about gifted learners was introduced through options such as a meeting with elementary district gifted education teachers, print materials such as articles from professional journals, and encouragement to attend gifted education professional development. No specific professional development with respect to gifted education was provided prior to undertaking their teaching assignments and the teachers did not initiate requests for support or information about gifted learners and their needs.
With four out of the five teaching staff of the Transition Program now working exclusively from the UBC location, the role of the program coordinator expanded in ways that were not anticipated (TPMC Notes, VSB, 1999). Program coordination that had previously been provided through leadership shared among experienced staff was no longer available given two new staff members. Not only did coordination tasks expand, the need for program leadership that supported the unique needs of this student population intensified. An important aspect of the leadership role involved engaging the staff in a vision of the program wherein they were not only teachers within their disciplines, but also members of a team with a shared goal of being responsive to each student as a unique learner. Teamwork involved more communication, collaboration and a focus on the whole student as well as a respect for the need of each staff member to continue to learn and to create curriculum modifications through interdisciplinary planning. Increased responsibilities for the coordinator included team development and staff management through organization of information, communication, meetings, resources, and space management. The coordinator was also responsible for communication not only with staff, parents, and students but with UBC staff, the program's administrator and principal of University Hill Secondary, district gifted education staff, and the UBC liaison coordinator (TPMC Notes, VSB, 1999). The program was functioning without secretarial support and all access to resources required numerous telephone calls and tight time management. As a result, the coordinator, who was also teaching part of the time, functioned in response to each need as it arose. Often much of the coordination time was spent responding to student needs. The counselor whose primary responsibilities were located at University Hill Secondary was not always able to be available for Transition Program students on site; she encouraged students to make appointments to meet with her at University Hill Secondary where office space and privacy were readily available. The daily issues of support and problem solving fell to the coordinator and, to some extent, the teachers. The staff expected the coordinator to provide program leadership, organization, and stability and in some cases secretarial support while the coordinator focused on meeting the needs of individual students and their parents and responding to the relationship responsibilities with staff as well as requests of individual teachers.

In an effort to provide more communication and organization for the program, a management team comprised of the principal, the District Gifted Education Support Teacher and the Coordinator was initiated (TP Notes, VSB, 1999). At these meetings current issues were discussed and future plans were outlined. While this process served to increase awareness of the program's operational challenges and allowed for some concerns to be managed in alternate ways, the overall effect was only to provide a safety net to back up the coordinator's role. It did not lessen the responsibilities of that role.

As the school year of 1999-2000 moved through the fall months, different perspectives of program delivery became evident among staff (TP Staff Meeting Notes, 1999). Student needs were also surfacing through the comments and behaviors of students and their parents. Communication about these needs and action to support students were understood and responded to differently by individual staff members, the coordinator and the counselor. The management team suggested that all the staff connected to the program use professional development time to clarify the program's philosophy and goals and implications for program delivery. The principal arranged for an external facilitator to work with the team for two days in November with a follow-up session in January (TP Staff Meeting Notes, VSB, 1999). The concerns of the teachers focused on clarification of curriculum content and opened the door to discussions of interdisciplinary connections. Perspectives on curriculum organization and delivery compacted
over the course of the two years of the program differed significantly across disciplines. These differences created considerable tension. Staff agreed to track the content being delivered over the course of the year so as to plan in the future for better interdisciplinary connections and to review how compacting of curriculum could be more effectively achieved (TP Staff PD Notes, 1999). More communication with staff through regular meetings was supported. The staff also articulated the unique aspects of the program and the value-added elements. (See Table 5.0) While these plans were initiated in good faith, follow through was dependent on individual initiative, and, by default, information collection lapsed and data that could inform practice were not available for analysis and discussion. Focus on day-to-day management overtook planning.

### Table 5.0 In What Ways Is The Transition Program Unique And How Does It Add Value To The Educational Experiences of Participating Students?

#### Unique:

- Only program of its kind in BC and Canada
- Focuses on preparing students academically to achieve early entrance to university while supporting their social-emotional development, self-knowledge, physical health, goal-setting and career exploration

#### Value Added:

- Intellectual peer group
- Curriculum organization and delivery
  
  i.e.  
  
  acceleration, telescoping, compacting, fast-pacing, enrichment, focus on key concepts, treatment of topics extending depth and breadth of overall curriculum, challenging students with conceptually advanced ideas and problems

- University location and use of resources including libraries, visits to university classes and potential for mentorship experiences
- Seminars with UBC professors; seminars & small group work
- Intensity of program and attention to individual students
- Cross-curricular explorations; links between ideas in different disciplines
- Peer support and graduate student support
- Current research
- Flexibility within the program
- Support from founding partners, VSB, UBC and funding agency, Ministry of Education

Notes from Transition Program Staff Professional Development 1999-11-23

The challenge of developing shared understandings with respect to the needs of the students and how these needs might be addressed through the organization and delivery of the program was also explored with the Steering Committee. On December 04, 1999, a draft proposal entitled "Planning for the Future: The Needs of Transition Program Students" was presented to committee members at a meeting held at the Transition Program site following a shared lunch with students and staff (TPSC Minutes, VSB, 1999). The proposal provided a historical framework for the program's development and offered a perspective for long-term planning based on the existing relationship between the university and the school district. The outlined infrastructure included options such as extended out-reach services for students, teacher training and a range of research possibilities. The proposal moved the question of student needs into the
arena of the roles and work of the institutional partners and invited their support and commitment to long term collaborative planning and shared responsibilities for talent development of youth. The proposal generated interest at the Steering Committee. When shared with program staff, the proposal was eclipsed by issues and concerns related to daily management of program delivery. Responsibility for taking action was not designated nor were action plans developed. It was not clear who should take ownership of these next aspects of program development. Through documentation of ideas the conversation about the program's development continued to expand.

In a complementary process, the Transition Program staff participated in a second planning session on January 26 and 27, 2000. The session focused specifically on program delivery and reiterated the three main aspects of the program: academic core, social-emotional development and career exploration (TP Staff Notes, VSB, 2000). As a way to address individualized planning to meet student needs, staff discussed the concept of having same core courses for all students and allowing students to choose additional courses that facilitated the development of their areas of strength and personal or career interests. To facilitate these ideas, a structure for students' Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) was devised, and a school-based team meeting to discuss students who needed additional support was initiated.

The work on program development by the staff was followed by a visit to the Seattle Transition School and Early Entrance to University Program on February 17, 2000 (TP Notes, VSB, 2000). Except for the program coordinator and the district teacher, none of the Transition Program staff had previously visited the Seattle program upon which the VSB/UBC program had been modeled. Teachers wanted to see how another program with similar students and goals functioned, including how the program was organized, the curriculum was delivered, and the infrastructure facilitated achievement of early entrance to university for the students. The visit also provided an opportunity for staff to extend their professional relationships, validated the success of this innovation in real time, and opened the door for further teacher collaboration on program delivery. The program coordinator, three program teachers and the district teacher spent the day observing classes, talking with staff and debriefing with both Dr. Noble and Dr. Robinson. The counselor, French teacher and school principal were not in attendance.

The staff returned with a variety of ideas to extend their discussions. These ideas included an evaluation system to indicate whether a student was meeting/exceeding or not meeting expectations as opposed to only marks and letter grades. Staff also noted the importance of space provided for program graduates next door to the Transition School's quarters. This space encouraged the development of a peer culture and extended support beyond preparation for university into undergraduate years at the university. Staff recommended adoption of on-site counseling and academic advisement to 0.5 FTE for the program. An articulation of philosophy, purpose, goals and policies such as exit procedures was also recommended. This included an articulation to students and parents of behavioral standards and expectations as part of the initial acceptance process. Weekly faculty meetings were considered an essential aspect of the support for the staff. The Seattle staff emphasized that curriculum was not coverage but represented preparation for university level work. The Washington program's time schedule matched the university timetable in order to support those students who were taking a university course while still enrolled in the year of preparation for university studies. Notes from the visit describing the ideas generated by these discussions were subsequently transcribed and provided for the program staff including the counselor and the school administrator. It was suggested that these ideas be
discussed further; however, program management issues took precedence and the staff did not have occasion to revisit this topic.

A synthesis of the issues discussed by the Transition Program staff, administration and district staff were presented to a Transition Program Steering Committee meeting on March 08 2000. (See Table 6.0.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What makes the Program unique?</th>
<th>How might the unique elements of this program be maximized?</th>
<th>Future Program Scenario (Preferred Future)</th>
<th>What is needed to achieve these ends?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Student population</td>
<td>• individualized plans</td>
<td>Enrolled students supported for success</td>
<td>• structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• student as case co-manager</td>
<td></td>
<td>• articulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• early identification/support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. UBC campus location</td>
<td>• mentors/course visits</td>
<td>Future-focused role image</td>
<td>• coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• university courses: audit/credit</td>
<td>Giftedness across cultures e.g. First Nations, ESL</td>
<td>• institutional collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• meeting h.s. &amp; graduation requirements through university equivalents</td>
<td>Talent Search Center at UBC Gifted Learner Summer Pgm.</td>
<td>• space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Program purpose:</td>
<td>• pre-university identity</td>
<td>Enhanced support</td>
<td>• infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;university success&quot;</td>
<td>• seamless transitioning</td>
<td>Transparent praxis</td>
<td>• research in-action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Requirements:</td>
<td>• concurrent studies</td>
<td>&quot;Communiversity&quot;</td>
<td>• institutional collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• retroactive</td>
<td>Mutual enhancement of organizations strengths</td>
<td>• faculty support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• university course equivalencies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Program goals:</td>
<td>• acceleration/compacting</td>
<td>Networking of resources</td>
<td>• professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interdisciplinary/integrative</td>
<td></td>
<td>• space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Psychology; Philosophy; problem-solving skil</td>
<td></td>
<td>• leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• interest/values/aptitude inventories, career mapping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Program delivery</td>
<td>• articulation of scope/sequence</td>
<td>Documenting &amp; facilitating &quot;best practice&quot;</td>
<td>• release time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• coaching for success; problem solving</td>
<td></td>
<td>• 0.5 FTE Counselor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• peer culture with grads; TA's</td>
<td></td>
<td>• space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• individual planning; faculty linkages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Challenging issues</td>
<td>• recruitment; structure</td>
<td>Outreach programs</td>
<td>• organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• recruitment; program image</td>
<td>Linking of services to support long-term planning</td>
<td>• space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• coursework: core + electives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.0 Transition Program: Articulation of Program Needs In Support of Program Development 00-03
This synthesis encouraged discussions of the unique aspects of the program and consideration of how the program could be further enhanced from the perspective of each unique element. These discussions of program needs were further summarized as categories of need and presented to the committee. (See Table 7.0.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.0</th>
<th>Summary of Needs:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Philosophical alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nature and needs of student population; unique needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>best practice from research and gifted learner education literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>secondary school education and university education</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interconnections between recruitment, screening, student orientation, program delivery, evaluation, placement, counseling and advisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Institutional Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Financial and Resource Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Steering Committee discussed the direction of program development suggested by the synthesis and unanimously approved the proposal that these ideas be shared with the institutional partners. It was recommended that the Chairperson, representing the Vancouver School Board, organize a meeting to discuss these needs with representative decision-makers from the Ministry of Education and Office of the President of The University of British Columbia (TPSC Minutes, 2000).

While conceptual gains in program design resulting from the work of the teachers were considerable, issues with respect to practice remained unresolved (TP Staff Meeting Notes, VSB, 2000). Differing perspectives on program delivery caused frustrations, particularly when decisions by one member were seen to have adverse effects on the ability of another teacher to achieve different but equally important goals within his or her discipline.

One way to resolve the situation, according to one staff member, was to develop statements of program policies and procedures and articulate roles and responsibilities (TP Staff Meeting Notes, 2000). Other staff expressed a reluctance to confuse issues of teamwork and collaborative planning with the need for rules and procedures. While secondary school policies applied to the Transition Program, the uniqueness of the Transition Program's students and program goals often called for flexibility to support problem solving with respect to individual student needs rather than reference to rules. It was also the view of administration that agreement about procedures needed to be considered within the context of current program delivery challenges.

In the end, whether it was in lieu of written statements of procedures or lack of collaborative planning, or a combination of both, decision-making with respect to program delivery splintered
across a wide range of views and interpretations. There was uncertainty as to who had the authority to make the decisions. Often resulting decisions were not unanimously supported and/or lacked coherence with respect to the program's conceptual framework. The climate of frustration affected students and parents, and gradually students began to lose confidence in the program's ability to address their learning and social-emotional needs. In some cases, students chose to relocate to University Hill Secondary School (TPMC Notes, 2000). Modifications to program delivery were suggested but not required, and, as a result, the status quo continued and frustration increased. Tensions also increased when understandings about areas of concern and related student needs did not translate into modifications in how students were taught, how curriculum was re-organized to support compaction and acceleration, or how the program climate encouraged and acknowledged student efforts. Regular school-based team meetings were organized to facilitate full discussion of individual students' progress and needs. The program coordinator undertook responsibility for documentation and monitoring of implementation of the actions generated to support individual students. Infrequent meetings and confidentiality issues limited communication about the effectiveness of interventions and heightened teacher concerns about student wellness.

In response to teacher stress and concerns about student progress and as part of the on-going program development, the District Teacher suggested interviews with all students in order to determine their current and projected course credits in relationship to high school graduation and university entrance requirements. The Coordinator, the counselor and the District Teacher met with all Year One students, and all but one of the Year Two students enrolled in the program. In all cases the interviews confirmed students' preference for the "core plus" model for program delivery which required all students to complete a common core of courses and then make choices about electives (TP Notes, VSB, 2000). It also became clear that in some cases students had been supported in accumulating as many as 80 course credits over the two years despite the 52-credit requirement for high school graduation. This over-extension of efforts on behalf of students and staff reinforced the need for the proposed model, which would provide some flexibility with respect to secondary courses, provide students with opportunities to sit in on university courses and, in the second year of the program, promote student enrolment where possible in at least one university course.

At the May 15, 2000, planning day the Transition Program staff discussed the timetable for this new design and options for students (TP Staff Meeting, Notes, VSB, 2000). The core courses included English, Social Studies/History, Mathematics, and one science which in Year One would be Physics. The core courses continued for the two years, culminating in Grade 12 provincial examinations. Elective courses in both the humanities and the sciences would be added to the course load for each student and would be determined according to student interests, career directions or faculty choices. During the Orientation Week for new students, June 05-09, 2000, in-coming students were introduced to the concept of core courses plus student choices. The idea of visiting six university courses during the first year of the program—two courses in areas of academic strength, two in areas of career directions, and two in areas of personal interest—proved especially exciting to students who were advanced in areas such as computer studies or who had career interests they wished to explore. One of the most popular choices of university courses for these students was psychology (TP Notes, VSB, 2000).
When the Transition Program Steering Committee met on May 29, 2000, members supported the direction of program planning. Staff indicated that availability of increased space was a critical variable for the implementation of these plans (Minutes, Steering Committee, VSB, 2000). Space requirements were outlined for different groups of students working in different elective courses as well as counseling, tutorial assistance and student studying. (See Appendix C.)

To support this request for space a meeting was arranged with the Academic Vice President and Provost of UBC. The meeting was attended by Claudia Roch, Acting Director of Special Services, Ministry of Education; Dr. Valerie Overgaard, Associate Superintendent, Vancouver School Board; Dr. Stanley Blank, Emeritus Professor, UBC; and Vancouver’s District Support Teacher for Gifted Education. The issue of space was explained in the context of the program’s unique design and student needs (TP Notes, VSB, 2000). Further articulation of the nature and needs of these academically gifted students and their program of study and its linkage to future studies within UBC was suggested as a means to identify how the Transition Program fitted into the university’s goals, purpose and infrastructure. The discussion identified the potential for the Transition Program to act as a catalyst for developments such as a Center for Excellence in Teacher Education, a Talent Search Center at UBC as well as a residential gifted learner summer program. The UBC representative continued his support to address the need for more space for the Transition Program. The meeting was the stimulus for a follow-up meeting on July 11, 2000, where a subset of the Steering Committee outlined actions in support of the full implementation of the program model for 2000-2001. These plans included professional development with the staff in August.

Two days in late August were selected for the professional development of the Transition Program staff (TP Staff Notes, VSB, 2000). One teacher elected not to attend these sessions. Dr. Blank provided leadership for the first day’s discussion of how the program needed to respond to the unique learning needs of gifted students. The second day, led by the principal, focussed on policies and practices designed to support these unique learning needs. This included an evaluation policy which would insure that students would receive marks equivalent to those they would obtain in a regular secondary school and thus not be penalized with respect to their abilities to compete for scholarships simply because they were in a more demanding program and experienced a steeper learning curve. Teachers also agreed to provide study and organization skills through a set of organized materials with every teacher promoting these skills within each subject area. Practices such as homework monitoring and specific support for students with respect to organization skills or specific academic skills were discussed. Student workload was discussed in the context of a more balanced liberal arts program. Staff expressed interest in providing a program that would support students who were gifted in the areas of science and mathematics and/or in the humanities but not necessarily in both. One example of this discussion was to suggest that core subjects would be delivered to the Grade 12 level, but advanced placement courses, for example, would not be offered. Students who had completed their Grade 12 courses would be encouraged to enroll in university courses for further advancement in those subject areas.

The sub-committee of the Transition Program Steering Committee also met during the summer and in the early fall (TPSC Sub-Committee Notes, VSB, 2000) to develop options for increased space for the program and address the needs for program awareness and extended opportunities at UBC that would support this student population and the work of the Transition Program.
Implementation of the Revised Program Structure

As the Transition Program began the 2000-2001 school year, staff and management committee members discussed implementation of the refinements to the program design that had been developed over the previous eight months as a priority for program development (TPMC, VSB, 2000). Management was hopeful that these infrastructure changes would provide a closer link between program and student goals and improve program delivery. Close monitoring of student progress was intended to identify specific needs of individual students. Addressing these needs was expected to become a critical aspect of program delivery in classroom work as well as involve all staff through discussions at staff meetings and school-based team sessions.

As part of this focus on student needs, Transition Program staff participated in the Provincial Gifted Education Specialists' Association conference in October 2000 where they had the opportunity to work with Van Tassel-Baska on curriculum enrichment and acceleration. It became clear to Transition Program staff that they were responding to the needs and goals of a population with whom very few educators were familiar. They could see that their professional roles were significantly more specialized and their professional development needs were more difficult to address (TP Staff Meeting Notes, 2000). For example, teaching within the program afforded teachers direct access to a unique population of highly academically gifted learners; on a daily basis they had experiences with the nature and needs of these individuals. However, without the theoretical and research lenses from gifted education to assist with the interpretation of experiences and to advance their understandings and insights with respect to these students and their educational needs and social-emotional development, teachers used traditional classroom teaching knowledge to explain student behavior and learning. When students and parents met with individual teachers to discuss their concerns about student learning and progress, they wanted to understand how instruction, curriculum, and evaluation were organized to address the learning needs of this particular student population and what the teacher had observed about their child's learning strengths and weaknesses in particular. Some teachers, uncomfortable with these topics, interpreted parental inquiries as a questioning of their authority and responded by defending their ways of teaching in terms of professional autonomy and professional judgment. Other teachers used these opportunities to learn more about the individual student's needs and modified their practices with respect to teaching, curriculum, and evaluation. In effect, the latter group of teachers modeled learning, enhancing their professional skills as a result of their work with groups of identified gifted students within the context of program delivery and a continuing focus on program improvement. Often these efforts generated piece-meal learning since there was no one on staff who could offer a gifted education knowledge base to clarify the link between the educational needs and developmental challenges of the gifted learner, their behaviors and concerns, and best educational practices.

One area of agreement among the staff was the importance of the intellectual peer group for the students. To support the development of a strong peer culture in the program, staff organized a number of field trips. Several opportunities in the fall included a day hike and an overnight hike. The four second year students under the leadership of the History teacher and with the support of the counselor visited Ottawa for the opening of parliament, a precedent setting experience for the students and the program (TP Staff Notes, VSB, 2001).
Beginning in the fall, staff initiated refinements to the reporting process to reflect both student progress within the required curriculum and the "added value" or enrichment aspect of the program. A new interim report form and report card format were piloted by the staff beginning with the fall reporting period. The goal was to increase feedback to students and parents through clearer communication. Parents could follow the progress of their students and respond to any concerns with respect to a student's learning in any course. The reports represented another element of the monitoring of students within disciplines in accordance with their Individual Educational Plans.

While the program staff was working toward implementation of these refinements, potential new applicants and their parents were informed about the program through meetings held in October and January. More than 75 students participated in the large group assessment sessions held in December and January. Dates for student application, placement offerings and acceptance were organized in accordance with a common date set for all Vancouver District Alternative Secondary programs.

The Transition Program model had been represented at the meetings of the head teachers of district alternative secondary programs since 1998 when these meetings were first organized at the call of the Associate Superintendent of District Learning Services. One impact of this representation was that a template of program standards for gifted education was introduced to the group as they discussed what made district programs unique both in terms of the student population served and the ways in which program delivery was different from regular secondary programs. The head teachers of district alternative secondary programs were encouraged to apply modified standards to their programs as they articulated program goals; unmet student needs, identification procedures and how specific student needs were addressed through program delivery. This articulation process influenced the development of criteria for designating and funding district programs (District Secondary Alternative Program Meeting Minutes, VSB, 2000). It also influenced the sharing of information about students across programs, promoting discussions of student placements based on the needs of the individual student rather than program competition for exceptional applicants.

At the end of December 2001, the Transition Program Coordinator requested leave for an indeterminate period of time. Selection of a replacement for this position was the responsibility of the secondary school administrator. Meanwhile attention of staff and administration moved from implementing program change to managing and maintaining effective program delivery.

The vice-principal of University Hill Secondary accepted responsibility for the coordinator role as a replacement for the half-time teaching requirement of his administrative role. New to the district and to the role of vice-principal, he was aware of the steep learning curve associated with the coordinator position as well the uncertainty of its duration. He infused his administrative skills into program organization, communication and leadership for both staff and students and collaborated with both the district gifted education teacher and the school principal. He reported enjoying his interactions with the students and eagerly introduced initiatives including a newsletter and an advisory block to engage students in reflection on their experiences and articulation of their concerns. Students were introduced to leadership skills and a process with which they could problem-solve together. One result of these discussions was that students were provided with choices with respect to their needs for tutorial assistance and/or mathematics competitions. The Acting Coordinator undertook the management and completion of each
The uncertainty of the Acting Coordinator position was resolved in the spring with the posting of the program coordinator position. The posting described a secondary teaching position with desirable leadership qualities. Classification, experience and seniority in accordance with union contracts were the primary criteria affecting selection of a successful applicant. Gifted education qualifications remained desirable rather than a requirement of the job. The coordinator role remained a teaching position that could be linked to a teaching role in the program. As a result of this process, the successful applicant was a teacher who had been responsible for teaching history and social studies in the program for almost two years. The incumbent who had been involved in the program for the past six months accepted the part-time science teaching position, and a new person accepted the part-time program counselor position. The filling of these positions complied with the regulations for staffing in secondary public schools in Vancouver.

The Challenge of Change

As the Transition Program commenced in September 2001, it was uniquely positioned for change. The new program coordinator was poised to introduce structure and communication to program delivery. The staff knew him and he had knowledge of how the program had been working. He had also participated in the discussions where improvements to program delivery had been previously identified. Thirteen of the fourteen Year One students continued on into Year Two and would provide stability for new students. Twenty new students enrolled in Year One and one new student was accepted into the Year Two program. On-site counseling was organized for three afternoons a week.

To promote more effective leadership within the program, an articulation of the organizational structure was developed by the District Gifted Education Teacher and presented to the Management Committee in September 2001. It was reviewed with the Associate Superintendent, University Hill Secondary School Principal, the Transition Program Coordinator, and the UBC Program/Liaison. The framework depicted the roles and structures within the policy-making and practice aspects of the Transition Program. Delineation of roles and responsibilities for members of the Transition Program Management Committee illustrated the collaborative problem solving approach that had been developed over several years to promote effective program decision-making and communication and highlighted the importance of gifted education leadership to support program operation and development. On October 15, 2001, this document was presented to the Transition Program Steering Committee (TPSC Notes, 2001) where it was approved subject to minor edits.

The first priority of the staff was to develop a shared understanding of the learning profiles and related needs of each of the new students. During September each teacher observed students in classes, through homework organization, assignments, and tests. The program coordinator collected these observations at the end of the month. On October 1, the Transition Program staff met with the district psychologists who had administered the psycho-educational assessments for each of these students and the district gifted education teacher who had coordinated the identification process. Each student was presented according to his or her psycho-educational
profile including abilities, interests, and needs. The coordinator presented information on the student's performance that had been collected from the staff based on their observations during the month of September. This information included concerns or issues raised by teachers. The goal was to clarify reasonable expectations of performance and areas that required additional support for each student. The documentation and discussion at this meeting provided a basis for the development of students' Individual Education Plans.

On October 4, Transition Program parents were invited to their first opportunity of the year to meet staff and each other. The Program Coordinator spoke to the parents, outlining the program operation, processes and expectations including behavioral standards for students and how parents could access assistance and information. At that time the coordinator indicated that Year One encompassed Grades 8, 9, and 10 curriculum and that Year Two focused on Grades 11 and 12 including provincial examinations. There was no reference to the idea of core academic courses plus electives. Although some questions were raised about what appeared as coverage of high school curriculum as opposed to university preparation, group dynamics precluded an in-depth discussion on these questions. As a result, this organization of the program was accepted together with student expectations and suggestions for how parents could support their young people. Parents were invited to share their observations of the students' initial program experience at the request of the District Teacher. Some parents reported that students were working harder than ever before, struggling but also enjoying the experience of the intense academic focus. There was strong agreement about the importance of the intellectual peer group for all students (TPPA Meeting Notes, 2001). The satisfaction of the students proved gratifying to the parents who were told to expect increasing levels of struggles as the workload intensified. A number of parents volunteered to work together to develop organization structures to support future meetings and initiatives.

Concern about communication within the program began to surface through individual students and their parents. When parents perceived their issues were not handled through discussion with program staff, they addressed their concerns to administration and district staff (TP Telephone Notes, 2001). At the same time, no program management meetings were initiated and no formal staff meetings were organized. According to the coordinator, program delivery was being managed successfully through informal discussions with on-site staff. Lack of communication increased the range of difference in perspectives, understandings and assumptions used by on-site staff, part-time staff and management committee members. The lack of communication of information among staff members and with administration and district staff made support for program operation increasingly difficult. The resulting lack of collaboration began to affect program delivery.

In addition demands on program delivery had increased. The number of students enrolled in the program changed from 18 in 2000-2001 (14 in Year One and 4 in Year Two) to 34 in 2001-2002 (20 in Year One and 14 in Year Two). This larger student group needed more space than was available in the limited quarters of the program. Classroom space was the primary program concern, according to the program coordinator's report to the Transition Program Steering Committee meeting on October 15, 2001.

Another factor influencing program delivery was the composition of both the Transition Program students and the Transition Program Parents' Association. The majority of the new students were Grade 7 graduates without any high school experience and with varying academic and social
emotional maturity levels related to their age, development and experience. For example, five of
the new students had previously been enrolled in the Multi-Age Cluster Classes for academically
gifted students in Vancouver. These students had had previous experience working with
intellectual peers and engaging in enrichment opportunities involving in-depth work on projects
in areas of personal interest. They were at ease with their identities as gifted learners and
familiar with the use of IEP's to set goals, to articulate strategies to achieve goals and related
systems to monitor achievement. The parents of these students brought an expectation of
continuing gifted education program delivery systems such as IEP's. Several other students had
experienced home schooling and were confident about their abilities to work independently.
Their parents expected to be involved in the educational decision-making for their children.

The Year One parent group as a whole possessed several unique features. For the first time this
group included a parent who had both knowledge and skill as a parent representative interfacing
with school staff and administration as well as district staff and trustees. Over the course of a
decade she had presided over an elementary school parents’ association (PAC) and been elected
as a District Parent Representative liasoning with district senior management and school
trustees. She also served on the District Advisory Committee for Gifted Education and was a
leader within the Gifted Children's Association of BC locally and provincially. Her child had
participated in elementary gifted programs prior to enrollment in the Transition Program. In
addition there was a parent who had taught in Vancouver Elementary Gifted/Enrichment
Education Programs for numerous years. At the time that her son was in the Transition Program,
she was a teacher in one of the Multi-Age Cluster Classes in Vancouver. A number of other
parents were experienced in choosing educational options to address the needs of their children,
and they were prepared to question experiences that did not serve their children well. As a whole
the parent group represented a great diversity of cultural and educational backgrounds,
professional roles and career paths, including medicine, law, theology, psychiatry, technology,
consulting, and various roles in business, corporations, and public service. The diverse strengths
and abilities within this group became significant when the parents decided they wished to
contribute their talents and abilities to support the program's development and enhance the
program learning experiences for their adolescents.

These students and their parents represented both opportunities for program development and
challenges for program delivery. They played an important role in the ensuing months when
external factors intensified the need for effective management and communication. How the
program responded to these various challenges placed program delivery under the microscope of
various stakeholder groups. Not unlike the process wherein steel is tempered by fire, the
Transition Program was pressed to engage in a process of change and growth in order to respond
to the needs of students.

The first external event that intensified this press occurred as a result of failing provincial teacher
contract negotiations. The British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) generated a Phase One
Job Action for all its members in November 2001. This job action was developed after
consultation with the Labor Relations Board, a step required as a result of the provincial
government’s summer designation of education as an essential service which made teacher
strikes illegal. Phase One Job Action listed numerous limitations to teacher work including not
completing report cards for the end of first term (November). Teachers were also not available
to talk with parents about the progress of their students except during instructional time and only
if release time was provided. Given the academic acceleration within this program and the steep
learning curve of students, parents were very concerned about the progress of students and frustrated by the limitations imposed on communication with individual teachers.

The second external event was the mid-year change in the secondary school administrator for University Hill Secondary. The new principal officially took up the role on January 7, 2002. The uniqueness of this program represented an additional learning challenge for the new administrator and intensified the demand for program communication.

In the meantime the Transition Program Parent Association had undertaken to establish itself as a vital entity interested in learning about the nature and nurture of giftedness and working together to support the success of the program and the success of all students. An election process identified a first year parent as chairperson for the parent group with a second year parent as co-chair. Different parents took responsibility for various tasks, one of which was developing a speakers' list for future meetings. As a result of these efforts the parents had the opportunity to listen to a variety of speakers and to discuss questions and concerns over the course of group meetings in November, December, January and February (TPPA Meeting Notes, 2001-2002). Presenters included Mary Lynn Baum (GCA) speaking about development of gifted adolescents including career exploration; Dr. Marion Porath (UBC), addressing the implications of the categorical versus the developmental view of giftedness; Dr. Jane Garland (UBC), speaking about the social-emotional development and vulnerabilities of gifted adolescents; and Dr. Kathleen Noble, describing the experience of gifted adolescents in the one year university preparation program at the University of Washington, Seattle. The parents also established a listserve enabling all parents to communicate with one another and with the group as a whole via the Internet. Parents began to do research on the program through a variety of documents including the Conceptual Framework '98 and past minutes of their association. They began to share their concerns with one another and determined to build a community of support for all the students and all the parents. They expressed their commitment to support teachers' efforts to deliver the best possible program for their students and at the same time to identify areas for program improvement and work with staff and administration to influence positive program change (TPPA Minutes, 2002).

The frustrations over of lack of information about student progress and the inability to influence elements of the program which were causing problems for the students resulted in parents presenting concerns to school and district administration (TP Correspondence, 2002). Following a presentation from the Director of the Early Entrance to University Program at the University of Washington, Seattle, the parents requested an opportunity to share their concerns with the new principal and the Associate Superintendent on January 10, 2002. Subsequent meetings on February 5, February 19, and March 5, resulted in further documentation of issues and concerns. A number of parents wrote letters describing particular issues and documenting their concerns. Parent concerns generally focused on communication and the discrepancy between the conceptual description of the program and program delivery, with specific concerns about curriculum and instruction including evaluation of students' progress. The parents were particularly concerned that the efforts that students were making needed more encouragement, acknowledgement and support.

The principal and two Associate Superintendents met with the Transition Program staff to outline the concerns presented by the parents. At that time a communication structure was put in place for the completion of student IEP's and, at the request of parents, meetings involving the
individual student and their parents with all staff. These meetings were designed to review progress in each discipline, articulate student strengths and areas that needed to be improved, to generate strategies to address these needs and set up a monitoring system to support feedback on student efforts and achievement as well as plan next steps with respect to achievement of student goals.

In January 2002 the provincial government legislated a contract for BC teachers, thus ending teacher job action. In response to being legislated back to work, teachers withdrew support for extra-curricular activities; in the resulting climate, collaboration between teachers and administrators as well as district staff was seriously impaired. Uncertainties heightened when soon thereafter the government announced a reorganization of the Ministry of Education. This reorganization included changes to funding approaches and an increased focus on accountability and assessment. As a result, the majority of special education categories that had previously received capped funding, including Gifted Education, were now included in school district core funding. School districts also received notification of budget allocations frozen for three years. Based on the Ministry projected funding, the Vancouver School Board announced budget cuts of 25.5 million dollars for 2002-2003. Within the context of budget cuts and reorganization, parents and staff expressed concern about the continuation of funding for provincial resource programs. Concern with respect to the continued existence of the Transition Program also affected students who were nearing completion of Year One and Year Two respectively.

The open communication on issues and concerns that developed through the parent association meetings between November and February were brought to the Transition Program Steering Committee meeting on March 11, 2002 (TPSC Notes, 2002). The meeting began with a list of issues prepared by the Program Coordinator. Issues included clarity with respect to the program goal, IEP's, curriculum goals, requirements for university entrance, necessity of high school graduation, lack of communication with District and school-based management, lack of information about budget and lack of staff input into student selection. This report was followed by a report from the Transition Program Parent Association. The parent representative identified all parents as highly supportive of the program and all students as committed to achieving success. He went on to summarize five areas of specific concern from the perspective of current program parents. These concerns included teacher training with respect to gifted students, curriculum, communication, documentation and facilities (TPSC Minutes, 2002).

In response to these reports and to the concerns that had been identified in preceding months, the Chair of the Steering Committee announced the initiation of an external review of the Transition Program and presented the committee with terms of reference for the review. The purpose of the review was described as follows:

To resolve the issues arising from the discrepancy between the Transition Program's Conceptual Framework and program delivery taking into consideration requirements for high school graduation and university entrance requirements and constraints of physical space. (TP Review, 2002)

The review committee was composed of representation from the Ministry of Education, UBC, Vancouver Secondary School Administrators, Gifted Children's Association of BC and a retired former teacher of the Transition Program. Due to changes at the Ministry of Education, a representative was not available except for consultation by telephone. The committee agreed to
present recommendations to the Steering Committee on April 29, 2002. Other issues tabled at
the meeting included increased space and program affiliation with UBC through faculties,
infrastructure and staff.

Beginning in the middle of March, a retired secondary school administrator was hired to replace
the Program Coordinator who was reducing his role substantially as part of a personal leave for
health reasons. The new Acting Coordinator promoted program stability through his
commitment to students, his understanding of the program's conceptual framework and through
his actions that were in accordance with the original program goals. Through various field trips
on campus and speakers related to career exploration, he reaffirmed the students' pre-university
identity. He re-established communication links across parents, staff, administration and district
staff. Despite the limitations inherent in the short-term appointment, his attitude, experience, and
support for students and appropriate teaching enabled him to illustrate how the innovative nature
of the program could be effectively managed. The Acting Coordinator also reported to the
Steering Committee, participated in the screening meetings for reviewing and selecting
candidates for the 2002-2003 school year, and re-established staff meetings and regular reports to
the secondary principal.

On March 25 the Associate Superintendent together with the school principal, district teacher
and UBC liaison professor met with the Acting Registrar of UBC to discuss university entrance
requirements for Transition Program students. Recent discussions and developments within
UBC with respect to the idea of broadening the policy for university entrance were discussed in
relationship to the need for policy to address the unique circumstances of Transition Program
graduates. With a significant number of Transition Program graduates attending university and
records of their success in university studies available, including several students with
scholarships for graduate school at various universities in the United States and Canada, it was
decided that this would be a good time to raise the issue of a modification to the UBC admission
policy with respect to students who prepared for early entrance to UBC through the Transition
Program.

As a result of these discussions, a proposal was drafted requesting university entrance for
students who successfully complete the two-year university preparation program. The proposal
requested that formally identified academically gifted students who successfully completed the
two-year Transition Program preparing them for early entrance to university and who met the
requirements for entry to the UBC faculty of their choice may, with the recommendation of the
school principal, be granted entrance to UBC. The proposal did not preclude students' choosing
to meet requirements for high school graduation; rather it broadened the time frame in which to
do so. Secondary school graduation, for example, might be achieved retroactively rather than as
a requirement for university entrance. More importantly, the proposal took into account the need
to reduce student stress by acknowledging the abilities, efforts, and achievements of Transition
Program graduates and welcoming them into the university based on merit as opposed to
accumulated credits facilitated by five years of high school and accompanied by physical and
social-emotional maturity.

The proposal was introduced to the Transition Program Steering Committee at the April 29
meeting where it received unanimous approval. The Ministry of Education representative
identified the significance of this proposal in light of the Ministry's current review of graduation
requirements. Announcement of changes to high school graduation requirements was announced for the fall of 2002.

Dr. Neil Guppy, Associate Vice President of Academic Programs, UBC, offered to present the Steering Committee proposal to the UBC Senate Committee on Admissions. The proposal was positively received by the Committee on May 15, 2002, and recommended for Senate approval at the next scheduled meeting of Senate Committee members in the fall of 2002.

Also at the April 29 Steering Committee meeting Dr. Marion Porath together with Mary Lynn Baum presented the executive summary of The Transition Program Review Report on behalf of the Review Committee. The Review Committee had met with current students and parents as well as parents of program graduates, current staff and administration and management, two UBC professors and the UBC Liaison professor. Some individuals and groups provided the committee with written submissions. Committee members also met with a broad spectrum of students who had completed the program including a representative of students who completed only one year of the program. The committee expressed unanimous respect for and delight in the students as well as support for this unique program alternative for academically gifted adolescents. Each of the fourteen recommendations was reviewed and discussed by the Transition Program Steering Committee representatives including a representative from the Ministry of Education. The report received enthusiastic support and implementation of recommendations was undertaken by the office of the Associate Superintendent of Learning Services and the principal of University Hill Secondary. While the report reaffirmed the original conceptual framework, it also recommended ways in which program delivery would be enhanced and how both UBC and VSB could work together to optimize the program learning experiences for these students and generate more benefits for both institutions.

As a result of both the Program Review and the Proposal for University Entrance, the Transition Program's organization was reframed in accordance with the Conceptual Framework. Staffing was reorganized to address the developmental needs of students with respect to skills and knowledge required for university studies and continuing success in university careers. As opposed to sequential coverage of five years of high school, the program was organized to support students' academic acceleration, social-emotional learning and career exploration through a combination of approaches that built on prior knowledge, focused on learning outcomes and afforded appropriate levels of challenge and pace of instruction. Staffing was also reorganized to address priorities with respect to student learning needs including development of critical analysis in reading and sophisticated verbal and written communication. New positions were posted in accordance with the recommendations from the Program Review, highlighting the importance of gifted education training, interdisciplinary teaching, working as a member of a team, flexible approaches to addressing student learning needs and a commitment to the program's conceptual framework, goal, and delivery model. New staff members expressed enthusiasm for working creatively and collaboratively to address student needs in accordance with these requirements.

The Transition Program commenced in September 2002 with two new staff members and staffing reorganization which included a full time position for the teacher of English. The Acting Program Coordinator and the District Gifted Education Teacher were encouraged to work with staff to support organization of program delivery in accordance with the recommendations from the Review and understandings from the Conceptual Framework document. These efforts were
complemented by an agreement with the university to post a full time program coordinator position and by the plan for the UBC Senate to vote on the proposal for university admission for successful Transition Program graduates. Reports from parents and Steering Committee meetings indicated the positive impact of these changes. Parents in particular recognized differences in program climate and student and staff morale. One parent of a Year Two student explained that the program was now functioning as it had always been dreamed that it could. The approval of the admissions proposal by the UBC Senate on November 20th was a historical moment for the Transition Program’s development. Dr. Neil Guppy of UBC was heralded for his leadership in bringing this proposal forward with the support of Dr. David Holm, Dr. Stanley Blank, and Dr. Paul Harrison. Both students and parents received the news as an acknowledgement of student work effort and a sign of the university’s welcoming of these students. Commencing in January 2003 the students, staff, parents, and Steering Committee members welcomed Betty Gilgoff as the new program coordinator. The new coordinator has been appreciated in particular for her knowledge of gifted education practices from experience as a Challenge Center Teacher and a teacher of one of Vancouver’s Multi-Age Cluster Classes for highly gifted elementary students. The collaborative model for program development has been re-established through the commitment of the staff to work together to address student needs, the efforts of the new coordinator to facilitate staff exploration of best practices and the revitalized communication among program, parents, school administration, district gifted education coordination, UBC gifted education and program liaison.

The collaboration of program participants has been significant to the change process. Parents of enrolled students as well as parents of students who chose to return to regular secondary school supported the changes to the Transition Program organization. The parents’ articulation and documentation of student needs and the call for program delivery to align with the program's conceptual framework laid the foundation for the program review which identified guidelines for on-going program development. It was largely through the efforts of parents that the question of program integrity was brought to the highest levels of decision-making within the partnership institutions. Issues raised to the level of ethical decision-making demanded to be addressed. As a result this unique and innovative program was both tested and found worthy of efforts to improve it and continue its support and development. Administrative support together with infrastructural changes position the program for stability and growth along a well-defined goal and an articulated process model using reflection on improvement as part of program development.

Summary

The evolution of the Transition Program viewed from the perspective of the historical narrative has been an intensive and richly rewarding learning journey. Everyone involved in the program has been motivated to find ways to support these unique learners in their struggle to become masters of their exceptional abilities, intensity and sensitivity ultimately to become productive and contributing members of society. From the observations of how these students processed their experiences and responded to academic and social-emotional challenges, a program delivery model gradually developed that was more flexible, more responsive to student needs, and encouraging of student efforts.
The historical narrative revealed how the Transition Program developed through a process of negotiated understandings. These negotiations occurred at the conceptual level and the level of practice. Competing visions for achieving the program goal spiraled between program conception and program implementation. In retrospect the tensions generated by this process while stimulating program development, may have been less stressful had collaboration among participant groups been articulated, facilitated and acknowledged for its critical role in program development. It was the meaning-making process among participants that was the catalyst for change and made program development experiences so rich and compelling.

Program participants brought different perspectives to the negotiation process. Negotiation focused on the educational and developmental needs of students, how these needs could be met within the program, and the nature of student success. Differences in understandings of giftedness and attitudes toward its development were influenced by a variety of factors including family and cultural expectations, professional roles and gifted education knowledge, and previous experiences with identified gifted students. Negotiation required articulation of perspectives and this proved challenging particularly in the beginning years of the program for reasons such as knowledge of English (ESL) and lack of experience with school systems. Particular barriers included specialized vocabulary, emotional nature of issues, rigid interpretation of boundaries and limits, unclear roles and responsibilities, unarticulated assumptions, and a reticence to speak of issues for various reasons including fear of consequences. As a result negotiations developed over time and involved various means including group discussions and documents. Various individuals provided leadership and facilitation skills, principle-based reasoning, sensitivity to the diversity of the perspectives and a respect for the persons contributing their experiences and knowledge. Within the context of these challenges was the potential for the facilitation process to be derailed, with the result that the issues could become personal and communication could be reduced to lines of authority and power struggles. From the negotiations emerged decisions that have guided program development. These decisions together with influential external events are listed in Table 8.0.

To summarize the process of its development, the Transition Program's history has been organized into six stages. The first stage, which includes significant events prior to 1993, focused on the conception of the program, development of institutional partnerships, and obtaining approval in principle in order that implementation could proceed. This stage marked the initiation of the representative planning committee, which later became known as the Transition Program Steering Committee. Members articulated the need for the program and its basic tenets within their organizations, making institutional support for the program available and persuasive. These actions laid the foundation for the program's future funding and system support structures.

The second stage from 1993 to 1994 is identified as the year of program initiation. With only seven students to accommodate within the secondary school, an atmosphere of flexibility and tolerance for ambiguity encouraged experimentation and learning. The message for participants was collaboration and learning by trial and error. With this perspective came expectations that when problems arose they would be discussed with all parties and that solutions would be developed through consultation as part of the growth process for the new program. Parents at
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1988-1990</td>
<td>Vancouver School Board policy; identification of student need by District Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>Introduction to early entrance to university program model, University of Washington, Seattle.</td>
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<td>1990-1992</td>
<td>Development of VSB - UBC partnership; program concept articulated/supported</td>
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<td>1993-1994</td>
<td>Initiation of Transition Program at University Hill Secondary; Transition Program staff changes</td>
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<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>School Administrator changed mid-year; Transition Program parent group formed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>First Transition Program graduates. Some graduates choose additional Gr. 12 year.</td>
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<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>Internal coordination: 2 Transition Program teachers share responsibilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Director of Student Services, VSB, retires mid-year</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Education approves Provincial Resource Program application</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transition Program coordinator/teacher position posted (0.50 FTE)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>District Gifted Education teacher position closed; decision rescind for a year</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transition Program students: some choose/are counseled to return to regular or other programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transition Program parents; survey, brief and recommendations re unmet student needs.</td>
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<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>VSB internal review; new Superintendent</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Budget cuts, downsizing, and reorganization in Vancouver School District</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Proposal to UBC for relocation of TP to campus location</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Foundational work for TP study initiated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conceptual Framework developed for program review prior to relocation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Staff changes; postings for designated program staff positions.</td>
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<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>New administrator for University Hill Secondary</td>
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<td>New UBC President: Dr. Martha Piper</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Official opening of UBC location: UBC President, VSB Superintendent, Ministry of Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>First year all TP graduates enroll in university (full-time or concurrent studies)</td>
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<td>Eighty applications for fall of 1999; initiation of large group assessment</td>
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<td>Two TP staff retire; 2 new staff hired for September 1999</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TP study receives approval and support from VSB and TP Steering Committee</td>
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<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>TP study data collection initiated</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Program needs request developed and submitted to VSB, UBC, &amp; Ministry</td>
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<td>TP staff, administration, and District staff work on program design, delivery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>International CEC conference: TP presentation and site visit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>New framework for program delivery: core plus electives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meeting with UBC Academic Vice-President, Acting Director of Special Education,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&amp; Associate Superintendent of VSB to discuss need for more space and set agenda for 5 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>Goal is implementation of program design refinements</td>
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<td>Long term planning for extended opportunities for students and accreditation plan</td>
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<td>Coordinator on leave (Dec.-June); acting coordinator January 2001.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parent presentation to Principal and Associate Superintendent (January 2002). Information shared</td>
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<td>with staff and action plans initiated (February 2002). Program Review (March-April 2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reorganization and positions posted; acting coordinator appointed (May/June 2002).</td>
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<td>UBC Senate approved proposal for Transition Program students to apply directly to Faculties.</td>
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</table>
this time were most concerned about finding a level of challenge that engaged their students and brought a degree of satisfaction and a sense of worthwhileness to their educational experiences. The Steering Committee did not meet during this time and responsibility for program leadership was undertaken by the school administrator supported by the Director for Student Services and the gifted education teacher. Parents brought concerns to the principal and the district teacher.

During stage three from 1994 to 1996, the program struggled to manage full-time classes of twenty students, to teach them as a group and to monitor their various ability levels and needs. These years focused on experimenting with ways of meeting student needs and generally establishing the program within the constraints of secondary school operation. The overlay of secondary school organization oriented Transition Program students toward achievement where marks functioned like currency in students' bids for support and acknowledgement, particularly in terms of the credits required for graduation and the cut-off marks on provincial examinations established for university entrance. Academic and intellectual challenges focused primarily on mastery of provincial curriculum. For a number of courses the teaching of the students in the Transition Program remained relatively unchanged from the teaching within the regular classes. In some cases the number of topics and amount of homework increased. Students who struggled to demonstrate mastery and/or did not respond to the instructional approaches available, were counseled to regular classes. Decision-making emerged as school-based and focused on setting school-based parameters for program operation to guide student selection, evaluation, and retention. Significant numbers of students were readily choosing to return to regular classes where they anticipated that they would be required to do less work while at the same time achieving higher marks and having more access to scholarships, awards, and recognition. Parents' concerns were highlighted in a brief prepared for the district and school administrators.

It was during this time that the Steering Committee was called upon to provide advice to program developers and decision-makers. Changes in school administration and program staff had broadened the program vision. The vision for the program became particularly significant when the Ministry of Education approved the program as a Provincial Resource Program, giving credibly to the program concept and goal and legitimizing the program as a separate identity with funding for designated staffing. The new status made program delivery accountable to the original program vision.

The fourth stage from 1996-1998 was a period in which program delivery struggles identified two specific student populations. The first group was composed of students interested in academic challenge and secondary school rewards. As adolescents concerned with identity among peers, these students recognized that being in a separate program isolated them from the mainstream culture. While not particularly interested in early entrance to university, some students valued the program as a way to challenge themselves and achieve some level of advanced placement such as moving into senior secondary courses after one year in the Transition Program. The second group of students was positively committed to achieving early entrance to university and was not particularly interested in the secondary school experience. They were not as troubled by their social status within the school, accepting it as a condition of enrollment in the Transition Program. During this time it became evident that students from the second group were the ones who were continuing into Year Two. The decline in enrollment,
particularly girls, suggested that the program was not responding to the learning preferences and needs of the broad range of identified gifted students who had chosen to enroll in the program. Transition Program delivery was functioning as a faster-paced version of regular secondary courses. According to staff the pace of instruction required to cover the course content limited opportunities for enrichment and in-depth learning. Coverage of curriculum took priority, which in some classes meant sequential movement through texts, extensive practice and testing. Staff changes and no articulation of professional development interests in this area, further limited efforts to focus on teaching differently or to use prior knowledge of individual students to organize individual education plans.

Two options emerged from the struggle for program stability. One option was to adopt the Transition Program as a district secondary alternative program identified with the school in which it was currently housed. This option would provide an administrative recognition for high achieving students and their selection would be based on academic achievement in school programs. The second option was to relocate the program to the UBC campus and articulate a conceptual framework that shed light on an appropriate response to gifted students’ needs. It was this latter option that was supported by the Steering Committee. As result the program achieved relocation and the opportunity to re-staff the program in accordance with the articulated framework.

During the fifth stage from 1998 to 2000 the program focused on development of its identity as a pre-university program. The university location promoted access to facilities and increased the involvement of the UBC Professors providing instructional support with respect to the core disciplines. While students and parents were encouraged to adopt the pre-university identity, the staff viewed students from their perspectives as secondary teachers, roles that were reinforced by the program's continuing focus on preparing students to meet both high school graduation requirements and university entrance requirements. The first year of operation on campus all program graduates successfully enrolled in university. By the second year significant numbers of students were choosing to enroll in University Secondary School rather than continue on into Year Two of the program. The students, eager to excel, had been accepting increasingly heavy academic loads, accumulating as many as eighty credits for graduation which required fifty-two. In some cases the program experience was one of being mentored, coached and taught for success but in others it became a testing ground that fostered competition and comparisons within the ranks of students.

During this time efforts were made to articulate the value-added aspects of the program which differentiated it from a secondary school. This included work on curriculum organization, skill development, instructional strategies and evaluation policies. To accommodate student interests and requests for flexibility, courses were categorized as core courses required for university entrance or electives available by choice. When implementation of these ideas did not have the commitment of all staff, program delivery remained substantially unchanged. Efforts to manage change within the program proved frustrating, affecting relationships within the program.

During 2000-2002 the Transition Program took on the challenge of accountability and program integrity. A number of changes were introduced but key concerns and issues were not addressed. The gap between the program's conceptual framework and program delivery was articulated by parents to decision-makers and through the Steering Committee. When Teacher Job Action
heightened parental concerns, documentation and requests for changes were directed to program and district administration. Discussions with staff, while validating the discrepancies articulated by parents, suggested limits of program delivery were related to issues of space and resources, requirements for high school graduation and university entrance, and unmet program needs with respect to bureaucratic and administrative challenges. Resolution was provided through two actions undertaken by the Steering Committee. One was the program review that recommended changes to program delivery based on the needs of students as articulated through the conceptual framework and supported by parents. The second was the proposal presented to the UBC Senate Committee on Admissions. The proposal requested the broadening of admission requirements for students who successfully graduated from the Transition Program. The result of these actions was the reorganization of the Transition Program into a year of orientation and a year of intensification. Reorganization of staffing designed to promote these program delivery changes followed. Reorganization was further supported by the hiring of a full time program coordinator.

Throughout the history of the Transition Program's development several themes have remained constant. One is the concern for the unmet needs of the target student population. An expanded understanding of giftedness and gifted student needs has reinforced the importance of the intellectual peer group and highlighted the critical significance of individual student needs and vulnerabilities associated with the social-emotional development of these students. From an understanding of the ways in which these students process their experiences and the speed with which they grasp concepts has emerged an appreciation of the challenges inherent in supporting the discipline and associated mental habits needed for the development of talents and abilities. Best practices with respect to academic acceleration for gifted students including curriculum compacting and gap-based instruction have been the subject of an on-going conversation among staff, students and parents, and program management. Effective instructional strategies and teaching to the range of individual needs within this population are part of this conversation.

A second theme is the importance of communication, collaboration and community building within a program that is both intense and relatively short in duration. The program experience might be likened to an IMAX film viewed standing up. The high intensity stems from the rate of student development and change and the quick silver processing of highly capable minds; it is the strength developed through community which provides the hand rails for this experience. Because the program does not solely rely on typical secondary traditions and culture, the culture of a pre-university program continues to be constructed by current students, staff and parents, through program graduates and alumni parents, and through the Steering Committee and its institutional representatives. These relationships are a critical component of the program's success. For the participating students it is their experience of an intellectual peer group that particularly differentiated their program experiences.

A third theme is the commitment to continue to learn and to develop as an innovative and unique program. The program has changed in response to new understandings of giftedness and related student needs. It is as a result of this process of learning that services provided for students have improved. One example is the importance of conceptual clarity that makes what is done for students transparent, defensible, and accountable. Another is the importance of equity of access for highly gifted students from various populations including gifted girls, ethnic minorities, learners with disabilities and rural and inner city students.
A fourth theme is institutional partnerships and the vastness of opportunities that have only begun to be developed through shared efforts and committed leadership. The scope of issues ranges from program operation to issues of infrastructure and policy through to creative initiatives involving research, outreach, and teacher development. Leadership from the institutional partnerships has provided opportunity, legitimacy and credibility, opening the door to advances that cross institutional boundaries and extend benefits to organizations and communities.

A fifth theme is the challenge of developing an innovative program within the context of traditional educational systems and structures. An example of this challenge is the difficulty in finding, hiring and developing appropriate staff within the limitations of hiring practices. Staff members need to have advanced level knowledge of gifted learner needs and development, be aligned with the program goal and program delivery model and be able to offer best practices associated with gifted education. Staff roles include working collaboratively on program development, learning from their experiences alongside other participants, accepting responsibility for shared leadership across disciplines, student needs, and community building and engaging in research within the program. Changes have occurred gradually to the point where recent descriptions of teacher positions have included descriptions of the program and qualifications required of staff including gifted education training and/or a commitment to development of professional knowledge in this field.

A sixth theme throughout the program's development has been the importance of program leadership. To support the efforts of staff, promote collaboration and communication, and align program development with the nature and needs of gifted students, substantive and long term leadership for the program has been identified as a priority. Infrastructure support for leadership is necessary to support communication with all participant groups. Specialized knowledge with respect to the psychology of gifted learners and best educational practices needs to be shared across the program staff and coordinator as well as district gifted education coordinator and university expert knowledge, teacher education, and liaison staff.

Lastly, throughout the multi-faceted challenges that have faced the program, there has been unequivocal acknowledgement that the students as individuals and as members of an intellectual peer group deserve respect and support. The program's development has been punctuated with the creative insights, in-depth understandings, enjoyment of challenge, capacity for joy and humor, and remarkable achievements of the students who have chosen to enroll in the program. Student efforts have informed the practices within the program and improved services for students in other programs and other school districts. Through their efforts and their goals they continue to stretch the limits of current policies and practices making way for further innovation. Not from the utilitarian perspective of talent development but from the nature of who they are they become as tantalizing, mesmerizing, wondrous, fragile, elusive and illuminating as the proverbial aurora borealis on a cool September evening. The opportunities to walk with these students as they struggle to know themselves and develop their abilities are both a privilege and a reward. The understandings gleaned from these intense experiences inform and enrich both personal and professional decision making, which, when shared with other professionals and parents, contributes to improvements to the education system for all students. Students and their learning remain the compelling reason for the program's continued development and the source of passionate commitment evidenced throughout the Transition Program's evolution.
As if anointed at its beginning with the words, "May you live in interesting times," the Transition Program has thus moved through many challenges. By virtue of its innovative nature the program was permitted to focus on finding appropriate ways to address the needs of the unique student population it was committed to serve. Instead of taking on the framework of traditional programs, the Transition Program engaged participants in reflection on how the program could be improved. It is the commitment to student needs which suggests that the program will continue to evolve in creative ways within a future that will hold its share of new questions, concerns and issues. However the evidence of students' successes has been glimpsed and there are now voices to answer the question of why the program needs to exist. There is also documentation such as the Program Review that reconfirms the importance of this innovative alternative for academically gifted adolescents. One legacy of the program's development is graduates, parents and members of the Steering Committee that are committed to helping the program improve. The program has arrived at a pivotal point in its development when the opportunity to take advantage of what has been learned has been made available. What students need from the program has been articulated both theoretically and practically. How creative and collaborative problem solving within and among the founding institutional partners addresses the potential for significant positive program change is the beginning of a new chapter. The future evolution of the Transition Program waits upon the decisions of program developers and administration, institutional supporters, the funding agency, and current and future students, program graduates, and their parents.
CHAPTER IV

EXAMINING THE PROGRAM FROM THE INSIDE OUT

The historical narrative traced the evolution of the Transition Program over the nine years of its operation though a variety of information sources including program documents, notes and interviews. The influence which participants and stakeholders have had on program development is evident throughout the narrative. To obtain a deeper understanding of the perspectives of those who experienced the program at different stages of its emerging form and function a combination of surveys, focus groups, interviews and clarifying conversations were undertaken. An overview of these and other research activities within the context of the Transition Program's history is provided in Table 9.0. A discussion of data collection processes and findings follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Program Development</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988-1992</td>
<td>Program conception and initial design</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
<td>Program initiated at University Hill Secondary</td>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Part time Program Coordinator role initiated</td>
<td>Historical Document Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Relocation Proposal for The University of British Columbia</td>
<td>Program History Initiated</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Conceptual Framework Document</td>
<td>Program Delivery Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proposal to relocate program to UBC submitted</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relocation to UBC campus: September 1998</td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Two new staff; Staff focus on Student Needs; Internal Program Review of Curriculum Delivery</td>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Program extensions proposed through staff discussions: Core courses plus electives; modification to evaluation policy; university course visits for students. Request for more space to address student needs.</td>
<td>Policy/Practice/Role Articulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Acting Program Coordinator plus part time temporary staff New staff: Program Coordinator, Counselor, Teacher Policy/Practice/Role Articulation</td>
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Data Collection

The historical narrative has suggested differences among participant groups with respect to their perceptions of student needs, how these could be addressed, and what would constitute success for these students. These differences in perception stimulated the negotiation of understandings that resulted in the current organization of the Transition Program. A variety of approaches were used to sample the differences in perception of the participation groups in order to examine the expectations which accompanied student enrollment in the program and how these expectations were met and if they changed over time. Patterns of differences and commonalities across groups were explored to clarify the struggles within the program's development and suggest understandings that could potentially make future development more available and transparent.

To this end a combination of approaches was used to collect participant perspectives on three issues: student needs, student success and program improvement. These issues were explored first through a survey distributed December 1999, second through focus groups which met in the Spring and Fall of 2000, and lastly through interviews and follow-up conversations which took place between 2000 and 2001. An effort was made to invite responses from all participant groups reflecting all years of the program as well as different lengths of time in the program. Participant groups included students, parents, staff, UBC professors, and Steering Committee members. Years of program involvement ranged from 1993 to 2001. Different lengths of time in the program were described as only Year One, both Years One and Two, and only Year Two. The sum of the latter two categories represents program graduates.

Survey

A survey consisting of questions developed in accordance with the above rationale was piloted with program applicants and their parents during screening interviews (spring 1998-99) and distributed in December 1999. (See Appendix D.) Initial questions focused on demographics that could identify the respondent's role and years of involvement in the program. Students and parents were asked to identify alternatives they had explored prior to enrollment in the Transition Program. Students and parents were also asked to list the educational needs which motivated application to the Transition Program and to elaborate on how they anticipated the program would meet these needs. Comments on their program experience in terms of which needs had been addressed effectively and which had not were invited. Similarly, students and parents were asked to identify their initial criteria for student success and comment on any changes that had occurred during or after participation in the program. Other participant groups were asked to respond to the above questions from the perspectives of their various roles and responsibilities related to the program. To promote further clarity with respect to the way in which student needs had been addressed within the program, respondents were provided with a list of 28 program elements drawn from current practice and the conceptual framework document. In addition to rating each element using a scale of one to five, from not at all helpful through to critical to student success, respondents were invited to clarify their responses by commenting on any of the program elements. Lastly all participants were asked to suggest how the program could be improved.
The student survey concluded with a section requesting information about academic progress through secondary school and university including courses, faculties, grades and other evidence of achievement. Students were also asked what assistance they would appreciate having available at the university, those experiences or achievements from the program or the university of which they were proud, and career directions they were interested in pursuing. Anecdotes and comments were invited.

Focus Groups

Parents

The survey questions and their responses formed the basis of the focus group discussions in April 2000. Two meetings were arranged for parents of students currently enrolled in the Transition Program, one for parents of Year One students and one for parents of Year Two students. Parents had recommended separate sessions because the issues associated with adjustment in the first year differed substantially from the issues of achievement in the second year. Parents agreed to the tape recording of sessions supplemented with note taking.

In addition to reviewing the questions from the survey and exploring the range of views on these particular issues, parents were invited to provide their interpretation of the program's efforts, both in design and delivery, to respond to the needs of the enrolled students. Clarifying questions included the following. Why did parents support their child's enrollment and continuation in the program? What were the trade-offs and compromises that influenced their decisions? How extensive and unique did they perceive the needs of enrolled students to be? What unanticipated needs were addressed within the program? What made the program experience most meaningful and worthwhile for students? How did the program experience support the future success of the students? Parents engaged readily with the issues and extended questions, candidly offering their perspectives and using examples from the experience of students in the program to support particular views. They indicated the program was the best option for their students given needs for advanced level work and opportunities to be with students like themselves where they could experience acceptance and friendships. They expressed surprise at the academic and social-emotional development of students that changed significantly over short time spans within the program. Parents also remarked on the close bonds that had been established among peers. Within the discussions parents explored different family perspectives on the needs of students, the needs met and unmet within the program, and various measures of student success. Parents expressed appreciation for an opportunity to share reflections on the program experience with other parents within a community-building process. One group recommended this experience should be provided to small groups of parents on a regular basis every year.

Students

Between April and November 2000 three groups of students gathered to provide feedback on their program experiences. Two groups consisted of program graduates, the first group had experienced the program at the secondary school location and the second group had enrolled in
the program located on the university campus. The third group consisted of three girls who had completed Year One and subsequently chose to enroll in University Hill Secondary. Table 10.0 indicates the program years represented by these students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10.0 Focus Groups: Transition Program Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Years</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Group I: Program Graduates</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94 / 1994-95*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96**</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994-95 / 1996-97</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995-96 / 1996-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Total:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group II: Year One Only</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Total:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group III: Program Graduates</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99 / 1999-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-Total:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
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</table>

* One male/one female student enrolled in Grade 12 following Transition Program.
** Students who enrolled in Year Two only.
*** Students at the time were enrolled full time in first year at UBC.

The first focus group with students took place April 2000 when eleven graduates of the Transition Program from the years 1993 through to 1997 responded to an invitation to participate in a discussion about their program experiences. The students who chose to attend the session ranged in age from 21 to 18 years. Students agreed to the tape recording of the session that was supplemented by notes.

Students began the session by re-establishing connections with individuals, some of whom were former classmates while some had graduated from the program in different years. All students had participated in the program while it was located at University Hill Secondary. Four students had enrolled only in Year Two. Two students had taken a Grade 12 year following Transition Program and one student enrolled in a regular secondary program for a year between Year One and Year Two. Several students were completing undergraduate degrees in areas that included engineering, pharmacy, linguistics, mathematics, physics, and psychology. Other students were enrolled in third and fourth year of various undergraduate programs.
Students approached each of the issues by offering opinions to which other members in the group then responded. Perspectives were either validated with anecdotes and elaborations on the original opinion or contrasted by other opinions. Students were also inclined to analyze each other's responses based on both memories of program experiences and reflections on experiences within their university years. The students who had been enrolled at university longest reported being pleased with their university successes and the future opportunities which early entrance to university had afforded them. The younger students described interests connected to future career paths. One student, for example, exuded energy and excitement as he explained how he had identified bio-information technology as a burgeoning field of study that he intended to pursue. He explained that his applications to graduate programs were focused on universities with professors who were engaged in leading edge research.

Students not only spoke passionately about their areas of interest but with detail and analysis described their experiences as students in the Transition Program, often breaking into hilarity as a result of shared memories of particular events or teachers. Interwoven through their discussions of almost four hours were references to the particular teachers for whom they had affection and respect. Important contributions of teachers included setting high standards for challenging work, individual support, and interesting approaches to learning experiences. Fast-paced exchanges rippled through the group when particularly insightful perspectives were articulated and then shared by others.

Students indicated that their program experiences were important to them and that they enjoyed the opportunity to explore understandings and acknowledge challenges among peers who had made similar decisions. The older students in particular articulated the desire to give back to the program through sharing what they have learned about university and career paths with younger students. Some students were articulate with respect to the consequences of their personal and career choices in terms of the meaningfulness of the work they saw themselves able to do. A number of students described the challenge of defining a career path given the wide range of interests they enjoyed. A majority of the students indicated that although their parents had identified the Transition Program as an option, the decision to enroll was one that they made. Their decisions to continue in the program were largely motivated by their enjoyment of their peer group and engagement with a range of challenges leading to early entrance to university. Students reported that the university location provided opportunities for them to meet their academic needs and that hospitable locations such as UBC's Math Club, which many Transition Program graduates chose to frequent, supported their social needs. Continuing relationships among many of the graduates beyond studies to social events and friendships was also a source of satisfaction for the students.

Students expressed a desire to maintain a connection to newly enrolling program students and recommended development of a website as the most efficient means by which communication could be maintained, particularly as many of them saw themselves and their friends enrolling in graduate school in different Canadian and American cities. They identified a number of students who had already relocated to enroll in programs such as medicine at McGill and computer technology in California universities. Generally students indicated they were pleased with their skills, confident about their abilities, and enjoying satisfying experiences in their university studies. When the session concluded students pulled out chess and other board games and engaged in these activities in small groups, actions that appeared to reinforce the friendships they shared.
As a follow-up to the initial student focus group, a smaller group of students who had enrolled in the Transition Program since its relocation to the UBC campus met in October 2000. Four recent graduates of the program, two males and two females, reflected on the Transition Program from their perspectives as first year university students at UBC. Following an introduction to the survey questions, students commented on their reasons for enrolling in the program and the challenges they had experienced. They commented on the peer group as especially important, providing support for a range of strong and different personalities and interests. They explained how they used a variety of approaches and developed useful skills with respect to organizing and managing an extensive workload. These students suggested that students are able and should take it as their responsibility to shape the program experience by their attitudes and their willingness to work hard. They credited their success to the support and assistance provided through teachers and the coordinator and their peer group. Bubbling through their commentaries and anecdotes was excitement with UBC courses and their status as university students. They were also delighted and surprised at the ease of their adjustment to university. Students recommended that only students who wanted to enroll in the program should be accepted and that students could not be successful in the program if they were enrolling to please other people. Opportunities to increase program flexibility and broaden student choices, such as not everyone having to complete all courses at a high level and earlier access to university courses were suggested.

A third group of students met to discuss their program experiences and particularly their decisions to enroll in University Hill Secondary after successfully completing Year One in the Transition Program. The three girls were joined by one of their new friends from the secondary school who expressed an interest in enrolling in the program. All three girls described the decision to enroll in the program in terms of opportunities for interesting challenges and advancement through acceleration. They commented on their achievement goals with respect to high marks and scholarships and awards. They indicated that parents supported these achievement goals and wanted to ensure that the girls would have both the opportunities and the appropriate financial support to enable them to pursue their education and career plans. Each of these students was aware of her exceptional abilities although one student expressed concern about skills in English given her relocation to Canada in recent years and English as a Second Language support during elementary school.

The students indicated that the decision to enroll in the secondary school after Year One had been the subject of intensive reflection. The reasons for making the change were explained as follows. The marks they had received during their first year in the program had been substantially lower than they had anticipated and they were concerned that their achievement levels in Year Two would be the same. Despite encouragement and explanations to the contrary, the students had concluded that they would be more successful within the secondary school. Secondly, the range of abilities and strengths within the program was somewhat daunting particularly given ten male students characterized as strong personalities with some areas of exceptional strength and typically less development with respect to social maturity. Within the dynamics of the classroom these differences in maturity and style were accentuated by gender imbalance. These dynamics were described as a more aggressive form of competition and verbal exchanges as compared to the climate of cooperation, encouragement, support for achievement, and pleasure in each other's company that these female students found enabling. Thirdly, these students wanted more help in areas where the content was new as physics, for example, is for
students who enroll after Grade Seven. Accessing the assistance they needed proved problematic for various reasons and they reported feeling somewhat discouraged with their efforts to be successful. Lastly University Hill Secondary School was described to them as a viable alternative, a choice that had been made by numerous other students. The warmth and encouragement offered to the students through the counselor was both persuasive and attractive. They enrolled in the secondary school with a sense that someone would make every effort to support their achievement goals, be available to discuss any of their concerns, and that they were valued and wanted within the school. These individuals were comfortable with their decisions and recognized the benefits of the Year One experience and anticipated high levels of success in the secondary school.

During the course of the hour and a half discussion, the fourth girl listened carefully. At the end she expressed her interest in enrolling in the program notwithstanding the concerns voiced by the other students. She indicated that her experience of one year of high school had been interesting but insufficient with respect to the level of challenge that she needed. She had been advanced in mathematics within the school but still felt isolated and frustrated with having to follow repeated instruction in curriculum that she mastered readily and being unable to explore advanced level work with which she was eager to engage. Subsequently the student proceeded to enroll in the program and after two years, successfully graduated with exceptional achievements including particularly outstanding awards in mathematics. She reported that the fast-pace within the program, opportunity to work with UBC professors and her peers, and achievement both early entrance to university and recognition in mathematics were sources of particular satisfaction (Focus Group Follow-up, 2001).

Semi-Structured Interviews

As a follow-up to the survey and focus groups, a range of semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual students, parents, staff and Steering Committee members during the spring and fall of 2000. The interviews focused on the three areas of discussion: student needs, student success, and program improvement. Individual anecdotes often reinforced understandings hypothesized and/or articulated in survey responses or focus group discussions. In some cases the meaning for the individual was attached to a vision of the program and in others it was linked to personal values with respect to student success and a worthwhile life.

The individuals interviewed indicated appreciation for the efforts to develop the Transition Program, which represented an innovative program responding to unique needs and goals of academically gifted students. They affirmed the importance of having such an option for students, many of whom they described as at risk for dropping out of school and serious social-emotional challenges. Parents, teachers, and members of the Steering Committee suggested that an important influence on students' social-emotional development was the program's ability to provide challenging learning experiences within an environment where it was safe to be smart. The in-depth friendships and support experienced within the peer group were described as critical to student achievement and success both within the program and in later years. Parent and Steering Committee representatives acknowledged the importance of the efforts of students and staff to adapt to on-going developmental challenges within the program. Parents, staff and students identified positive relationships as an important influence on program climate. The
climate of encouragement and valuing that affected the productivity of both students and staff also affected the family dynamics of students at home according to parents.

Within individual interviews there was more open criticism of aspects of the program which had failed to address particular needs of individual students. These concerns were often framed as a need for flexibility within the program delivery and a need for sensitivity with respect to the nature and vulnerabilities of students who were facing significant challenges often for the first time in their school experiences. Both students and parents emphasized the need for more emphasis on encouragement, relationship building and community support together with acknowledgement of the challenges and struggles inherent in the program. A number of concerns related to internal program organization, instruction, curriculum organization, evaluation of student learning and communication needs were brought up. Frustration was expressed with respect to the limits within which the program was required to function as opposed to a climate wherein appropriate responsiveness to student needs was the priority. At the same time the program concept was unanimously supported and a willingness to support program development was articulated.

At the request of some students and parents the interview format was modified to incorporate small groups of two, three or four individuals and informal conversations about their program experiences were reviewed within the group. These discussions reaffirmed the influence of the program experience on students as well as on parents. Many parents had also developed strong friendships during their years of association with the program, which continued to thrive long after students had graduated. They felt that addressing students' needs for academic challenge required differentiated instruction, curriculum and evaluation practices blended with an equal measure of social-emotional, developmental support. They also pointed out that, as the only staff who worked with students on a daily basis, the teachers and program coordinator were responsible for accommodating the range and intensity of student needs.

Tensions within and among participant groups were also articulated in interviews. These tensions were attributed to the inability to address needs identified as important to program delivery and student success. For example students expressed a need for evaluation that was based on evidence of learning as opposed to compliance in terms of homework, explaining that ability to demonstrate learning through examination merited acknowledgement whether the learning had occurred as a result of accumulated homework or other means available to the individual student. Parents pressed for communication and a collaborative problem solving approach to issues in order to be supportive and helpful. Staff called for more classrooms with more access to university facilities and curriculum resources in order to be more responsive to the diversity and range of student needs. Different perspectives on issues and how they could be addressed were typically accompanied with expectations regarding who could, would, or should take responsibility for any unmet needs.

Frustration also related to the challenge of problem solving within a context of institutional partnerships. For example, some solutions to student-focused program needs were dependent on interpretation of existing policies within the institutions whose partnership provided the foundation for the program’s operation. The ability to access appropriate decision-makers, to make these issues a priority, and to facilitate appropriate changes, demanded continued attention and effort. Working through committees and bureaucracies brought change but often not quickly enough for students who were enrolled for a short time in an accelerated program. There was a
sense, at times, that the program was spanning institutions and the development of a safety net had to be a priority of the program staff until such time as a seamless infrastructure could be built.

Comments from staff suggested that roles, responsibilities and expectations for teachers as well as other staff were not well articulated and that support for teachers within the program needed to be reviewed. Tensions were attributed to the call for flexibility in order to respond to student needs on the one hand and the demand for achievement according to established criteria within the different institutions, namely secondary school, university and Ministry of Education, on the other. Coordinating teacher work to address both individual student needs and institutional requirements involved close collaboration amongst staff members and administrators. Some staff anticipated resolution of tension through articulation of program policies and procedures, administrative facilitation of access to university resources and facilities, and increased staff for counseling and monitoring student productivity and behavior. They suggested team planning to coordinate alternative interdisciplinary approaches to curriculum and evaluation as a means to address student needs and enhance relationships with students and parents. Within these dynamics there were internal struggles to extend the traditional teacher role to meet the challenges associated with the program goals, the unique student population, and the intensive experiences of collaboration and academic acceleration. The extent to which teachers and administrators within the program would become active participants in a process of development change was not initially understood and thus not part of role expectations nor readily accepted or supported by individuals. Teachers and principals were also highly sensitive to their responsibility to support achievement of success for students and the program and some individuals reported loss of sleep and low morale as a result of anxiety about whether they were appropriately addressing student needs.

Participants in focus groups and semi-structured interviews all revealed a compelling interest in understanding how the program functioned and changed. Earlier participants expressed surprised at the extensiveness of current program development. Some students suggested increased specificity of program organization would result in a program that was too demanding and rigid. Other comments suggested that the program's development demonstrated an understanding of student needs and an attempt to address issues that had arisen during the early stages of the program. An interest in making the program better in terms of the services and facilities provided for students was a constant theme.

Within the context of the above approaches it is important to note that the Conceptual Framework document served as another vehicle for inviting participant perspectives when it was discussed as a response document in the spring of 1998. Participant groups invited to respond to the document included current students and staff, current and alumni parents, program graduates and UBC professors who provided instructional support to the program. The document discussed earlier by Steering Committee members was approved with minor changes. The importance of an articulation of the program's goal and framework were unanimously acknowledged across all groups. The vision of the program's operation was accepted with some questions about how this could be managed and who would be responsible for making it happen as described. These questions have remained challenges for the program's on-going development.
Complexities and Limitations of the Data Gathering

Participation in the above combination of approaches afforded the opportunity for corroboration of points of view identified by different groups of participants at different times in the program's development. Numbers of participants are listed in Table 11.0. The extent to which the data collected by these various approaches was representative of the participant groups is addressed through further analysis. The years of the program represented through the data collection process are detailed in Table 12.0.

Data analysis also needed to be sensitive to other factors that influence interpretation. These factors include conditions under which the information was collected, the complexities inherent in the issues, and the individuals involved. The following discussion is designed to address these issues.

Participation in data collection approaches was voluntary and based on self-report. Individuals were invited through letters and personal contact. Groups were alerted to the study and advised of opportunities for input. Reports were influenced by factors such as the period of time since their participation in the program and subsequent academic and social development of students. Responses were also related to social-motional issues made increasingly sensitive by the unique ability profiles of these students and their related needs as well as family dynamics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Groups</th>
<th>Respondents: Potential</th>
<th>Respondents: Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>91-114</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>88-110</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBC Professors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Above groups included current as well as past members. Steering Committee also included original program planners and VSB administrators. UBC Professors refers to those individuals who have been providing instruction in the program.

* Other refers to special conversation settings and includes panels of students, parents, and Steering Committee representatives at Transition Program Information meetings (November, 1999 & February, 2000) as well as a panel and an open discussion session with students as part of the Council for Exceptional Children International Conference, April 6/7, 2000 and various meetings with individuals/groups.
In order to look for patterns or themes within the responses, it was important to consider respondents’ years of association with the program according to years of program enrollment and length of time within the program. Not only did the program encompass students at different stages of development at different times, but student experiences within the program, whether one year or two years, provided very different perspectives on the Transition Program. For example, students who experienced only Year One of the program had different understandings of the program’s operation when compared to students who enrolled in both Years One and Two or only Year Two. Typically Year One involved significant adjustments to a secondary school culture and multi-age grouping. Academic acceleration introduced high demands with respect to productivity, organization and time management, and continuing improvement within an exceptional capable and intense new peer group. These demands often precipitated decisions to continue in the program or to return to the regular secondary program. This was particularly the case for students who entered the program directly after Grade Seven and had no previous experience with the extensive organizational structure required by secondary schools responsible for providing service to large numbers of students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12.0 Program Years Represented by Student and Parent Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Collection Approaches</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptual Framework</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survey</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus Groups</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, students who completed both years of the program began Year Two with an established identity within a peer group. These students experienced increased academic confidence, having had the opportunity to see how much they had learned and developed during the course of Year One, and the chance to realize substantial academic gains during the second year of the program. Students who only enrolled in Year Two were generally older and more focused on achieving university entrance. They had less time for development of the bonds that were identified as a source of significant support for the students who completed both years of the program.

Program perspectives were also influenced by adolescent developmental changes and challenges. The asynchrony of mental, emotional and physical development within a gifted student was accentuated by the multi-aged grouping. Significant differences in maturity evident in interests, behaviors, and stamina required a style of management different from the typical classroom
where students are grouped according to chronological age. For example the mean age for students enrolling in the first year of the program between 1993 and 2000 was 12.72 years. Ages of individual students ranged from ten years for three students (one female and two males) in 1995-96 to sixteen years for one female student in 1999-2000. (See Table 13.0.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 13.0 Student Enrollment By Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
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<td>1994-1995</td>
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<td>1995-1996</td>
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<td>1999-2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous educational background also influenced the dynamics within the Transition Program classes. Student academic and social-emotional maturity and related expectations for schooling were different not only by culture and tradition. For example, the majority of students enrolling in Year One moved from being among the oldest students in an elementary school to the youngest in a secondary school, inexperienced with respect to secondary school expectations and culture. The grade levels of students accepted into Year One of the Transition Program ranged from Grade 9 through Grade 7 with some exceptions. (See Table 13.1.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 13.1 Student Enrollment By Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
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<td>1995-1996</td>
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<td>1996-1997</td>
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<td>2000-2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that while age influenced social-emotional maturity, particularly with respect to student socialization within a secondary school culture, age did not automatically predict lack of academic success within the program. Several of the most successful students in
the program enrolled at ages eleven and twelve. Most often it was students who had experienced academic acceleration in elementary school who were eager to continue with advanced level challenges in the Transition Program. Their academic success related to factors influenced by age and experience but was not necessarily limited by them. These included organizational skills, time management, self-esteem, academic confidence, intellectual curiosity, and the ability to focus and sit still for long hours and listen to lectures. Notably these characteristics are typically demonstrated by gifted students when they are working in areas, or on topics of high interest. Within the Transition Program where intellectual peers and appropriate levels of challenge were provided, these students immersed themselves in a steep learning curve and demonstrated remarkable development and achievement over the two years. This was particularly evident in the years of the program when teaching approaches were more often differentiated for this student population.

The newness of the program and its uniqueness within the education system meant that change and development were on going. Within this climate of change and innovation, program delivery was being refined by practice. Therefore the perspective of survey participants needed to be reviewed with reference to particular stages of program development. One example of how the stage of program development affected participant perspectives was the Conceptual Framework, which only became available in 1998. Prior to that time there was limited articulation of program organization available in print. Participants in a unique program had little with which to compare their expectations and experiences. Understandings of the uniqueness of the students and the range and diversity of student needs was only gradually being developed and addressed within the program. To understand the meaning which participants attributed to the program experience it was helpful to explore the motivation to enroll and initial understandings of student needs within the context of the stage of the program's development.

A further level of complexity involved the nature of program development at different time periods. The first year of the program, 1993-94, represented the start-up year. From 1994 to 1996 the program's operation was established through practice. Between 1996 and 1998 the program expanded its mandate as a Provincial Resource Program, enrolling students from outside of Vancouver. The increased diversity of student backgrounds and readiness of academic acceleration brought a range of expectations which raised issues and concerns with respect to program goals, the ways in which students were identified and their needs understood and addressed. From 1998 to 2000 the program established a pre-university identity for students with relocation to the UBC campus. Struggles to define and stabilize an effective program delivery model at this new site ensued. From 2000 to 2002 program development focused on refinements to program delivery, particularly with respect to curriculum and instruction based on original program goals, student needs and identified best practices.

**Analysis of Survey Data**

Survey distribution targeted the following participant groups: students, parents, staff, principals, UBC professors involved in the program, and members of the Steering Committee. Students and their parents were identified based on a minimum one full year in the program. Other groups were targeted by membership of two or more years.
The survey provided snapshots of participants' understandings of their program experiences based on duration of enrollment and the specific years of enrollment. Responses to survey questions were expected to vary considerably through the initial years of the program as compared to the latter years when the conceptual framework document was available and graduates of the program had demonstrated successful patterns by their choices.

The largest participant groups were students and their parents. A review of student enrollment in the Transition Program commencing with the program's initiation in 1993 provided initial data to determine to whom the survey would be distributed. (See Table 14.0.)

Table 14.0 Transition Program Student Enrollment 1993-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>POST YEAR ONE</th>
<th>YEAR TWO</th>
<th>UBC</th>
<th>POST YEAR TWO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ONE</td>
<td>Cont</td>
<td>Reg</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-94</td>
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<td>M3</td>
<td>F2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-95</td>
<td>M18</td>
<td>F7</td>
<td>M7</td>
<td>F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95-96</td>
<td>M14</td>
<td>F6</td>
<td>M8</td>
<td>M5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96-97</td>
<td>M9</td>
<td>F11</td>
<td>M3</td>
<td>F4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97-98</td>
<td>M6</td>
<td>M3</td>
<td>M1</td>
<td>M2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-99</td>
<td>M10</td>
<td>F6</td>
<td>M8</td>
<td>F4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99-00</td>
<td>M7</td>
<td>F6</td>
<td>M2</td>
<td>F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00-01</td>
<td>M10</td>
<td>F6</td>
<td>M7</td>
<td>F6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-02</td>
<td>M13</td>
<td>F7</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% 120</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percent calculation based on 8 Year One classes of 120 students and 7 Year Two classes of 76 students
Key: Cont = continuing to Yr 2; Reg = regular secondary; Other = alternate program; UBC Conc = Concurrent Studies; Oth U = Other universities; M = male; F = female.
According to Transition Program enrollment data beginning in 1993 and through to the fall of 2001, 140 students comprised of 88 males and 52 females have enrolled in nine Year One classes and 90 students comprised of 58 males and 27 females have enrolled in eight Year Two classes. Of the 120 students who enrolled in Year One prior to 2001-2002, 59 students or 49% have continued on into Year Two. Twenty-seven new students have joined the program in Year Two comprising 30% of the Year Two student population. Of the 59 continuing students, 41 are male and 18 female. During the same period of time, four students enrolled in concurrent studies at UBC while completing Year Two coursework at the Transition Program. As of September 2001, 76 students have successfully completed the Year Two program.

Years when enrollment declined correspond to factors related to program stability including staffing changes and program relocation. During the five years prior to the program’s relocation to the UBC campus, an average of 53% of the students in Year One did not continue on into Year Two; they chose to accept placement in a secondary program. Other than in 1999-2000, when two teachers who had worked with the program since its inception retired, the program had been moving toward 80%+ retention of students from Year One into Year Two. Of the 76 students who have graduated from Year Two as of June 2001, the majority has enrolled in academic studies the September following graduation from the Transition Program. A total of 13 program graduates have chosen to return to regular secondary school for one year before enrolling in university studies. Five students chose other career paths or took time for opportunities such as travel before resuming their studies. While a number of Transition Program students have enrolled in different universities in BC, to date UBC reports registration of 74 students who were previously enrolled in the Transition Program and were formally identified as academically gifted.

The survey was distributed in December 1999 to 114 students who had participated in the program for a minimum of one full year between the years 1993 and 1999. Of the group of 91 students (six classes) who initially enrolled in Year One, 48 had chosen to return to regular programs after completion of Year One and 43 had decided to continue on into Year II. Of the 55 students (five classes) who had completed Year Two by the end of June 1999, 31 were students who had continued from Year One, one student was enrolled in concurrent studies at UBC, and 23 students were new to Year Two.

The almost 20% return rate of the student and parent surveys was lower than expected compared to educator groups whose returns ranged from 40% to 75%. (See Table 15.0.) Thirty-three surveys were returned. Eighteen were from students and nineteen were from families representing twenty students. Three staff returned surveys. Two UBC instructing professors and nine Steering Committee representatives completed surveys. Three former principles of University Hill Secondary completed surveys. Thirteen surveys were returned as undeliverable.

Numerous parents, as well as staff, program planners, and Steering Committee members spoke positively about the study and their interest in its results. The reasons why surveys were not returned included time constraints and a reluctance to speak of intense personal experiences through a survey. Students, particularly Transition Program graduates, explained that their attention was focused on current coursework and related academic goals. These students expressed a preference for verbal response opportunities. Some individuals simply did not wish to discuss their experiences within the program. For example, few students who completed the survey provided details with respect to courses and grades. Some parents indicated that they
were not comfortable with expressing their responses in written form (e.g. English as second language families). A number of parents described their experiences as "too emotional" to articulate readily and expressed a preference to talk about their experiences as individuals or in small groups.

### Table 15.0 Years of Transition Program Involvement of Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>STUDENTS</th>
<th></th>
<th>FAMILIES</th>
<th>STAFF (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>Respondents Per Prgm Yr</td>
<td>Yrs. Involved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I II CS</td>
<td>M F</td>
<td>M F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4 3 3 1 2 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>√√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>22 12</td>
<td>22 12 7 3 4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>√√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>20 13</td>
<td>24 9 4 2 2 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>√√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>20 9</td>
<td>18 11 2 1 1 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>√√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>6 10</td>
<td>11 5 2 1 1 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>√√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>16 10 (1)</td>
<td>18 9 6 4 2 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>√√√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>(13) (14) (3)</td>
<td>19 11 6 5 1 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91* 23* (1)*</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Student numbers after 1998-1999 did not participate in the survey because they had not completed a year in the Transition Program at the time of the survey.  
* = Numbers of student to whom surveys were distributed.  
CS = Concurrent Studies at UBC

Most student respondents were from earlier program years and subsequent to program relocation to the UBC campus. Parent respondents were more evenly balanced across all years of the program. (See Table 15.1.)

### Table 15.1 Program Years Reflected by Student Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Yr I Only</th>
<th>Full Program</th>
<th>Yr II Only</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Std Gd</th>
<th>Yr I</th>
<th>Full Prog</th>
<th>Yr II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>M F</td>
<td>Total M F</td>
<td>Yr I M F</td>
<td>Yr II M F</td>
<td>Total M F</td>
<td>Total M F</td>
<td>Only</td>
<td>Yr I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-94</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 2</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-95</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 3</td>
<td>3 2 1 2 2 1 1</td>
<td>4 3 1 2 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95-96</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 2 1 1</td>
<td>3 2 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>5 2 3 2 1 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96-97</td>
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<td>1 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>4 2 2 1 2 1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4 2 2 1 2 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>98-99</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4 2 1 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>99-00</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5 1</td>
<td>5 4 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td>5 5 1 1 4 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within the limited number of students who responded there were differences. More of the students who completed both years of the program or only Year Two responded that those who completed only Year One. Although significantly few females had enrolled in the program than males, their representation in the survey responses were reasonably balanced with responses from male students. (See Table 15.2.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment 1993-1998*</th>
<th>Survey Distribution</th>
<th>Survey Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Enrolled in Year I</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Completed Both Yr I &amp; Yr II</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Completed Only Year II</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Program Graduates (B + C)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Totals (A + B + C)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Records of student enrollment includes 91 students who registered in Year I (31 of whom continued into Year II) plus 23 students who joined the program in Year II and 1 concurrent studies student.

*Three students who continued on into Year II had not yet graduated at the time of the survey.

Neither the rate of return of surveys from parents and students nor the numbers of respondents from each program year provided significantly representative information to support an identification of trends within the program. However the information gained proved helpful when survey data were examined in relation to focus groups and interviews. The combination of data from these various approaches supported and enhanced understandings developed within the program.

In comparison to parents and students, other participant groups were relatively small. For example, Transition Program staff selected to receive the survey (n=8) were individuals who had worked for a minimum of two years within the program or one year in the case of Mathematics and Physics. Two of the responding staff had each been involved in the program for six years, 1993-1999. In the early years of the program all staff were full time teachers assigned to University Hill Secondary and teaching one or two blocks in Transition Program as part of their school assignment. The first exception to this occurred in 1996 with the hiring of a part time program coordinator who also taught science in the program. Starting September 1998 three full time staff positions and two-part time positions, plus some counseling time constituted the program staff. The teachers who completed the survey represented both part time and full time positions within the Transition Program. They also represented a range of disciplines from the Humanities, specifically English, History and Social Studies as well as the Sciences including Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology and the coordinator role. Steering Committee
respondents represented UBC faculties of Arts, Science, and Engineering and VSB administration as well as parents from the Gifted Children's Association and the Transition Program Parent Association. Secondary administrators involved between 1991-2002 participated in two interviews and three surveys. An in-depth interview was conducted with the Director of Student Services (1984-1995) responsible for initiating the program.

Survey responses were coded by group and by years of involvement in the program. Tabulated responses were organized with respect to the three themes of student needs, success, and program improvement. Analysis of ratings of program elements was differentiated in terms of the items identified as most helpful, which consisted of very helpful and critical to student success, as opposed to the least/not helpful items. Most helpful and least helpful program elements were used to identify similarities and differences across and among groups. The rating of program elements was calculated for all surveys and organized by groups. Comments provided with respect to program elements were incorporated into the interpretation. In addition to the data organized by years of involvement in the program, parent and student surveys were differentiated according to the student experience. Three levels of experience included only Year One, the full two year program, or only Year Two. (See Appendix E for ratings of program elements.)

The pattern of helpful elements and least or not helpful elements suggested differences between program consumers, namely students and parents, as opposed to those responsible for program delivery, namely staff, administrators, and Steering Committee. The latter groups rated more program elements as helpful as compared to parents and students. Ratings together with comments suggested that parents and students expected either more and/or different kinds of assistance and support from the program than were provided and supported from the perspective of other participant groups. (See Table 16.0.) Comments from program developers such as Steering Committee members suggested their ratings reflected more of a conceptual perspective with respect to program elements. Student, parent and teacher ratings appeared to reflect more direct program experiences. Their comments often explained how particular program elements had the potential to be very helpful but at the time of reporting were not providing significant help for students. Examples of these elements included the program's conceptual framework and academic advisement/career exploration. Accordingly those items deemed to be less helpful by parents and students and teachers were also highlighted as potential areas of high need that were not yet well addressed by the program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Groups</th>
<th>Most Helpful</th>
<th>Least Helpful</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7 -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBC Professors</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22 +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program development issues that gave rise to significant program changes in 1998 were reflected
in the number of unhelpful program elements identified particularly, by students enrolled between 1996-1998. (See Table 16.1.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 16.1 Differences Across Parent Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Program Experiences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year One Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year I &amp; II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Two Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates (Yr I &amp; II + Yr II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Program Years</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More helpful program elements were identified from program years 1998-00, attributable perhaps to the program's relocation to the UBC campus and program articulation through the Conceptual Framework '98. (See Table 16.2.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 16.2 Differences Across Student Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Program Experiences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year One Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year I &amp; II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Two Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates (Yr I &amp; II + Yr II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Program Years</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences within the parent group and student group according to program year suggested that the parents and students who chose to leave the program after Year One viewed the program elements as less helpful than those who continued on into Year Two or those who enrolled for only the one year experience of Year Two. This pattern appeared to be particularly evident during the middle years of the program, a time when the program's identity and organization were still being established. It was also during this time period that enrollment numbers had increased substantially. Among these larger groups were a few younger students who had been accelerated in elementary school. Also at this time professional knowledge about gifted students was new to the school. The school and the program negotiated and piloted various approaches to program delivery and these efforts to provide accommodation were somewhat unsettling to the usual operation of the school. As part of these negotiations, an identity for Transition Program students proved difficult to develop. They were compared alternatively with high achieving
senior secondary students because they were classified by those grades and with relatively less mature Grade 8 students who were adjusting to secondary traditions and expectations.

While both parents and students identified more helpful program elements and less unhelpful ones later in the program's development as opposed to earlier years, there were also some differences within groups. Students who enrolled only Year Two after the program's relocation to UBC, for example, rated both the university location and the challenges provided within the program as more helpful than students who participated only in Year One. They also identified access to UBC professors as a more helpful element after the move to the UBC campus. Increased proximity to the program made it easier for professors to provide instructional time for students in the program.

Program elements that were most often identified as helpful across most of the participant groups included ability assessment procedures, curriculum content, instructional practices associated with academic acceleration, social-emotional support for students. The assessment procedures and candidate screening had been used to develop a profile of student strengths and needs which was used to inform students and their parents about the applicant's educational needs and a range of options to address these needs. The data collected formed the basis for student's educational plans and contributed understandings to program decision-making and counseling. The teaching within the program in terms of both what was taught and the approaches used by teachers defined the students' core experience of success within the program. The importance of social-emotional support for students during their development within the program was also a priority.

Those elements identified as least or not helpful by all groups included parent communication with parents, and summer program support. While the summer program had been provided on a voluntary basis beginning in 1998 it had not continued for lack of support. Differences of opinion existed with respect to the value of providing students with additional support during the summer or whether it would be more important for students to have time away from studies for that period of time.

Concerns attributed to parent communication with parents were referred to in written comments, focus groups and interviews. Parents commented on the diversity within the group and the logistics involved in pursuing relationships among busy families from across the Lower Mainland who had no previous connections. Many parents undertook to learn as much as possible about the program in order to help them understand the experiences of students and assess how students were managing within the relatively short two years of the program. They also consulted with one another to organize transportation or student events and to determine whether particular problems were isolated issues or problems for other students as well. Their communication provided information, advice and, in some cases, friendships. Parents were often curious about approaches used to support academic acceleration and sought to assist their students and support teachers in various ways. Their proximity to the program was for reasons such as transportation gave them direct access to program dynamics on a regular basis. Within this context parents also queried teachers about curriculum and requested feedback on student progress. Where communication proved insufficient or student issues were not resolved, parents looked for assistance beyond staff. These communication efforts were intensified by the uniqueness of the program and doubts that were raised about the success of individual students. The extent of parent involvement was also a pattern that was more typical of private schools and less typical of secondary public schools where school climate encouraged students to solve
problem within the school directly with staff or through the school counselor. Transition Program teachers did not anticipate the high level of involvement and related communication needs which parents presented. Members of different participant groups identified some tensions with respect to this issue.

All participant groups rated the intellectual peer group as either critical to student success or very helpful. Comments within the focus groups and interviews confirm the importance of the peer group as a continuing feature of the lives of all students including those who return to regular programs. One of the students from this latter group explained that her university friends consist in large measure of the friendships developed within the Transition Program. University is described as the place where they all meet up again. This consistent response corresponds to what has been previously articulated through gifted education research and practice. The importance attached to the peer group within all participant groups suggests that it is a program strength which merits further exploration in terms of understanding student needs as well as program delivery approaches, particularly with respect to elements that have not been perceived as particularly helpful and areas of student needs that are not yet perceived as well met.

Of lesser prominence among many survey respondents was the student need for career exploration and the future-focused role image supported by academic advisement. While a significant number of respondents recognized this area of the program as important, its implementation remained limited by feasibility and lack of time and resources. It was also an area that required reorganization within program delivery in order to make it part of the program timetable. Alternatives offered in summer and/or through apprenticeships, mentorships, and work experience had not yet been explored except by individuals and on a case by case basis.

The analysis of survey responses within the context of student enrollment provided a different lens with which to view program delivery. Further informed by the comments articulated within focus groups and interviews and conversations this analysis underscores the complex dynamics inherent in the Transition Program's evolution.

Discussion of Findings

The following discussion of findings is based on the analysis of the information obtained from surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Representation from participant groups overlapped all years of the program and in the case of students included both male and female perspectives. The uniqueness of the students within this population as well as the limitations in the data gathering previously acknowledged suggest the usefulness of these findings can be found in hypothesis-building and problem sensing which are important for creative practice and future research in this field.

The findings are organized according to student needs, student success, and program improvement. These findings are discussed in relation to the three program objectives: academic acceleration, social-emotional development, and career exploration. As well the discussion of findings includes comments provided by program participants.
**Student Needs**

**Motivation to Apply**

It is from their characteristics as academically gifted students that the needs of Transition Program students emerged. Transition Program students have been characterized as conceptual learners who readily engage with complex ideas and master curriculum with ease and speed. One of the UBC professors who worked regularly with the students commented on this characteristic. "Transition students catch on to basic concepts very quickly and do not need to revisit them year after year as in the regular physics curriculum" (Survey, UBC Physics Professor, 2000). These students typically thrive when provided with academic challenge and function considerably less well when they are under-challenged.

These are young individuals with potential for academic advancement at a pace far in excess of the general population...and require challenge to sustain interest in acquiring knowledge. While some might be gracious and live within the confines of their boredom, others are restless and lose interest in their academic environment" (Survey, Steering Committee Member, 1999).

The students and parents who participated in this study reported looking for academically challenging educational options prior to applying to the program. They viewed the Transition Program as a way to address this need. A number of students explained that without appropriate challenge, they found school uninteresting. "I also hoped that by removing boring and annoying repetition of material, the program would be more interesting than regular school" (Survey, Student, 1998-2000). Students emphasized the importance of having "interesting work" which many of them associated with pace of instruction, new and different problems, and a focus on "underlying patterns, relationships, systems, and structures" (Survey, Student, 1994-95).

For some students enrolling in the Transition Program was a way of avoiding what they assumed would be uninteresting work. "Getting through high school quicker was pretty much my only concern, to be honest. Even if it was two years of hell, I reasoned, it could only be two years rather than five" (Survey, Student, 1996-97). One student who enrolled after Grade 6 and when the program was in an earlier stage of development, explained that the Transition Program looked like the best option available at the time.

Give me a break. I was 11. All I could see was high school graduation and interesting schoolwork. I hoped school would be less of a trial, the program would not bore or frustrate me. I liked the people there and wanted out of where I was. (Survey, student, 1994-96).

A number of the students, after the first year of the program which accelerated them one, two, and in some cases, three years, chose to remain in the secondary school for Grades 11 and/or 12, or sometimes to complete an additional Grade 12 year. They reported being satisfied with the senior secondary program, particularly with the access to additional courses, extra-curricular activities and social opportunities. Several students recommended a secondary program that provided students with acceleration for grades 8 through 10 or 11 followed by a senior secondary Grade 11 or 12.
Almost half of the students who enrolled in Year One between 1994 and 1997 subsequently enrolled in secondary school. In these cases it is not clear whether administrative accommodation within the secondary school through acceleration could have effectively addressed their needs for academic challenge. These decisions reportedly were influenced by a number of factors some of which related to unmet expectations and needs as well as concerns about achievement, particularly scholarships. From these experiences evolved more communication with students and parents about their goals as part of the application and screening process. The Transition Program was subsequently reframed as an early entrance to university program and not simply as a means to obtain more academic challenge.

Typically students who successfully completed the Transition Program reported that they applied to the program because they wanted to attain entrance to university. For example, one student explained, "I had primarily anticipated the reduction of time I needed to spend prior to university" (Survey, Student, 1994-96). Students demonstrated a commitment to this goal through initiating the request for enrollment, convincing their parents of the importance of this option for them, and sometimes expressing this need in dramatic ways as one student did with the following comment. "I will give you one, no, two cups of my blood if I can attend this program" (VSB Psychologist's report, 1994). These students viewed the intensity and quantity of the workload and the high standards of the teachers as important aspects of their preparation for university work. As a result of "be (ing) challenged to their capacity and a bit beyond" (Survey, Steering Committee Member, 2000), students developed the confidence to feel they were capable of being successful in any future endeavor. One student explained that the Transition Program experience, " opened my eyes, to know what you can do. You can do anything" (Focus Group, Student, 1993-95). From the perspective of their goal of early entrance to university, students described their movement toward autonomy and self-reliance.

I found that I can learn a lot more in a short time. I took on a workload that surpassed my expectations. I had an amazing feeling that I had conquered something that in the beginning was impossible. I challenged myself. It is the journey in learning that counts, not the destination (grades). (Survey, Student, 1998-99)

While the need for challenge and the goal of early entrance to university proved motivating, students who graduated as well as parents reported that the need for an intellectual peer group and the related learning and social environment were also compelling aspects of the program.

Although not a very strong need, initially for me, personally, the most important part of being in the program was to have a group of people with me, to have a place that felt similarly towards education, and not to feel alone in finding that the normal curriculum was insufficient to satisfy our curiosity. (Survey, Student, 1995-96).

A large number of the students reported that a close relationship with peers was the most significant benefit of the Transition Program experience. "The peer group...is one of the things of true lasting value I've gotten from the program" (Survey, Student, 1996-97). Another student explained that, "The peer group, for the most part, was and continues to be excellent" (Survey, Student, 1996-97). One of the visiting UBC professors described the learning conditions created by the peer group as a "lively, happy, often boisterous classroom environment with everyone participating" (Survey, UBC Professor, 2000).
It is also noteworthy that the intellectual peer group served as a social group for most students. These relationships as reported by the majority of students, continued to flourish whether students left or graduated from the program. The peer group was described as more than a network of friends.

There were moments when the program made school more interesting for me than a regular school would have been, but they were few and far between. In retrospect, the Transition Program was most important for me socially. It left me with a large group of good friends. (Survey, Student, 1993-95).

As one student explained, "Friends help you get through University. Friends who went through the program have a greater (personal) understanding of your difficulties" (Survey, Student, 1994-96).

Students also reported that the social aspect of the peer group heightened the learning experiences of its members. Students ascribed a variety of benefits to their peer group from providing a friendly level of competition to a more compelling level of intellectual honesty, from the experience of unconditional acceptance to discussions where many different points of view were supported and valued. Some felt understood, known and respected in a very deep and fundamental way by other members of this peer group. They described a high level of trust in one another, suggesting that they shared bonds that would likely result in lifelong friendships. This bond appeared to help them to recognize what they were capable of doing and promoted a future-focused role image, reinforcing a shared commitment to influence the world and their futures in positive ways.

**Interpretation of Student Needs**

While the performance and behavioral characteristics of academically gifted students were readily discussed with students, parents, and staff (refer back to Tables 1, 2, & 3), the ways in which learner needs were understood and the perception of how these needs could best be addressed varied across individuals, within and across groups and across different stages of the program's development. One of the reasons for this variance was the diversity of schools in which these students had previously enrolled. Students represented most school districts in the Lower Mainland, districts as far away as Saskatchewan and Alberta, as well as a variety of private schools. (See Table 17.0.) Second, students ranged in grades completed prior to program enrollment as well as differences in ages. (Refer back to Table 13.0 and 13.1.) A third reason is that many of the students entered the program without previous experience of a public high school with its unique culture. Fourth, when the program was initiated in 1993, there had been little development of detailed support structures (e.g., an implementation plan, program articulation document, teacher training, and a consultative process). Parents and students made enrollment decisions based on assumptions about the benefits of a program that provided an accelerated curriculum "with trained teachers, a supportive peer group and a positive learning environment" (Survey, Student, 1998-99). It was assumed that these factors would come together and be actualized as the program experience, with staff, administration, students and parents all learning together. The first years of the program presented everyone with a very steep
program learning curve wherein differences in expectations and interpretations of student needs emerged.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 17.0</th>
<th>Educational Settings of Students Prior to Enrolment in Transition Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private/Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Mainland</td>
<td>Burnaby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coquitlam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maple Ridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Surrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>West Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Home Schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distance Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BC Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vancouver Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alberta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pioneering experience proved intense in its demands of the program participants -- students, staff, parents and administrators. As different expectations and individual needs were articulated, the scope of what the secondary organization could deliver became clearer. Students were advised to adapt and teachers struggled to support student efforts on an individual basis. One student described the experience as follows. "I found it alternately too hard (Science, 8-10) and too easy (Socials 8-10, Guidance)" (Survey, Student, 1996-97). Students, parents and staff expressed concern about the value and effectiveness of academic acceleration and some attention was refocused on goals of "well-roundedness" and enrichment. In an effort to achieve high school graduation and university entrance, staff adopted fast-paced instruction to prepare students to write Grade 12 provincial examinations so that achievements would meet university entrance requirements. This drive to be successful was particularly evident in the approaches used for the first graduating class. One student described this experience as follows: "I felt that other than in history, the emphasis was on acceleration, not enrichment" (Survey, Student, 1994-95). While there was a general recognition that "the program did exactly what it said it would do -- accelerate through high school in two years" (Survey, Student, 1997-98), the next level of program development was being urged on by questions about quality versus quantity of learning, level of preparedness for university level work versus achievement of high marks on provincial examinations, support for individual academic goals of students, and the social-emotional development of these adolescents. Emerging priorities from students as they graduated and entered university, from parents and from staff who had supported the intensive work effort of these students, suggested that the most valuable aspect of the program was that students were learning how to learn. The larger goal of preparing students for success at university and in life generally began to refine the initial interest in simply achieving entrance to university.
A deeper understanding of the unique and individual natures of the participating gifted adolescents developed as a result of staff working with students and meeting with parents. Students' special needs and unique vulnerabilities intensified by, if not inherent in, their giftedness were not always apparent or easily understood. Some respondents described a number of these characteristics as unmet academic, social, and emotional needs. One student admitted that the program "did not address my lack of structured study skill" (Survey, Student, 1994-96). The need to pursue areas of interest in-depth, to have access to a specialized counselor/psychologist with background in gifted education, to have program flexibility, to be a partner in the development of educational planning, to have more preparation for university entrance and academic advisement, to have less emphasis on marks and more opportunities for breadth and depth of curriculum, and to achieve integration of curriculum across disciplines are all examples of the needs articulated by students. One student explained the importance of this attention to the uniqueness of individual students who were embarking on a program of considerable challenge as an invaluable support that "allowed me to consider deeper meanings of learning, personality and life. I was respected as an individual with my own style of learning, thinking, and that gave me strength to do more than what was expected of me" (Survey, Student, 1993-95).

The readiness of the individual student to participate in an intensified accelerated program of study was also identified as an important question to be addressed by the program's identification process and carefully considered by students and parents. Some students reported that they felt unprepared if not unwilling or unable to access, within themselves, the focused effort required by the program. Particularly, the inherent demand for organization, time management, and study skills as well as independence, self-reliance, and social responsibility were daunting to students who had limited experience with advanced academic challenge opportunities. One parent explained that her student "...felt so pressured...completely stopped doing everything.... seemed incapable of remembering assignments" (Survey, Parent, 1995-96). The student in this case reported that while academic achievements were not satisfactory, the opportunity to learn with and develop friendships with the Transition Program cohort continued to be valued and those relationships were being maintained. "Despite what my parents might believe, the Transition Program had nothing to do with my performance in high school, and I do not regret my participation in it" (Survey, Student, 1995-96). The student went on to explain that a lack of study habits and a personal decision to focus on having fun rather than to engage in the struggle to develop the skills necessary for fast-paced and advanced level work contributed to a poor academic performance not only during the initial year in the Transition Program but in regular high school. The decision to excel and a readiness to work to achieve success began in Grade 12 and became more evident in university courses.

In some cases, the Transition Program experience helped students come to terms with their exceptional abilities, the effort required to develop them, and their own decision with respect to how they wished to pursue educational goals. "In the Transition Program, I was happy with my grades. They didn't matter because I was challenged" (Survey, Student, 1994-95). Similarly there are examples of students who struggled with the program's demands and persevered to the point of mastering self-discipline and the management of their own learning at a level which amazed not only the student, but parents and staff as well (TP School-Based Team Notes, 98-00).

When asked what they would advise teachers to do, program graduates recommended academic challenge and advanced learning opportunities as well as provision for in-depth studies and a
faster pace of learning. They also stressed the importance of being heard. One student summed it up by saying, "We need respect" (Focus Group, Student, 2000). Respect was translated into understanding and valuing of their uniqueness in terms of abilities and depth of emotional sensitivity, and willingness to negotiate and collaborate on options and opportunities. Respect was also discussed as a level of fairness that did not discriminate against them nor try to isolate them with statements about how smart they are and that they should be able to achieve their goals without help. To be treated as individuals who can learn, want to learn, and want to fulfill their potential and give back to the society that nurtured them was emphasized as a demonstration of that respect.

Student needs were articulated by different participant groups, including students, parents and staff. These perspectives differed only with respect to relative importance assigned to particular kinds of needs and the best way to address them. The extensiveness of these understandings of student needs was difficult to measure due to the limited response to the survey and the voluntary participation of students, parents, and staff in the data collection process. However, the existence of the needs and the importance of addressing them were supported by all participant groups.

Specific needs articulated by students have been characterized according to three themes. These themes consist of academic challenge, intellectual peer group and early entrance to university. Each theme was articulated as a priority by some students, but students suggested they needed to be viewed in combination. Informing and influencing each other the themes encouraged a program dynamic that supported students’ development academically as well as socially, emotionally and as a community. (See Figure 2.0.)

![Figure 2.0](image)

These themes correspond to the three program delivery components identified in the Conceptual Framework (1998) which are related to four aspects of program delivery: content, process, product and learning environment (Kanevsky, 1999). (See Table 18.0.)
**Table 18.0** Summary of Student Needs From Transition Program Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TP Goals</th>
<th>Academic Acceleration</th>
<th>Social-Emotional Development</th>
<th>Career Exploration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Academic Challenge</td>
<td>Intellectual Peer Group</td>
<td>University Early Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conceptually Challenging</td>
<td>Adolescent Issues</td>
<td>Understanding success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High level thinking skills</td>
<td>Being gifted</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enrichment + acceleration</td>
<td>Communication/collaboration</td>
<td>Career path options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compaction &amp; in-depth</td>
<td>Emotional Development</td>
<td>University system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New, different, interesting</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Application &amp; Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identification of strengths</td>
<td>Course visits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible pacing</td>
<td>Identification of needs</td>
<td>Program graduates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not solely lecture</td>
<td>Student council</td>
<td>Guest speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem-based</td>
<td>Role play, simulation</td>
<td>Mentorships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seminar</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Interview experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>Relationship skills</td>
<td>Criteria-based decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formats and structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary content</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Career plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinated assignments</td>
<td>Self-knowledge</td>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Intellectually stimulating</td>
<td>Safe &amp; comfortable</td>
<td>Supportive of risk-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Supportive of each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsive</td>
<td>Intellectually stimulating</td>
<td>Discovery oriented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student needs identified by staff reflected more emphasis on academic acceleration. School counselors are viewed as responsible for issues related to social-emotional development and career exploration. (See Table 18.1.)

**Table 18.1** Summary of Student Needs From Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Acceleration</th>
<th>Social-Emotional Dev't</th>
<th>Career Explor'n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceleration (faster rate &amp; higher level)</td>
<td>Community of learners</td>
<td>Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>On-site counseling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address skill &amp; knowledge gaps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment (complexity, breath &amp; depth)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to demonstrate abilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to achieve academic success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to demonstrate abilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and group achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimize intellectual challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive, caring staff who help students,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>energize, and motivate students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing challenge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student needs articulated by parents emphasized the importance of responding to the social-emotional needs of students within the learning environment to enhance academic acceleration and career exploration. (See Table 18.2.)
Table 18.2 Summary of Student Needs From Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Acceleration</th>
<th>Social-Emotional Dev't</th>
<th>Career Explor'n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual stimulation &amp; challenge</td>
<td>Development of social skills and friends</td>
<td>Exposure to UBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum: compacted &amp; advanced</td>
<td>Shared interests, abilities, emotional depth</td>
<td>UBC courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More depth and breadth</td>
<td>Emotional assistance with accepting self</td>
<td>Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faster pace (not regular curriculum faster)</td>
<td>Understanding giftedness - self &amp; others</td>
<td>Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varied approaches to Instruction</td>
<td>Broader social activities</td>
<td>Scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive to individual learning styles</td>
<td>Development of community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close monitoring &amp; frequent assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to strengths &amp; lesser strengths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging &amp; acknowledging of efforts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/recognition for students' needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers with gifted education training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the articulation of student needs there were differences related to stages of students' experiences within the program. For example, students during the first year of the program needed support to adjust to more challenge and increased workload. Students in the second year needed more support for university level knowledge and skill development. Differences within and among profiles of giftedness for individual students also influenced understandings of these needs.

Definitions of Success

The second set of findings focused on definitions of success for the program and the students. Ideally, success was equated with the meeting of student educational needs both in terms of individuals and as a group. The program's intention of meeting these needs was reflected by the program's goals (See Figure 3.0).

Figure 3.0 First Stage of Program Integrity: Congruence

From a structural or conceptual point of view, the program's success was based on its integrity, namely the congruence of program goals, design and delivery systems, and program effects and
outcomes inasmuch as they matched the needs of the enrolling students. (See Figure 4.0.) The participants' perceptions of success helped to illuminate the program's integrity and aspects of the program that needed further clarification and development.

The current goals of the program were described in the Conceptual Framework document. The program's vision and ultimate purpose was "to make available a program designed to meet the educational needs of academically highly gifted students while supporting their social and emotional development; and to recognize both the students' current needs and future goals" (Conceptual Framework '98, p. 3). Indicators of program success were listed as "student academic achievement and early entrance to university (e.g., GPA, scholarships; goal-directed program planning; independent learning skills; confidence and personal satisfaction; positive attitude to self, others, and future)" (Conceptual Framework '98, p.18). Program delivery was organized to facilitate the students' meeting of requirements for university entrance that included high school graduation. This design articulated three categories of student need: (1) academic development, (2) social-emotional development, and, (3) career exploration.

Parents' perceptions of success typically focused on the achievement of academic and social-emotional goals. While preparing students to achieve university entrance, the program was expected to develop academic abilities and related skills and attitudes, readiness for university
One parent described success in terms of students demonstrating the following behaviors:

- Study Responsibility e.g. assignments completed on time.
- Discipline and work habits
- Social responsibility e.g. contributing educated citizens
- Engagement in rich academic program with intellectual peers
- Achievement of university entrance requirements
- Continued educational success e.g. graduate studies
- Academic and social-emotional maturity.

(Survey, Parent, 1997-98).

Typically parents identified evidence of student success in the program through observations of individual students. For example, Year One and Year Two parents who participated in the focus groups indicated that their students had surprised them with their enjoyment of the program despite its heavy workload. Parents also reported that their children demonstrated ability levels and skills and talents that they had not previously recognized nor anticipated. They also expressed surprise at the onset of independence in their children who suddenly wanted to take over many responsibilities for themselves. They noted self-confidence, self-reliance, and a sense of identity and belonging in their children that began and continued to increase during the course of participation in the program. Unanimously, parents identified the intellectual peer group as a primary source of academic and social support for students in the program. The understanding of the nature of the students' learning journey as expressed to them and to the students by some teachers was valued and lauded. More general indicators of success were expressed through comments such as, "My child has never been happier" (Focus Group, Parent, 2000).

Differences in student development between Year One and Year Two also influenced interpretations of success as reported by parents. Parents of students enrolled in Year Two reported more definite gains in the students' skills, self-concept and self-discipline. These gains reinforced the family decision to support the student's enrollment in the Transition Program.

Parents of Year One students, on the other hand, expressed higher levels of concern about the appropriateness of the program. Particular issues included the amount of homework and students' struggles to be organized, manage time effectively, and bring full concentration to the tasks of learning material quickly. They reported being concerned about the daunting learning tasks that the program presented. They suggested that student success was influenced by support in terms of skill development in generic areas such as organization, time management, and study skills as well as subject specific tutorials. Students, they felt, needed encouragement and feedback on their progress to inspire their continuing dedication and exceptional work effort. Students' management of their program experience required support from staff and parents. For example, one parent reported a student's keen interest in learning everything and the realization that the parenting role was one of prescribing limits that would support reasonable sleep requirements and ensure time for other activities. Parents of Year One students more often expressed these concerns, particularly with respect to whether the decision to enroll had been the best one for their child.

While it was expected that all students would achieve both high school graduation and early entrance to university, parents recommended that evaluation of these achievements appropriately reflect student's abilities, younger age and work effort and that entry to university be to the
faculty of choice. As part of these achievements, parents also suggested that students should
demonstrate the characteristics of the successful academic learner not only in skills and
understandings but also in attitude and behavior. Success, for them, included students' continued
efforts to develop their interests and abilities and to demonstrate a "willingness to challenge
themselves intellectually" (Survey, Parent, 95-96). Parents expressed confidence in their
children's abilities and looked to the program to provide them with the challenge and the
opportunity to develop them while at the same time nurturing their social emotional
development. Specifically they expressed concerns for development of self-concept, self-
acceptance and "good social and people skills" (Survey, Parent, 95-96). There was a definite
sense that parents valued the long-term benefits of the experience and achievement of early
entrance to university. When asked if they would choose to enroll themselves in this kind of
program if it had been available to them when they were a similar age, the majority of parents
responded affirmtively (Focus Group, Parents, February 2000).

Parents also suggested that success should be measured over the long term. According to one,
success was demonstrated by the "development of a circle of like-minded friends; the friends
made in Transition appeared to me to be the kind that last" (Survey, Parent, 96-98). Success was
also described in terms of benefits to society. "To the community it will mean the contribution
of the student towards good citizenship, civic-mindedness, community service, participation in
volunteer work to help others less fortunate than oneself" (Survey, Parent, 99-00).

Representatives from the Steering Committee also suggested that success needs to be measured
both short term and long term. Not only was the meeting of requirements important, but the
effectiveness of the challenge experiences and the achievements should be greater than what
these students would have experienced had they remained with the regular high school program.
The Steering Committee representatives cautioned that "The program must not compromise their
futures" (Survey, Steering Committee Member, 2000), with respect to the recognition and
awards merited by their achievements upon program completion as well as the opportunities to
enter first level graduate programs at universities of choice. The Steering Committee also
recommended that the program should help students "find areas of intellectual endeavors about
which they can be passionate and assist them with defining how their passionate intellectual
endeavor can support them and how they can make a contribution to society of which they are a
part" (Survey, Steering Committee Member, 2000). A successful program should ensure:
"effective movement toward greater learning possibilities; effective introduction to university
level work; greater understanding of post-secondary opportunities; social satisfaction; and
effective handling of choice and flexibility" (Survey, Steering Committee Member, 2000). At
the same time, the Committee suggested that "Transition Program students should emerge as
more secure, more sure of their abilities and with a greater sense of social connectedness"
(Survey, Steering Committee Member, 2000. These views were reflected throughout the
historical narrative in decision-making and documents such as the Conceptual Framework 1998.

The majority of students reported that success was represented by the development of social,
emotional and academic maturity. "Success of the program should be based not only on
academic performance, but also on the student's attitude towards their participation" (Survey,
Student, 95-96). Success can be demonstrated by being able to help others, feeling comfortable
and fitting into the university setting and being able to "adapt and adjust to the more
unsupervised mode of learning and the more self-reliant/self-initiated learning" (Survey,
Student, 94-96). While marks were mentioned for their value in assuring university entrance and choice
of faculty, students expressed more concern about self-esteem, academic confidence, and a belief in their ability to make a difference. One student described success as being able to "successfully enter university and find they can function there well. In general, the program should prepare students academically for the world beyond the program while also making sure they are prepared socially and emotionally" (Survey, Student, 93-95).

An emphasis on the development of maturity was articulated most often by Transition Program graduates who were completing their third and fourth year university. A member of the first graduating class epitomized this view by defining success as follows: "To have come to terms with one's self (intellect included); to have learned useful skills in learning; to have gained a broader perspective of the world and to be able to think critically about it" (Survey, Student, 1993-95).

Some students indicated somewhat different priorities within their understandings of success. More typical of students who enrolled only in Year Two of the program was the view of the program as a means to an end and success as program graduation. "I believe the value of the program is purely instrumental. Thus the program is a success for a participant if it gets them where they want to go i.e. university, technical school, etc. and enables them to flourish there" (Survey, Student, 94-95). More typical of Year One students was the view that success represented engagement in high levels of learning measured by marks that remained at the high level experienced in previous educational settings. Students who completed both years of the program reported success as the skills and attitudes that would allow them to engage and be productive in their university studies.

For program graduates success was grounded in awareness that they had learned how to work and had chosen to apply themselves to their studies. Some students indicated that this knowledge had been developed or significantly increased by their experiences in the Transition Program. Some students reported that university courses were relatively easy after the intense efforts required by the Transition Program. Others felt that it was only when they were actually at university that they consciously accepted the challenge of academic scholarships and recognized its potential rewards. They believed that their year of high school after Year One or after Year Two was developmentally useful and added to their level of skills and understandings. The decision to excel and put in required work effort took place at different times and was influenced by more factors in addition to the program experience for each student.

Program graduates also reported success in terms of their continuing relationships with most of their classmates from the Transition Program. They met together socially and provided one another with support and advice. They also expressed considerable excitement about unfolding career directions and found support for their success from these peers to be particularly satisfying and meaningful.

The students also believed that their age did not present a limitation to their academic success in university studies. They agreed that the disadvantage of their age related to some areas where access was governed by age such as being able to drive and to participate in some social activities. They did not feel uncomfortable with being younger than most university students. One student responded with the following question, "Who ever asks you your age when you are at university?" (Focus Group, Student, 2000). One student enrolled in graduate courses with students where the age range was from nineteen to fifty plus years and reported feeling accepted.
and a recognized member of the group. Another student explained that the professor of an advanced level course did not know her age until after the course, for which she received an 'A'. Program graduates regarded their ability to use positive and pro-active approaches to the opportunities available for them as evidence of success.

Several students suggested both by their comments and their university experiences that the success experienced with acceleration in the Transition Program did not stop upon arrival at university. These students particularly sought out advanced level courses, bypassing prerequisites in order to experience the challenge of upper-level courses. They expressed some dissatisfaction with survey courses focused on memorization and presented mostly by lecture in impersonal learning environments.

Students also attributed success to the motivation of individual students. They suggested the program is not for all students. Critical to the ability to succeed was the desire and the personal choice of the student to accept placement into the program. Students who noted that the decision to enter the program had not been their own choice also indicated less satisfaction with their experiences in the program and less confidence about their success.

When asked what they would like to advise teachers who worked with students like them, they suggested academic challenge and advanced learning opportunities as well as provision for in-depth studies and a faster pace of learning. They also stressed that they needed to be listened to. One student summed it up by saying, "We need respect" (Focus Group, Student, 2000). Respect was translated into understanding and valuing of their uniqueness in terms of abilities and depth of emotional sensitivity, and willingness to negotiate and collaborate on options and opportunities. Respect was also discussed as a level of fairness that does not discriminate against them nor try to isolate them with statements about how smart they are and that they should be able to achieve their goals without help. To be treated as individuals who can learn, want to learn, and want to fulfill their potential and give back to the society that nurtured them was emphasized as a demonstration of that respect.

Transition Program staff described student success as not only the development of skills and understandings and academic achievement commensurate with abilities and work effort, but mature attitudes toward self, others, and learning. The goal for one teacher was to support "healthy, successful kids who want to continue learning" (Survey, Transition Program Teacher, 1993-99). Alternatively university professors who worked with the students emphasized the development of thinking ability, both problem solving and critical analysis, and the student's enjoyment of the intensive learning experiences. One professor suggested that success was observed in the classroom where "they are content and much happier than in a regular school environment" (Survey, University Professor, 2000).

The majority of respondents in all groups indicated that expectations for success had not changed as a result of their experience of the program. Rather the understanding of success had deepened over time. For example, in some cases, where the program was not able to address the individual student's needs, goals, stamina or readiness, the program experience was still deemed valuable as a way of learning more about the student's potential and how decisions could be made to influence preferred future development (Conversation, Parent & Student, 2000). A few students reported that longer-term considerations had replaced the view that marks were the most important (Survey, Student, 98-00). In some cases where individuals did not benefit from a
debriefing of student profile, performance and program experience and collaborative efforts to support redefining of needs and best possible options were not available, the program was deemed by students, parents, and staff to have failed to address student needs.

A member of the Steering Committee felt that success could not be defined for this unique population and program by applying criteria designed for the typical developmental trajectory of regular school progress. Success instead was "defined by each of these highly intellectually gifted individuals" (Survey, Steering Committee Member, 2000). One student epitomized this personal view as follows.

I will say this many times, grades do not equal success. In this corrupted education system we have here, grades only mean whether you get a scholarship or not. Success is: accepting myself and others; recognizing and using my gifts and skills; achieving my short term goals which have long term results; appreciating the achievement of myself and others; living in a way that does myself justice and respects myself; knowing what it means to be me. A student is successful when she has all the above. A program is successful when it can guide students to this kind of success (Survey, Student, 1993-95).

The career directions reported by Transition Program graduates illustrate long-term measures of success. (See Table 19.0.) Graduates who were in third and fourth year university suggested that success was evident in student behaviors and attitudes. For example successful students were those who continued to seek out advanced learning opportunities in university, pursued areas of interest and graduate classes which "are more interesting than undergrad classes" (Focus Group, Student, 2000). One student used his academic career as an example. He had completed 40 courses, a B.Sc. (Honors) degree, major in mathematics, with a minor in philosophy, with GPA at 3.5, followed by enrollment in a Masters program in Mathematics and continuing to teach undergraduate Mathematics courses. Another student concurrently completed an engineering degree while working for a computer software and Internet company. One student accepted a five-year scholarship for graduate school at a prestigious institution in the United States. Another student completed the first year of the Transition Program and subsequently accepted an extraordinary opportunity to develop his exceptional musical talent. Support was provided in the form of scholarships as well as access to advanced learning environments, teachers and mentors who offered a range of unique learning opportunities.

| 4 | Applied Sciences (Engineering, Aeronautics, Nano-technology) |
| 3 | Arts (Psychology, Music, Linguistics) |
| 1 | Commerce and Administration (Business Administration) |
| 2 | Law |
| 4 | Medicine (Physician, Neurosurgeon, Health Science Research) |
| 1 | Pharmaceutical Science |
| 14 | Science (Computer Science, Mathematics, Physics, Cell Biology, Micro-Biology, Genetics, Bio-Information Technology, Physiology, Astronomy) |

134
From these students it was clear that exceptional achievement emerged as a result of the efforts of individuals who responded to the driving force of the talent within them. Important to these efforts was the support of parents and significant individuals as well as the larger community.

Not only did students demonstrate academic maturity in their career directions, but they also revealed sensitivity to society's needs and how their talents could make contributions that would improve the welfare of others. One student entering a doctoral program in linguistics exemplified this combination of maturity and enthusiasm in the following comment.

On one hand, I am interested in theories of the placing of language in our cognitive systems (like, how do languages work, what is the universal grammar, etc); on the other hand, I'm concerned with the ongoing language loss on the NW coast and would want to do something about it. The ideal for me to get a job in a university researching these areas and teaching about them. Failing that, I might work in the government doing cultural preservation projects. (Survey, Student, 2000).

Both Transition Program students and their parents regarded external measures of success as important particularly for the financial support that made university studies a reality for some of them. Students were encouraged and prepared to enter competitions for such awards and many achieved remarkable standings. For example, every year of the program a number of Transition Program graduates received university entrance scholarships and provincial scholarships, including major awards. Transition Program students also achieved outstanding results in provincial and national competitions in Mathematics, History, Physics, French and Reach for the Top. Each year since the program had been relocated to UBC, a Transition Program student was invited to participate in the annual Canadian Physics or Mathematics Olympiad team trial camps. The capabilities of the students, together with their efforts and the support of the staff have resulted in high levels of achievements.

A number of graduates of the Transition Program have reported noteworthy achievements in their university studies. For example, one student reported the following: "I was, in my last term, honored with an NSERC undergraduate research grant to study with a prof at SFU. I also presented papers at two of the Canadian Undergraduate mathematics conferences" (Survey, Student, 1994-95). Another graduate was invited to present a paper at a Physics conference in Switzerland and is currently involved in writing a novel. (Interview, Student, 1993-95).

At the same time, there is evidence to suggest that these students were interested in contributing their talents and understandings to help others. Graduates of the program have offered to return to the program and mentor, tutor, and talk to students about university life, courses, faculties and career choices. One graduate commented on the development of a Transition Program website.

I would like to see all Transition Program graduates represented in terms of what they are doing, the nature of their work and/or studies. I would be happy to have students who were interested in my field of study contact me. I would be happy to advise them from wherever I am in the world. (Focus Group, Student, 2000).

These students also reported involvement in community activities, organizations, and clubs at the university.
During Transition, I felt that my greatest success was graduating early, which proved that I was capable of doing what normal 17 year-old grads do. Recognizing and being able to use my abilities is my greatest achievement when I think of it now. I learned how to take up challenges (e.g. signing up for Linguistics 501, the one hardest course in graduate linguistics when I was 17) without considering how old I am and not to use age as a passport to special favors. (I got an A in the aforementioned course before the instructor knew of my age.) Transition at least has taught me NOT to be afraid of challenges. I used to be shy and quiet, but I challenged myself to be involved in different clubs in UBC; last year I became a Brownie leader (do Guides as well now). And now I am student rep in my department. I didn't know a thing about web programming, but I got a job in my department programming interactive web pages to teach phonology. I see this personal maturing and constant developing/broadening as the ultimate success, and it was the Transition program which started the ball rolling. (Survey, Student, 1993-95).

The various participant groups shared similar perspectives on success related to academic acceleration, social-emotional development and career exploration. Differences appeared with respect to the importance and value attributed to achievements illustrated by grades as opposed to academic maturity and personal maturity. (See Table 20.0.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 20.0</th>
<th>Summary of Perceptions of Student Success From Students, Parents &amp; Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Acceleration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social-Emotional Dev't</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
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<td>Discipline</td>
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<td>Critical thinking</td>
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<td>Worldview</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Knowing how to learn</td>
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<td>Parents</td>
<td>High School graduation</td>
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<td>University entrance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GPA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Scholarships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Awards</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Independence Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsible learner</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extending abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autonomous learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Healthy kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achievement of goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Desire to continue learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoyment of challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBC Prof</td>
<td>Able to handle anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strg.Com.</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clearly student achievement of success within the Transition Program appeared to generate a broader understanding of success and extended future goals for graduates both at university and within a context of meaningful and productive roles within community.

Program Improvement

The third set of findings focused on suggestions for program improvement. A number of respondents from all groups indicated that the program met their needs and they were satisfied or happy with their experience with it. Other individuals recommended program changes. Recommendations reflecting earlier stages of the program noted that in most cases these changes had already been embedded in the program. Some issues continued to be a subject of debate.

One issue was the age of program entry. Parents offered divergent views on the optimum age for program entry and the criteria for student selection. One suggested that whenever a student was ready and motivated, regardless of age, the opportunity should be available. A priority was placed on the desire to be there as opposed to selection criteria. This was in contrast to the view of many educators involved in the program who expressed concern with the effectiveness of the group dynamic and the ability of younger students to manage the work load, particularly given the limited availability of special support for students who were experiencing difficulties. This was particularly the case during the earlier years of the program.

Related to this debate was the view that students be required to have at least one year of high school experience prior to entering the program. While many parents saw the advantage of the experience and skills afforded by a year of high school, other parents supported the opportunity for the students to enter immediately following Grade 7. Opinions differed even within the same family. One set of parents had a child who entered the program after one year of high school and another child who entered the program after Grade 7. One of the parents advocated that all students should have a year of high school and the other parent indicated entry after Grade 7 was appropriate. Similarly parents with two children who both entered the program after completion of Grade 6 supported the option of early entrance to the program based on the experiences of their own children. Social-emotional maturity was also identified as an important consideration for program entry. Challenges inherent in assessing social-emotional maturity and of predicting how particular students would respond to the program's challenge and peer group were acknowledged. An alternative process in which students participated in the learning environment prior to acceptance offered some advantages in terms of program knowledge for parents and students and some opportunity for staff to notice student skills, understandings, and readiness for academic acceleration.

A second issue was program location, specifically the secondary school versus the university campus. One parent suggested a location in the middle of the city to make access equitable from the point of view of transportation within Vancouver. Access to the university campus was generally conceded as more important for the students particularly with student enrollment extended beyond Vancouver.
Students also commented on program location and design. Some individuals suggest the program should remain in a secondary setting to facilitate more of the typical high school experiences and promote interactions with age peers. Some students recommended a three-year program. These suggestions most often reflected the experience of students who had returned to the regular secondary program after part or all of a first year of the Transition Program.

Some students saw the secondary location as a way to increase the number of their friendships. These social needs were particularly evident when the number of male students far exceeded the number of female students (TP Notes, 97-98). In one case, a student who was socially adept as well as academically gifted reported the intellectual peer group satisfying but too small to support his social needs (TP Student Advisory, 1998). Students identified personality issues and social maturity issues as particular challenges within classes that carried intense workloads and demanded peer interactions at the level of university seminars.

The social needs of female students were expressed unequivocally in comments such as "I need to be with more people" (Interview, Female TP Student, 1994). The social intelligence of gifted females was more evident within the smaller enrollment in the Transition Program where students were "unable to hide" (Conversation, Female TP Student, 1998). Ways to provide more developmental support for female students has been identified as a priority for program development.

A third area of difference of opinions was the number of years of the program and the emphasis on acceleration as opposed to enrichment. Accommodation for students who needed a third year through concurrent studies was a specific acknowledgement of current program flexibility. The opportunity for an alternative secondary program to provide enrichment supported by acceleration was recommended either as a separate high school program or as an extension of the existing program. Distinguishing among applicants who would be well served by enriched courses in a secondary school with the option of enrollment in university courses in areas of strength and interest was also recommended.

A fourth issue was the nature of giftedness, the use of the term, how students identify with this descriptor, and whether addressing all the needs of this unique group of students is feasible. Changes to program delivery as new understandings developed characterized program development to the present time. The expectations of continued program refinement and collaboration and communication among participants incorporating a developmental view of giftedness were recommended.

Lastly, concerns were expressed for the special needs within this group of intellectually gifted learners and how these needs are addressed within the Transition Program. The diversity and range of needs was exemplified in students such as those who had only recently acquired English such as newly arrived immigrants, or students with an exceptional ability in one area and lesser ability in one or more areas, or students with discrepancies between their verbal abilities and their performance abilities. There are also students whose intellectual potential had not been identified and who had no previous experience of intellectual challenge; they required considerable developmental assistance in order to be ready to undertake a program of early entrance to university. Students with emotional and social development differences required other interventions and support structures. The different ways in which students developed and learned academically as well as socially and emotionally were also identified as requiring
specialized understandings, support and encouragement particularly with special populations with this group. Emerging needs were also associated with the nature of the student vulnerability, sensitivity and intensity. Program improvement suggestions reflected these various perspectives and concerns.

Student suggestions for program improvement viewed from the perspectives of different years of enrollment in the program paralleled developments within the program. For example students concerns for program organization were particularly articulated in earlier program years. The concern for flexibility and support for different students’ strengths and interests was more often suggested in more recent years. (See Appendix F for recommendations for program improvement from all participant groups.)

Areas of program improvement identified by all participant groups included curriculum content and instruction, support for academic skills and social-emotional development, communication and program management, facilities and resources. There were also suggestions that student identification and selection should be improved. For example, one student suggested that applicants need to understand the program workload and the "level of commitment required for success" (Survey, Student, 1995-96). Suggestions for program improvement from staff, university professors, and members of the Steering Committee were similar to those presented by students and parents. Suggestions addressed program design, delivery, organization and ongoing development.

The analysis of participants' perspectives with respect to program improvement was useful when viewed together with perspectives on student needs and student success. It was through this multi-lensed perspective that suggestions for program improvement offered particularly useful understandings. What was being recommended was an infusion of understandings with respect to the nature of giftedness and the needs of individual students into the practice of curriculum organization, instruction, and evaluation. It was also deemed critical for the learning environment and culture provided by the program. These understandings were particularly difficult to operationalize within traditional practices that suggested learning occurred as a result of sequential introduction of concepts requiring strict evaluation of concept mastery before permitting access to higher-level concepts. This approach was particularly effective in ensuring all students had equal access to key concepts and that prior learning was well established before next levels of challenge were supported.

There was a high level of agreement among participants that the nature of the gifted learner was different from the typical learner served by traditional learning practices. The more highly able and academically developmentally advanced the learner was, the greater was the extent of the difference in learning needs. These differences were both in kind and degree. It was felt that these differences were reflected in the learner's profile of potential and demonstrated knowledge and skills, learning style and interests. For example, the student who accessed advanced and abstract levels of knowledge at a significantly earlier age than age peers often was comfortable working with ideas and frustrated by physical writing. This preference for solving problems without paper or pencil when supported by exceptional memory proved sufficient to achieve mastery of elementary curriculum concepts. However this same reliance on mental ability was not sufficient for the advanced level work required for academic acceleration and university preparation. Conceptual knowledge and insight needed to be supported by skills in writing, articulation of logical development of understandings, and various kinds and levels of
sophistication of presentation. The demands inherent in the development of these skills not only required organization and time management but practice in translating understandings into appropriate language and formats to communicate effectively with various audiences. Engaging in such disciplined work effort was experienced as an emotional and academic risk for students who had not previously experienced appropriate levels of challenge.

It was also apparent that these students, by relying on inherent strengths, often managed to succeed with superficial understandings in settings where the level of challenge did not engage them in in-depth learning of new material. Simple rote learning was one example of this limited approach. It was realized that in order to engage their full attention, gifted students needed a meaningful goal or a compelling motivation. Examples included an outside audience, a significant achievement measured by external criteria, a passionate interest or curiosity to be satisfied, or a respected adult who inspired and required and typically modeled very high standards for work.

There was general agreement that the gifted students who enrolled in the Transition Program brought a combination of exceptional abilities, both demonstrated and potential, as well as gaps in prior learning, vulnerabilities associated with discrepancies between what they could understand and what was difficult for them, and variable production skills. These students were characterized by unlimited intellectual curiosity and energy, which fueled their ability to learn and develop. However this energy was not as available to them when challenge levels did not match their learning strengths. Defining these levels of challenge, the "zone of proximal development", was a sensitive matter. It was sensitive for both the teacher and the student. It formed the basis for their relationship and defined the support required for the learning process. Being in the appropriate challenge relationship was a source of encouragement for the student. This understanding of the nature of giftedness and the particular gifted student's needs was the key that enabled student success. It was also the understanding that informed appropriate practices for curriculum organization, instruction, and learning strategies in the program.

The importance of this distinction was reflected in the program recommendations offered by program participants. Introducing conceptual frameworks and complex problems or advanced level readings was identified as a way to engage the gifted learner and promote academic confidence. Assignments that required critical thinking and analysis synthesized into perspectives that could be logically defended set high standards for the learner. Equally important, however, was the development of skills, strategies, and habits that enabled production of excellent work. These skills were identified as important responsibilities within curriculum and instruction. For example, some students who readily grasped concepts and theories had experienced discouragement and high levels of frustration because the requisite skills levels necessary for success were not available to them. Direct teaching of specific skills and understandings needed to be supported by encouragement. Identification of vulnerabilities within individuals and providing students with support and strategies to produce the quality of product that matched their original mental concepts required teaching that was flexible, sensitive to the individual and organized curriculum through higher level concepts working backward to fundamental understandings as needed. The above approaches supported each student with appropriate levels of challenge and support. Program participants recommended use of a variety of approaches including gap-based instruction, flexible pacing, and curriculum compacting. Alternative approaches to evaluation of student learning were also recommended. Smoothing out knowledge gaps and connecting prior knowledge to larger knowledge frameworks needed to
focus on on-going development rather than be limited to sequential mastery of concepts according to prescribed curriculum scope and sequence. This was particularly evident in areas such as mathematics where students who engaged with current problems in mathematics presented by the university professor were able to offer useful solutions through mental calculation but needed support in order to articulate how the answer was derived.

The essence of program improvement focused on addressing student needs through the unique relationship of trust and sensitive engagement of teacher and student in an exploration of the intellectual scaffolding that underlies and links knowledge within various disciplines. At its core this relationship reflected principles associated with life and learning and was not limited to a particular course or grade level. This process required parental support and encouragement. It was when this process was not in place that parents made efforts to bridge these understandings by helping students adapt, providing teachers with information and questions that focused on needs, and, as a last resort, presented unmet needs to other administration responsible for program delivery.

In addition to addressing student needs, recommendations focused on the logistics of program operation including space, equipment, resources, and opportunities for students. These issues were identified for administration and institutional partners to resolve through their access to decision-making and the processes by which decision-making was made possible. The success of the students reinforced the success of the program, which promoted the political will that facilitated the resolution of these issues. Recommendations to support program improvement are further discussed in chapter 5.

The analysis of student needs and success informed suggestions for program development. Different perspectives on these issues gave some indication of the complexity involved in both identifying needs and assessing achievement of student success. They also suggested ways in which the needs of these students are difficult to address within regular school systems. Their intellectual development has been described as both different and more advanced than the learning assumptions that guide traditional educational organization. The asynchrony and accompanying intensity and sensitivity that characterize their social-emotional development presented a challenge for them as well as their parents and teachers. This discussion supported approaches through teaching and leadership designed to guide on going program development.

Summary

Data collected through survey, focus groups, interviews and conversations yielded information about participants' perceptions of the Transition Program's response to student needs. Participants' perspectives of student needs, student success, and program improvement have added depth to understandings of program development. Emerging themes were organized according to program goals: academic acceleration, social-emotional development, and career exploration.

Transition Program participants emphasized the importance of academic acceleration as a response to gifted students' needs for academic and intellectual challenge and associated development of academic confidence and self-esteem. Students who are motivated and ready to
undertake the work associated with early entrance to university are sensitive to the approaches used to facilitate their learning. Modifications to instruction and curriculum content and organization have been identified as critical to the delivery of appropriate levels of challenge for these students. Examples of specific strategies that support gifted students' learning strengths include compacting, gap-based instruction, and flexible pacing. Closely aligned to these modifications to instruction and curriculum are evaluation practices, monitoring systems, and communication devices. These modifications are described from the perspective of the developmental view of giftedness.

Secondly, the importance of the social-emotional development of gifted students was underscored. Participants suggested that gifted students experience unique challenges associated with the asynchrony of their development and the heightened intensity and sensitivity associated with their abilities. As a result these students need levels of support and encouragement within their environments, their learning experiences, and their social interactions that are typically not available within the organization of schools. All participants identified the intellectual peer group as an element that is significant to the social-emotional development of students. The opportunity to work and learn with intellectual peers provides gifted students with experiences of acceptance, authenticity, and personal integrity that are critical to their social-emotional development. Similarly the program climate is an important conveyor of this same kind of support. It is therefore important for teachers to have an understanding of the nature of these students and their struggles to achieve both discipline over and autonomy with respect to their talents and their social-emotional development.

Thirdly an understanding of individual student profiles of strengths, weaknesses, interests and goals emerged as critical to the program's ability to respond to students' educational needs within the curriculum as well as through long-term planning. Understandings of longer-term needs had gradually been framed through exploration of students' future goals and career paths. Career exploration linked the development of abilities and social-emotional maturity to the larger goal of a meaningful, productive and satisfying life as a citizen and community member. Research participants identified the importance of an initial understanding of gifted potential within the student profile as an important step in this process. Program planning based on the understanding of student needs identified through the assessment and screening process for candidates were enabled and effectively communicated through student individual educational plans. Specific attention to areas of learning differences, relative weaknesses and vulnerabilities were provided through the program's focus on skill development through topics such as organization, time management and study strategies.

Differences in perspective with respect to the relative importance of each of the above understandings of program design and delivery as well as how the individual elements are addressed have been at the heart of the debates within the Transition Program's development. These debates have focused on the nature of giftedness and the implications of the categorical approach reflected in education policy and typically supported through school organization. The developmental approach with its focus on the "zone of proximal development" based on prior learning, knowledge gaps and learner needs suggests a program culture with practices related to student learning goals and monitored growth as opposed to competition. Debate has also focused on the standards by which program delivery is measured. These standards range from a rigid, letter of the law interpretation of requirements from the Ministry and the university to broader standards reflecting life skills, learning how to learn, creative exploration of ideas and
play with patterns and connections, and taking responsibility for development of one's talents
and abilities. Another debate has focused on how much collaboration and communication is
useful to the program's development and serves the needs of students. The various debates
within the program have been supported by the commitment of staff and parents to student
development. These struggles have also been supported by the commitment of program
developers and Steering Committee members to program development focused on student needs.
This process has also been assisted by the commitment of administrators and management
coalitions to the development of vibrant learning communities wherein the goals and needs of all
participants can be effectively supported. The intensity of these program dynamics have been
both challenging for participants as well as a source of stimulation for program growth. An
unanticipated benefit of the Transition Program's development has been the community-building
process which proved essential to communication and support across participants' various
perspectives, roles and responsibilities.

Understanding the potential of the gifted learner and how to provide an optimum learning
environment for a small group of formally identified students has been a process of learning for
all program participant groups. It is within the dynamics of this combination of tensions and
strengths that learning and program's development has taken place. Discussion of this learning
process and the critical ideas that have supported program development are discussed in Chapter
Five.
CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS ON PROGRAM LEARNING WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenges inherent in society's commitment to provide appropriate education for all young people and specifically those whose academic abilities are developmentally advanced are epitomized in the development of the VSB/UBC Transition Program. Initiation of the program was inspired by the goals, achievements, and efforts of individual students motivated to achieve early entrance to university at a time when no program support was available. From conception through implementation (1990-2002), program developers sought to understand the learning and developmental needs of academically gifted adolescents interested in early university entrance and to improve the educational preparation offered to them. However participation in the program for one or two years was too short a time in which to gain a perspective on the significant learning and change experienced by students, staff, administration and program developers. Documentation of the program's evolution was undertaken to enable all stakeholders to have access to past practices and to encourage program advancements beyond the scope of what has been achieved and as yet imagined. The focus of the Transition Program development also contributes to the conversation regarding "reculturing" (Buchan & Woerner, 2002) of schools for the 21st century using models of learning communities and revisiting the purpose of education from the perspective of individual learners taking responsibility for the development of their talents, abilities and personhood.

An examination of how the design and implementation of the VSB/UBC Transition Program evolved in response to the educational needs of a significantly gifted student population identified a range of developmental issues, problem solving strategies and solution ideas. The historical narrative of the program's development, in addition to an analytic account of the perspectives of participants, revealed a gradual broadening of understandings with respect to gifted students' educational needs, their social-emotional development and career goals, and how these understandings in turn affected program design and delivery. These understandings were articulated in the program's conceptual framework, reaffirmed by the program review and are currently fueling efforts of the institutional partners to extend the program infrastructure for enrolled and future students.

Reflections on the study focus on program development as a learning process. Learning accumulated through the interactions of participants in relationship to the program goal is discussed in terms of program change. Four factors influencing the dynamics of program learning have been identified. The ways in which learning and new understandings have precipitated changes in the program are further discussed in three critical areas of decision-making, namely, leadership, teaching, and policy. Emergent issues for future program development are also identified. Recommendations for program improvement and reflections from the perspective of practitioner as researcher complete the study.
Program Development as Program Learning

The legendary Russian doll that opens up to reveal yet another doll within a doll captures the compelling searches through levels of complexity that have characterized the development of the Transition Program. An ongoing process of problem solving within the program has illuminated various developmental knots that have limited responsiveness to student needs. Deepening understandings about the needs of gifted students in terms of how they learn and develop, have arisen from the interaction of theory and practice. Negotiated understandings among students, staff, parents, and administrators have precipitated changes in attitudes, behaviors and practices. New understandings have rippled outward to influence attitudes among institutional partners and the program community. New learning reinforced by experiences of program graduates has informed program decisions and organizational change.

Program analysis showed how key decisions clarified program goals and reframed program delivery, releasing creative ideas that were subsequently woven into program practices, thereby enhancing program integrity for future students. These decisions, based on accumulated learning within the program at particular points in time, were played out through the development of program leadership, teaching, and policy. Mapping these milestones across the program stages (refer to summary, Chapter Three) has made the developmental journey of the program more understandable and the struggles to support program improvement more transparent.

The theme of learning is evident throughout the implementation of this innovative program. It was inherent in the generation of the program concept and articulated in conversations with parents, students, and staff. Participants were encouraged to view themselves as pioneers whose perspectives were important to program development and improvement. The original intention was to build a learning community that would inform program development while providing support for students and their families. The process of learning was intensified by the uniqueness of the program design, the challenge it presented for teachers and administrators, the nature of the students and their desire to succeed and excel, together with the parents' concerns about the risks involved in choosing an alternative educational path. Learning was also affected by the context of secondary organization and traditions, institutional partnerships and external events. As new learning developed it was incorporated into practice, often challenging past practices, and thereby increasing the intensity of the experiences of participants.

Learning as Part of Program Culture

Given that the Transition Program began as an innovation wherein successful practice was expected to refine and support program development, everyone who was involved experienced some degree of uncertainty as the program grew through a combination of traditional practices and trial and error. Participants at all levels engaged in interpreting principles and unpacking understandings embedded in their program experiences. Participants anticipated that understandings emerging from the process of making meaning out of experiences would advance community building, promote organizational learning, and facilitate changes that would in turn
improve program delivery. Often the learning process took a long time to become an articulated part of the program culture.

One example of this learning process was the change in emphasis in teacher and student roles. Teacher roles gradually expanded beyond dispensing of prescribed curriculum, monitoring achievement, and management of students as a group within discrete disciplines. As a small group of four or five individuals, each representing particular disciplines, Transition Program teachers initially worked independently to facilitate students' development. Gradually through professional development and staff meetings, particularly when the program relocated to its own premises at UBC, teacher discussions focused more on understanding the psychology of the gifted learner and recommended practices for curriculum and instruction including highly individualized instructional strategies, curriculum compacting, and combinations of enrichment and acceleration. Encouraged by the learning capacity, enthusiasm, and intellectual curiosity of students, teachers explored integration of disciplines, planning collaboratively with program, district, and university staff, and purposefully promoting an intellectual peer culture. New responsibilities combined with new understandings influenced teachers' professional identity and generated new learning opportunities as well as vulnerabilities and tensions. For example, teachers discovered that preparing highly gifted students for university scholarship subsumed and transformed the more traditional focus on achieving required curriculum outcomes and preparing students for provincial examinations. Teachers had to engage in reflection on the purpose of education, examine the values and beliefs underlying their instructional practice and identify the kinds of knowledge and skills that were a priority for critical analysis and creative synthesis at the post-secondary levels of education. Refinements to professional identity occurred as understandings developed from experience with students and professional knowledge based on research and best practice.

The student role also changed. From a focus on adjusting to the organization and norms of traditional school instruction, students were moved toward engagement as active partners in the creation of their learning environment through participation in goal setting, negotiation of ways to address individual needs, and contributions to evaluation of individual performance and strategic planning for improvement. Within this context both teachers and students were expected to share a commitment to high standards of work and behavior based on fundamental ethical principles as individuals and as members of a community. As one student explained, Transition Program students and staff need to work on curriculum exploration and learning as members of a collaborative team rather than as competitors in an environment wherein teachers act as knowledge gate-keepers (TP Student, Year I, 2002).

A Learning Model for Development and Growth in the Transition Program

Beginning with the program's inception in 1993, Transition Program candidates and their parents were introduced to a heuristic for understanding and reflecting on individual responses to the intensive learning and development experiences associated with enrolment in a program of academic acceleration. Adapted from work of George Land (1973) the heuristic was represented graphically using an S curve. Students were invited to use this process model to monitor their perceptions of personal growth and development within the Transition Program. Students typically reported using the model during the two years of the program as well as university
enrollment to position their personal patterns of intensive and accelerated growth and development within a larger context of lifelong learning. The S curve describes responses to significant learning and growth in terms of three phases beginning with disequilibrium, followed by a period of meaning-making struggles from which emerges a new equilibrium. (See Figure 5.0.)

According to the S curve of development, disequilibrium is an extension of the uncertainty that typically accompanies new experiences. Disequilibrium occurs when new experiences challenge prior knowledge or assumptions, particularly those previously accepted ideas that have been relied on to organize and predict life experiences and result in success.

For example, most new Transition Program students reported experiencing disequilibrium during the first weeks and months of the program. As students who previously excelled with minimal effort in typical age-grade appropriate classrooms, they were familiar with high achievement and academic success. Relying on excellent memories and problem solving abilities to achieve high grades they had come to expect that academic learning occurs easily, effortlessly and quickly. Upon enrolment in the Transition Program these students encountered compelling academic challenges that required effort, time, intention and learning skills they had not previously seen the need to develop. Students were often disconcerted when they experienced the exhilaration of an intellectual peer group only to find that these students who were equally if not more or differently talented, set higher performance standards. For some students this was a first experience of genuine friendships and the strong relationship bonds within a cohort characterized by scintillating, fast-moving combinations of insight, humor, intensity, sensitivity, an ethic of excellence and a strong sense of justice. These experiences typically challenged students' previously held views of personal competency and assumptions about learning. During this phase students confronted, often for the first time in their lives, the realization that intention and effort will be critical to actualization of their potential. Unfamiliar with higher levels of complexity and a faster pace of learning, students often questioned whether they had the ability to handle the work, whether the assessment results were accurate, and whether they should return to regular school. Almost all students during the first months of the program reported failure to achieve success as a foremost concern. During this phase information about giftedness, effective
learning strategies, the temporary nature of this disequilibrium together with encouragement proved helpful.

Students characterized movement through disequilibrium to the phase of meaning-making struggles as a shift from personalized doubts and frustration to a focus on working with new understandings about learning, self-discipline, organization, and talent development. A trial and error process of refining understandings and skills typically produced changes that were subsequently reflected in students' perspectives and behaviors as well as their academic performance. For example, students gradually began to report being able to recognize how their efforts to apply new skills increased their productivity together with the realization that they had much to learn and were eager to engage in the work assigned in their courses.

Students emerged from the meaning making struggles with internalization of new skills and understandings to a new equilibrium wherein they were able to apply organization skills and habits of scholarship on demand to support achievement of their goals. The new equilibrium was typically accompanied by well-earned academic confidence and enhanced self-esteem.

Typically Transition Program students reported movement through the three phases of the S curve of development during their first year in the program. Although the duration of the phases was different for each individual, most students reported experience of disequilibrium during the first two months of the program. By the fourth month students reported seeing positive results from their work efforts. Nearing the last months of Year One most students reported increased confidence about their abilities to handle advanced level work. By the end of Year One, students typically articulated an increased awareness of their abilities to learn together with some uncertainty about their ability to handle the harder work that had been described to them by the Year Two students. However upon entry to the Year Two program, students often surprised themselves as well as their teachers by how quickly they adjusted to the more challenging work. Year Two students often reported an increased personal satisfaction with their abilities to engage more in depth with curriculum and to settle into a work schedule that resulted in remarkable success by the end of Year Two. Teachers over the years have consistently remarked on how the development of learning skills during Year One typically blossomed into high levels of academic scholarship during Year Two. Similarly students who completed only one year of the program have acknowledged in retrospect the benefits of their limited exposure to a year of intensified academic challenge.

Learning as a Precursor of Change

Fundamental to this learning heuristic has been exploration of personal assumptions about learning, growth, and change. Transition Program students within the context of their rigorous academic program have been challenged to learn about their abilities and how these abilities and talents can be optimally developed. Metacognitive strategies that focus on learning about learning have helped students identify assumptions that have limited their ability to achieve. Schommer and Dunnell (1997) reported that epistemological beliefs limiting the academic productivity of gifted high school students included the belief that ability to learn is fixed at birth, that learning is quick or not-at-all and that knowledge is unchanging. Through determined efforts to struggle with academic challenges and achieve excellence, Transition Program students
have reported discovering the extensiveness of their potential and how to access it to achieve desired goals. For example, Transition Program graduates have emphasized that the most important understandings received through the program were that they were capable of learning "anything" and knew how to teach themselves.

These changes in perspective regarding their abilities and learning as reported by students who completed the two years of the Transition Program, are further illuminated when viewed in terms of first order and second order change. Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch (1974) described first order change as an increased tolerance for a new idea and its accommodation within an existing system. Second order change was described as structural in that it changed the system itself. This second order of change involved letting go of ideas that were no longer functional and internalizing new understandings that generated new systems with new perspectives and options. It is this movement generated by learning within students and the program that describes the critical paradigm shift that has signaled success for both.

For example, during the first years of the program, students were encouraged to view themselves as high school students and as such were expected to accommodate to the secondary system and culture. This expectation engaged students in first order change wherein challenge was defined as an increase in quantity of academic demands within the existing system. In essence the students were required to do more regular work faster. Success for these students was measured in terms of their ability to look like successful senior secondary students in terms of both academic performance and social and emotional maturity.

Second order change became possible for students when the program relocated to the university. The experience of the university environment and culture reaffirmed the reason for their enrolment in the Transition Program and encouraged students to view themselves as pre-university students. The new identity influenced the degree of students' engagement in studies and dramatically altered relationships with staff and peers. With more focus on preparation for university, students were encouraged to take more responsibility for the development of their abilities and the achievement of their goals. Students more closely identified with Transition Program graduates and viewed university as a viable achievement. Parents commented on the accelerated rate of their children's development as independent individuals. Change in student behaviors evident in the home included development of systems to organize their environments such as work spaces and schedules, increased autonomy with respect to decision-making and general increase in sophistication about themselves as learners.

Transition Program students through their unique ability profiles and goals presented educational needs that were not readily addressed by traditional school organization and curriculum. Learning about these students, their capabilities and needs, shed light on how organizing education differently can more appropriately support development of potential talents. Reorganization of schools to address students' unique learning needs required a culture of learning and an openness to creative change both within the organization and within stakeholder groups including students and their parents. Structural or second order change occurred through collaboration among these learning communities.
Organizational Learning and Program Change

The understandings derived from the learning experiences of Transition Program participants influenced a parallel process of organizational learning that resulted in changes within the Transition Program. For example, initially the program accommodated enrolled students within the structures and systems of the secondary school that hosted the program. The message of tolerance and acceptance of the uniqueness of the students was accompanied by efforts to socialize them to the norm of the secondary student population. However, as the numbers of students increased and their uniqueness became more difficult to accommodate, problematic tensions among program participants and the school itself increased. Since existing practices and systems were well established and satisfied the majority of the school's students and staff, Transition Program students and parents were encouraged to accept the limits of the school's accommodation efforts. The Transition Program’s implementation limited addressing the educational needs of academically gifted students to congregating them as an intellectual peer group and offering access to advanced coursework albeit undifferentiated in content or instruction.

Enrollment trends revealed that many of the students who were disappointed that the program could not respond to their unique needs withdrew from the Transition Program. For example, of the 75 students enrolled in Year One between September 1993 and June 1998, 44 students representing 59% of the total population, chose to enroll in regular programs or other alternate programs or schools rather than continue into Year Two. The 34 students who had completed Year One and chose to accept placement within the regular program of the host secondary school were counseled that it was in their best interests to work within the traditional system. Having gained one or two years of academic acceleration they were enrolled in senior secondary courses and refocused on high school graduation and academic achievement that would be recognized in terms of scholarships and awards. The accommodation of these students within the existing system characterized program organization until its relocation to the UBC campus in 1998.

Even as new applicants continued to enroll, Year One students were articulating frustration with curriculum and instruction that emphasized coverage of secondary content and skills as opposed to university preparation. With less than half of the students who enrolled in Year One of the program continuing on to Year Two, unusual enrollment patterns emerged with nine males in Year Two in 1996 and only six males in Year One in 1997. These enrollment patterns suggested that the existing program structure was not responding to the needs of the significant numbers of identified gifted students who were applying. This was particularly evident with respect to gifted girls who, as has already been discussed, were choosing regular programs where they believed there was more social-emotional and academic support.

It was during 1996-97 that suggestions resurfaced with respect to changing the program's structure to better serve identified gifted students who enrolled in order to achieve their early entrance to university goals. One suggestion was to eliminate the current program and institute a mini-school supporting acceleration through grades 8, 9 and 10 followed by enrollment in regular senior secondary courses within the structure of the secondary school, a solution that would again reflect first order change. The other alternative was to retain the early entrance to university program but in a form that was aligned conceptually with students' educational and developmental needs. This suggestion required a clear articulation of students' unique needs and a program model more closely aligned with a university environment. To this end the
Conceptual Framework document and the Proposal for Relocation to UBC were developed and eventually program change was manifested through relocation to a site on the UBC campus.

The Transition Program's formal relocation to UBC in September 1998 represented an opportunity for second order change where structures including staffing, timetable, courses and curriculums could be organized to address student needs. The positive impact of the relocation on the participating students and parents was immediately evident as they took ownership of the new space and made it their academic home. Evidence of the effects of relocation on students' perceptions of themselves, for example, were demonstrated more concretely when, for the first time since the program's inception, all program graduates from that year entered university studies in September. As a result of this change the program achieved a new state of equilibrium and a significant dissipation of previous tensions.

Paradoxically the release from tension that accompanies the return to equilibrium can result in more attention focused on maintaining newfound stability. A determined focus on stability can limit appreciation of possibilities for further program development, for example, by encouraging perception of new problems as threats to stability. As a result new problems may not be addressed as new information or opportunities for improvement but as challenges to authority. The creative response process can thus be disabled and replaced with a resistance to change.

An example of this challenge to on going program learning became evident in the experience of program relocation to the UBC campus. Despite the new environment and opportunities to access alternative approaches to program delivery, the program continued to be operationalized as a secondary school program in terms of timetable with the expectations and instructional goals developed for typical secondary students. Student performance based on averaging of marks on assignments and tests was compared to achievement of highly able and gifted secondary students that were age-grade appropriate and not academically accelerated. As a result students' unique developmental trajectories within the program were not always understood nor appropriately acknowledged, encouraged or rewarded. The process by which the horizons of high school and university were fused involved moving through the disquieting realization that the program was not providing adequate support and encouragement for all students despite the new environment. Struggles to understand how the program could address these needs involved revisiting how student needs were addressed and what constituted success for students. The perspectives arising from these examinations were often uncomfortable and limited by a reliance on secondary school practices to which students continued to be required to adapt.

Despite efforts to maintain the predictability and stability offered by the secondary school system, the innovative nature of the program and specifically, the needs of the students generated challenges to the status quo and the need for change could not be ignored. A leaf throws itself out of balance in order to grow according to geneticist Dr. Derald Langham (1983) who also advised that education should not be putting dead leaves back on trees.

For example, in 1999 the number of courses in which students were enrolled in the program was challenged first by students who suggested the work load was too heavy and then supported by data which showed that students were graduating with credits far in excess of what was needed to achieve university entrance and high school graduation. To attain a more realistic balance of required coursework and options, a new organizational model was constructed which distinguished core courses from electives. The reorganization generated a state of equilibrium
based on the meaningful resolution of an important assumption that affected students' learning within the program. This assumption was that covering all high school curricula was necessary for Transition students to achieve graduation, to be successful at post-secondary learning and to realize the mythical well-roundedness associated with happiness and maturity. Implementation of the reorganization of courses required development of alternative structures within the program. This restructuring of program delivery represented second order change.

This process, resembling the S curve of development, has been central to program development. Sensing unmet student needs stimulates exploration of issues embedded in established practice and decisions. Similar to disequilibrium, the process is unsettling and requires tolerance for ambiguity and perseverance to ascertain the meanings underlying presenting issues and identify the problematic variables most critical to student success. It is from these struggles that understandings emerge that guide changes to program structures. Educators as well as students and their parents have experienced both the struggles to grow and the challenge of incorporating changes that resolve tensions and lead to advances in program delivery.

Transition Program change required the support of community-based learning. Program staff, enrolled students and parents had opportunities to learn from one another. Reflection on program development and learning occurred also with the management team and the Steering Committee. During periods of disequilibrium, community-based learning and program leadership played a critical role. Together they maintained a focus on program integrity, stability and alignment of appropriate practice with student needs and program goals. Parents and students contributed to sensitive understanding of students' needs and vulnerabilities by discussing issues and looking at problems as opportunities to develop understandings and clarity about the program's goal and purpose. Program leadership facilitated achievement of stability at the next level of program development by rising above responsibilities for program management to inspire and encourage increased awareness, understandings and creative abilities of staff, parents and students. Each experience of growth through the 'S' curve refined strengths, clarified shared beliefs, and developed knowledge and skills, all of which became available for the next learning challenge. One result of this learning process was that the understandings about gifted learners underlying the original program concept became available as principles to guide decision-making. As this deeper level of knowledge was embedded in the functioning of the program, personal, professional and program integrity aligned to serve the students and support staff who committed to both teach and learn.

Understanding the learning process that underlies the Transition Program's development has proved to be useful for program staff and program developers as well as students and parents. It has deepened their appreciation of the efforts that have been made to understand and support the students that chose to enroll in the program and shed light on the process by which changes within the program have taken place over time. It has given meaning to the struggle to learn, understand and grow that generated creative responses to identified needs and reinforced the innovative nature of the program. As a result the program has defined a different kind of stability, one that is based on change as a norm and where new understandings are anticipated and welcomed as a means to continue to improve program delivery.

The dynamics of the learning process within the Transition Program are further illustrated in discussion of four factors that influenced program development.
Influences on Program Development

Four categories of influence on program learning and development can be identified as a result of this study. The first consists of key understandings related to gifted students developed through direct experience with students and informed by knowledge about the psychology of the gifted learner and best practices described in the literature. These understandings informed the program's commitment to address the educational and developmental needs of students and stimulated changes to numerous aspects of program delivery. The second influence refers to education systems and policies, particularly secondary and university organizations and their traditions and culture. The third category consists of external influences such as events and decisions beyond the control of the program and internal influences emanating from events and interactions within the program. The last category refers to the influence of new knowledge obtained through program experience, analysis of program data, research on student success and reflections from program graduates. These factors have interacted to stimulate questions about program delivery, challenge assumptions, inform issues and identify areas for program improvement. (See Figure 6.0.)

Figure 6.0 Four Factors Influencing Transition Program Learning
First among the categories of influence and pivotal to the program's conception and development were a number of key ideas that were based on understandings of the nature and educational needs of gifted students. A core of gifted education catalyst ideas constituted the building blocks of the program and the essence of its innovative response to a unique student population. They described approaches to curriculum organization, instructional strategies, and evaluation of student performance and development that responded to the needs of this student population in ways that were different from organized learning within typical secondary schools in British Columbia. By encapsulating the notion of giftedness and naming appropriate and effective responses to student needs, these catalyst ideas gradually influenced practices within program delivery. (See Table 21.0.) Key ideas are organized with respect to leadership, teaching and policy. They describe specific aspects of the program including program environment and culture, curriculum, instruction, learning management and evaluation, program philosophy and goals, and program design.

While many of the catalyst ideas described educational beliefs and values that serve all learners, their implementation with a population of academically highly gifted learners required critical differentiation by degrees of sensitivity, intensity and conceptual complexity that would not be practical within typical traditional classrooms.

For example, the results of the study showed how the psychology of the gifted learner, which includes vulnerability to perfectionism expressed through high expectations for self and others, generated different educational and developmental needs with respect to learning environment, learning experiences and support. Personal expectations included ethical behavior, social and personal responsibility, and achievement of excellence. Students expressed these expectations in terms of wanting to use their abilities to help others, build community, and make the world a better place for all people. At the same time many of the students realized that they needed to learn how to manage and discipline their emotional and intellectual strengths and energies in order to build the skills for creative production in challenging careers and life work. Appropriate educational experiences played a critical role in preparing these students to undertake responsibility for development of their potential. Learning challenges designed to match their zones of proximal development needed a climate that encouraged talent development and preparation for success. If the work was too easy, they became disenchanted and disengaged. They needed to learn conceptually and strategically rather than sequentially through repetition. These students also needed encouragement and a community of peers in order to develop the emotional strength required to support their efforts to achieve mastery and expertise. Within a climate committed to their success, students needed support to move beyond competition with others to a focus on collaboration characterized by sharing of goals and mutual support. Catalyst ideas from gifted education thus challenged the traditional culture and practice of secondary schools and suggested the need for a caring culture of support for development of talent, expression of creativity, encouragement of future-focused role images, and active participation in learning communities. Tempered in the fire of program implementation and the context of secondary school best practices, these ideas were internalized as part of the program's operation and on going commitment to organizational learning. How these understandings have influenced program delivery is illustrated in later discussion of leadership, teaching and policy.
Table 21.0  Gifted Education Catalyst Ideas Influencing Program Development

A. Leadership
- Program Environment, Culture and Dynamic
  - Focus on talent identification and development
  - Climate of respect and encouragement
  - Collaboration and community building using open transparent communication
  - Ethics of excellence
  - Pre-university student identity (Noble)
  - Commitment to innovation and program development
  - Development of peer and grad culture
  - Teachers as leaders, co-learners and facilitators of learning

B. Teaching
- Curriculum
  - Compacting
  - Integrated expertise (Keating) and interdisciplinary curriculum
  - University preparation as opposed to coverage of high school in two years
  - Social-emotional development (relationship learning/character education)
  - Appreciation and self-management of over-excitabilities, sensitivity & intensity
  - Academic confidence among intellectual peers and community of scholars
  - Learning linked to personal future through career exploration & mentorship
  - Understanding of giftedness and respect for uniqueness of individual talents & interests
- Instruction
  - Flexible pacing and gap-based instruction
  - Zone of proximal development (Vygotsky)
  - Highly individualized instruction (Silverman)
- Learning Management
  - Academic advisement (Noble)
  - Individual education plan
  - Skills and habits of scholarship
- Evaluation
  - Alternate measures of success

C. Policy
- Philosophy and Goals
  - Goal of early entrance to university.
  - Gifted learners as a special population
  - Commitment to student needs and success
  - Developmental approach to giftedness, including multiple intelligences
- Program Design
  - Program integrity
  - Institutional partnerships
  - Seamless infrastructure
  - Shared governance
  - Successful early entrance to university working model (Noble)
  - Liberal education focus

A second category of influence on program learning consists of systems and structures that organize how education is accessed and delivered across institutions. Transition Program learning challenged a number of assumptions embedded in the organization, traditions and
culture of typical education systems. For example the organization underlying comprehensive secondary schools made it difficult to address the range of special needs of gifted students. Elements such as the school timetable, age/grade appropriate coursework and peers, and a climate based on socialization to secondary school norms often limited opportunities for advanced and challenging learning pathways appropriate for academically gifted students. In cases where student needs challenged traditional practices within the Transition Program, intense struggles enveloped staff, parents and administration. Where learning needs of individual students and their parents were not met and administrators were not able to generate changes within the program, parents often supported students leaving the program. For example, individual students, who had achieved mastery in a discipline beyond the instructional level provided in the assigned grade level, requested alternative placement in order to foster continuing development of knowledge and skills. When these requests were not addressed, students chose to enroll in different secondary programs. The tensions that developed as a result of unmet student needs played a significant role in the program’s development, stimulating closer examination of program delivery and often improving practices to support student development such as challenge exams and advanced placement.

Secondary school organization and culture as well as other institutional bureaucracies have thus provided structures that have both supported Transition Program students at times and on other occasions, limited appropriate practices and opportunities that would have helped address the needs of enrolled students. For example, parents, using letters and briefs to school and district administration as well as the Steering Committee, were able to support program change by documenting their concerns with respect to the ways in which organizations did not give due consideration to students enrolling in an early entrance to university program. One such issue was the Dogwood certificates from the Ministry of Education and rules which did not allow these students to receive the same level of compensation that would be available to them if they were enrolled in a regular secondary program. Other issues articulated by parents included coordination of homework assignments, monitoring student progress, and appropriate instruction and evaluation within the program.

A third category of influential factors consists of external and internal influences, events and decisions. These include external events and factors beyond the control of students, staff, parents and administrators such as policy changes, personal and professional considerations and political acts. In our study, significant among these were changes in administration and staff and teacher job action. The general education climate with its extensive budget cuts, reorganization and downsizing within the school district influenced the attention given to the program’s need for support and development. Internal influences include organization of program site, access to university facilities and resources, relationships among staff and university professors, timetable and courses. Program development continued while the organization managed demands from within and weathered the impact of external events. When events such as job action challenged the program’s ability to communicate effectively with parents, new communication pathways were developed. One idea was the development of an Advisory Council composed of representatives from students, parents, teachers and the program coordinator. Some events, such as hiring constraints, severely limited the program’s ability to change in positive ways. It was how events were understood and managed that made a difference to whether the program was able to respond effectively.
Lastly the Transition Program was influenced by the development of new knowledge and new understandings. In the process of working to achieve program goals, learning accumulated with respect to the nature and needs of the students, appropriate curriculum and instruction for university preparation, and knowledge about how to access institutional bureaucracies and infrastructures to support student learning. For example, the development of understandings about the students' steep learning curve eased the concerns of students, staff, and parents during the first year of the program. From the graduates of the program came evidence that these students could be successful in university studies and be both satisfied and confident as they pursued interesting career paths and further opportunities for advanced learning and academic excellence. This knowledge enhanced understandings of the issues affecting program delivery and contributed to the goal of program improvement.

Central to the development of new knowledge and understanding of the program's evolution was the role played by committed program participants, namely students, parents, staff and administrators as well as committee members. Their efforts have pushed the envelope of program decision-making. At all levels of program organization participants have struggled to close the gap between the Transition Program's conceptual framework and its program delivery system. A dynamic process involving both learning and collaboration has characterized the experience of gifted students within the traditions of secondary and post-secondary education. Like the sculptor who releases the elephant from the marble slab, the Transition Program has had to release perspectives that were not in accordance with the program's mandate while engaging and refining those elements that remained essential to the program's purpose and goal. The Transition Program's current form is the result of the efforts of those who lived, struggled and worked with it in order to help realize the program's potential to be truly innovative in its response to student needs.

Leadership as Teaching

Leadership has played a critical role in the evolution of the Transition Program. Different approaches to leadership have been explored as the program has struggled to define itself as a unique and innovative learning community. Leadership of a learning community requires the capacities of a master teacher who embodies the vision, supports understandings of the purpose and goals, models effective learning and creative problem solving with individuals and employs strategic planning to address their needs while valuing and building on the strengths of all members of the community. Just as collaboration characterizes the development of a learning community, collaborative leadership has been critical to the evolution of the Transition Program.

Clearly the innovative nature of the program was not well understood at first and as a result the issue of leadership was not thoroughly addressed. Prior to implementation program developers identified program governance as the responsibility of the Vancouver School Board. Program leadership, however, was not identified as a specific need. The need for program leadership emerged only over time through an appreciation of the unique needs of gifted students, the challenges that the program presented to the culture and traditions of education organizations, and the influence of external events. In 1993 leadership by the school administrator was more assumed than planned. Similarly program implementation was not formally planned.
There were several reasons why the program did not have an implementation plan. The efforts of program developers in the years prior to 1993 focused on obtaining approval for the program concept and organizing funding to support implementation. This was a lengthy process involving political negotiations to develop institutional partnerships. The process was fraught with uncertainty at a time when there was no money to create staffing positions. It was therefore strategically reasonable to seek approval in principle rather than to request funding for a new program when the choice was to request approval in principle or not be considered at all. With funding for program staffing unavailable the only way to proceed, once program approval had been obtained, was through accommodation within existing staffing allocations. Guidance with respect to implementation consisted of informal discussions about logistics without consideration of how to monitor, refine, or support development. Initial understandings about roles and responsibilities within the program were tacit and understated. Initiating the program amidst the uncertainties of partnership commitments and in the absence of a plan to support program development invited the individuals who assumed responsibilities to define their roles and how they and ultimately the program functioned. As a consequence leadership reflected individual perspectives and interpretations rather than organizational planning and program vision.

The first leadership model in the program was collaborative because the vision for the program had been shared together with a commitment to its purpose and goal. This leadership model consisted of the school principal, the Director of Student Services and the district teacher for gifted education. The school principal assumed responsibility for site-based management of staff and resources. The Director of Student Services assumed responsibility for the liaison with institutional partners, program policy, and budget allocation. The District Gifted Education specialist assumed responsibility for identification of students and general gifted education support for staff, students, and parents. This collaboration was enhanced by the agreement that the district teacher would teach one block in the Transition Program and provide students with appropriate support, knowledge, and skills for academic acceleration. The school administrator's support for the program was helped by a visit to the Seattle program to view the students and meet program staff and administration. This early leadership model was based on a flexible management style that valued the unique contributions of different roles and supported a developmental approach to serving students needs.

It was assumed that approaches to program delivery would be negotiated with staff and that the program model would evolve from successful practice. However this assumption did not take into account the needs of staff faced with an innovative program that challenged secondary school traditions and culture.

For example, school administration and staff identified to work in the program had very little understanding of the unique needs of the student population nor knowledge about academic acceleration in terms of research findings and effective practices related to this particular student population and this particular program goal. Limited knowledge and no experience with an early entrance to university program resulted in many questions about the program's viability, legitimacy, usefulness and wisdom. Without the benefit of participation in discussions of program design, preparation with respect to best practices associated with gifted students, collaborative planning with respect to academic acceleration, enrichment and interdisciplinary curriculum, teachers were guided by the idea that the program would require no more than "good teaching" and "professional practice". Without access to an implementation plan to guide program delivery, articulated roles and responsibilities, goals, expectations, and a formative
evaluation system, and a gifted education foundation to dispel popular myths and misinformation about gifted students, a small group of teachers agreed to accept a small number of younger students in their Grade 11 classrooms and to learn by doing. The school administrator undertook management of the communication with parents who were concerned about student progress in the new program. A case by case problem solving approach evolved in a climate where the hope surrounding the newness of the program and the uniqueness of its goal heightened expectations of participants and focused attention on the concerns and tensions among students, parents, and staff.

The initial leadership reflected a commitment to program development and support for gifted students. However as program enrollment increased and student became more vocal and demanded more attention, responsibility for managing the program dynamics moved from the principal, to the vice-principal. Subsequently, with a change in administration, program management moved to two program teachers who were each given a block of time to provide specific support to the program, student needs and parent communication. The initial collaboration between school and district administration supported by the specialized knowledge of gifted education was eroded first, by the loss of knowledge about the program’s purpose and goal as a result of frequent personnel changes in the school administration, second, by the discontinuation of the teaching provided by the gifted education specialist, and third, by substantive changes in district administration and program staff. For example, personnel changes since the program was initiated in 1993 include the following:

- District administration: 1996, 1997

Similarly changes to leadership within the partnership institutions affected the way in which the program was viewed by these institutions and the effectiveness of the collaborative problem solving of their representatives. Examples of significant changes in leadership roles within the partnering institutions included Vancouver Superintendent of Schools (1996) and the President of the University of British Columbia (1998). Changes within the Ministry of Education included the Director of Special Programs (1999) and the Consultant for Gifted Education (1993, 1997). Frequency of changes in school administration made it clear that program leadership needed to be more specific to the program.

A second leadership model evolved through an informal agreement between school administration and program staff to manage increasing enrolment according to the policies and procedures of the secondary school. Tensions with this model occurred when expectations for gifted education knowledge and the larger vision of unmet gifted student needs were not reflected in program operation. Instead student learning needs were reframed to mesh with available accommodations within the existing school operation and traditions and gradually the focus of the program narrowed to serve only those students who could make the adjustments to advanced courses and related behavioral expectations.

The secondary management model of program leadership had several consequences for program enrolment. For example, candidacy was affected. Selection of academically gifted applicants
was more influenced by compatibility with secondary norms. Often exceptional students who were not accepted into the program were accepted into the secondary school’s Grade 8 program. These students, together with students who left the program after Year One, furthered the development of the school’s intellectual peer culture and enhanced the school’s status with outstanding performance on student achievement measures. The alignment of program delivery to school policies and procedures also affected students whose advanced knowledge and learning needs did not match teachers' organization and delivery of curriculum. These students were advised to accept limits or, alternatively, enroll in distance learning or apply to another school or program.

The Transition Program began to take on the character of a secondary school model of hard-working highly able students who behaved in accordance with secondary culture, achieved high marks and competed successfully for university scholarships and other forms of recognition. The program began to define itself in accordance with secondary courses, timetables, and learning culture. For example, courses described by grade level invited the description of the program as five years of high school in two. The acceptance of this definition of the program further mitigated against the differentiation of program delivery in terms of individual students’ needs.

The impact on program development was reflected in student enrollment in the program. Students reported an exhaustive workload requiring coverage of curricula for each grade level in a shorter period of time. Student achievement was made more difficult by the undifferentiated extensive work requirements, higher expectations, and limited understanding of the nature of the gifted students who enrolled. As a result problems in enrolment and retention of students became obvious. Particularly noticeable was the drop in female students which in 1996 resulted in a Year Two all male cohort with particular strengths in mathematics and science. Female students brought different needs and expectations to the program and they were reluctant to remain with a program model that was focused on more work and fewer rewards and relationship possibilities. At that time the program staff was primarily male with few female role models for female students. Social-emotional development and support through the development of a peer culture was not yet recognized as important and requiring staff support.

The third program leadership model was the teacher-leader. When parents advocated directly for a full time program coordinator with skills and understandings related to the needs of gifted students, administration framed the role in terms of the models for leadership found in existing secondary alternative programs such as the mini-schools. The result was to replace the two blocks shared by two program teachers with a half-time position equivalent to a head teacher role with equal responsibilities for teaching and for responding to program needs. The role requirements focused on organizational abilities and secondary teaching experience.

At the same time external events including budget cuts, downsizing and reorganization in the Vancouver School District (1995-96, 1996-97, 2000-2001, 2001-2002) as well as internal personnel issues affected development of strong program leadership. Financial considerations as well as political will and regulations with respect to hiring practices and union contracts influenced the ability to establish a leadership role within the program. For example seniority rather than qualifications such as gifted education training limited selection of candidates. At the same time development of professional knowledge in gifted education was not a priority of the staff (1993-1998) whose regular teaching assignment and role in the school's operation
constituted a prior commitment. As a result the program focused on retention of the status quo and growth was limited to first order changes such as particular enrichment strategies.

The search for alternative approaches to program leadership turned to efforts to provide a blueprint for program development. For example, the Conceptual Framework document heightened awareness of the program's goal and its commitment to address the educational needs of its students. It was anticipated that as a result of articulation of the program framework, program operation and program development could be held accountable by administrators and parents for serving both the nature and needs of the students who enrolled in the program and their goal of early entrance to university. Program practices, however, remained focused on requirements for university entrance that included fifty-two credits for high school graduation and competitively high marks in four provincial examinations. This narrowed focus on academic achievement limited service to the developmental and educational needs of students. Those responsible for student marks became gatekeepers of program development. Staff efforts to broaden program focus were constrained by the priority placed on high school graduation, by comparisons of students within the program to senior secondary students in a secondary school, and by cases of reluctance and resistance to change. Discussions with staff involving an outside facilitator proved effective in articulating refinements to program delivery including 'core plus' courses and added value aspects of the program. However implementation of these ideas required a level of leadership not available in the program organization.

Program staff alone were unable to work toward these changes for a number of reasons. Claims of professional autonomy and perspectives on role requirements worked against interdisciplinary curriculum development and team collaboration. From a systemic perspective, staff had been hired for abilities and knowledge with respect to teaching a particular discipline and were not necessarily skilled in sharing leadership, building interdisciplinary curriculum or supporting development of an innovative program. The challenge of delivering the program as well as changing the way in which work was done demanded significant commitment to the program goals, an understanding of their importance, time to engage in the process and external leadership and support. Changes in staff members resulted in different levels of knowledge about the program, the uniqueness of the student population, and their curricular and instruction and social-emotional needs, which limited program development efforts by the program coordinator who was constrained by membership in the same bargaining unit. Support for program leadership through a management team and the Steering Committee began to expand awareness of structural and systemic issues that needed to be addressed in order for leadership to influence program development.

When teacher job action further limited the role which teachers could play in program development, the need for program leadership was brought into stark relief. Parents frustrated with their efforts to have particular student needs addressed, questioned the discrepancy between the program's conceptual framework and the program delivery model. It became apparent from discussions with administration and staff that the mechanism for achieving this clarity was not available through staff alone.

In the spring of 2002 leadership was provided by the Steering Committee where the Chairperson proposed a program review to address the issues identified by parents and staff. As a follow-up to the Program Review and with the support of the Steering Committee, the Transition Program was reorganized and staffing roles were aligned to support a new program delivery system.
Staffing positions were subsequently posted in accordance with the recommendations articulated by the review committee. These postings articulated a commitment to the expressed goals of the program and graduate level work in the development and education of highly gifted adolescents including knowledge of academic acceleration with related practices in curriculum organization, instruction, assessment and evaluation.

These most recent developments also resulted in a commitment from district administration to provide full time site-based program leadership for the Transition Program. A new program coordinator, selected on November 26, 2002 will have an opportunity to build on the expectations for program improvement identified in the program review given extensive support from representatives from the institutional partners and members of the learning community that is the Transition Program. Program Review recommendations included close collaboration with the school principal, district administration and gifted education staff, the UBC liaison and UBC gifted education specialist. The goal of the new leadership role is to facilitate a philosophical alignment of program and district staff, students and parents with the program's conceptual framework and to ensure coherence within a flexible organization of services and a context of ongoing program improvement.

A particular challenge for future leadership is to identify "champions" for the program through the various networks and bureaucratic channels of educational partners and related organizations and institutions. These extensions of leadership will require an in-depth understanding of the student population, the program goal, and the scope of opportunities available through the UBC partnership and various faculties. A position created through the partnership institutions in order to promote creative program development supported by a sound grounding in gifted education research and practice is one possibility. It is clear that without university focused leadership program delivery defaults to the traditions of secondary schooling and loses its ability to function creatively in response to the needs and capacities of the unique student population. Yet the program has had difficulty in building champions among various segments of the university, particularly where space, laboratory use and equipment has been concerned. Because the program is not tied to any one faculty but must serve and be sustained by them all, Faculty Deans have been reluctant to provide support and resources, leaving the program to beg for support from the central administration.

The future of the program will be significantly influenced by the quality of program leadership, the creative collaboration among staff and the development of infrastructure to embody the program vision and support program integrity as it continues to improve service delivery to students. It is clear that leadership within an innovative program needs to support the learning about and development of talents of all participants including students, staff, parents, and school and district administration. This approach to leadership draws strength and wisdom from past experiences and links site-based management with school and district administration to district and university based gifted education knowledge. The collaborative leadership model supports program development and engages advocacy across institutions and at senior levels of administration and bureaucracies. Through study, research, and articulation of best practices, program leadership can help realize the potential of the catalyst ideas embedded in the program. With informed and dedicated leadership, the Transition Program learning community will have the opportunity to collaborate on creative approaches to participation, learning and change.
Teaching as Learning

Teaching in the Transition Program evolved through the contributions of no less than twenty Vancouver secondary teachers from a variety of disciplines who accepted responsibilities for enrolled students between 1993 and 2002. The development of teaching roles and practices has been pivotal to student success and program development. Paradoxically, it is through their experiences with student successes and struggles within the context of program learning and change that teachers’ understandings about the nature and needs of these students emerged. As they learned about the capacities of these students, teachers modified their practices, perspectives, and expectations. The resulting understandings have been incorporated into the professional conversation associated with the current professional identity of Transition Program staff.

It was the Transition Program’s commitment to provide preparation for early entrance to university in two years that presented new challenges to teachers. One challenge was the development and application of an uncommon professional knowledge describing the educational and developmental needs of academically highly gifted students. A second challenge required engagement with best practices associated with academic acceleration and enrichment to support the achievement of early entrance to university. A third challenge was to focus on individual learners whose individual learning profiles were unique among age peers as well as distinctive within the group of their academically gifted classmates. Teachers were required to expand traditional practices associated with large group instruction and lectures to include creative approaches to curriculum organization, instruction, and assessment in order to address the range of learning differences among the students. For example, students whose learning readiness ran counter to the traditions and systems of typical secondary school organization required modifications that called for new teacher skills such as collaboration in the development of interdisciplinary curriculum or accommodation for advanced prior learning such as those Grade 7 students who had completed Grade 11 mathematics. Designing educational experiences that emphasized university preparation gradually reframed the professional identity of the program teacher. For example, working with a unique student population meant that program staff constructed their practices without ready access to the professional knowledge or advice generally available within the typical secondary school staff or from teachers who had experience in this or a similar educational setting. As a result the organization of teaching moved from a reliance on traditional practice to a process model wherein teachers learned through working together with students, a role more often associated with coaching and leadership. As a result the learning experiences inherent in program teaching were described as both exhilarating and exhausting.

In retrospect the challenge of teaching in the Transition Program might have been more effectively managed if the circumstances had been clarified initially and teachers had been provided with appropriate professional development and support for approaching their new role. A clear description of the teacher role might have helped teachers to distinguish whether they wanted to work in the program in the first place. Consistent and strong program leadership on site with credibility through various networks and all the partnership institutions would have supported teacher efforts. Articulation of instruction and curriculum requirements and evaluation practices to support student growth would have been helpful. Clarifying the nature of the students and their learning needs within the larger context of university studies and career
roles could have afforded teachers a different perspective on the uniqueness of their roles within the program. Access to gifted education research, best practices with respect to academic acceleration for gifted students, early entrance to university program models, and other gifted education professionals may have assisted teachers with their own professional transition from the regular secondary school to an innovative program preparing academically gifted students for university studies and career success. Involvement in action research within the program may have supported teacher understanding of student learning needs which extended beyond content mastery to habits of scholarship and effective management of ideas, time, energy and goals and development of autonomy and academic confidence. A system for acknowledging and recognizing and rewarding staff for their learning and significant contributions to this innovative program’s on-going development might have also supported teachers in their development of new roles.

However the latter understandings developed only as a result of the experiences of the teachers who pioneered the teaching role and it is important to acknowledge how significant the challenges were and how profound the learning was for teachers in the program. For example, traditionally secondary teachers developed their professional identity through a process of socialization with experienced teachers within the organization of secondary schools, influenced by professional modesty and professional isolation. Typically, secondary teachers have been trained and hired as content specialists. They have worked within departments organized by disciplines wherein they taught discrete blocks often working with over two hundred students during the course of a year. Competency has typically been equated with effective management of the organization and delivery of curriculum, defensible and transparent evaluation practices and student achievement. One teacher exemplified this challenge when explaining that in twenty-eight years of teaching senior secondary courses in the same school it had not been necessary to engage in discussions of interdisciplinary curriculum with teachers in other disciplines nor to discuss professional development issues within the department. This statement is reminiscent of the long-standing description of Arts and Science as the two solitudes, and brings into stark relief the difficulties inherent in encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration within a context of secondary school traditions, culture and organization.

Similarly teacher training, particularly at the secondary level, did not prepare teachers for the special needs and strengths of a multi-aged group of highly academically gifted students. Most teachers had received only the mandatory cursory introduction to the concept of giftedness provided for pre-service teachers. In accordance with the traditions of secondary teaching, few secondary teachers had pursued the study of gifted education with an additional course and none had completed masters or doctoral work in the field. Lack of professional knowledge extended to misunderstandings about the nature and needs of this student population and often resulted in teachers in the traditional education setting being professionally uncomfortable with the nature of these students and their learning needs. In contrast to assumptions that teaching gifted students was easy, teachers were unprepared for the labor intensive roles that required extensive assessment of prior learning, development of learning profiles and articulation of individual learner needs. Understanding student development for this population was a new responsibility. Teachers also required skill in communication together with appropriate knowledge in order to explain the pedagogy accompanying academic acceleration to students and their parents and to provide feedback with respect to the learning goals developed through the students’ educational plans. Program delivery also required creative engineering with respect to adaptations to curriculum, instruction and evaluation supported by administrative skill with respect to
monitoring student learning and social-emotional development as changes in understandings and skills were demonstrated and different behaviors and attitudes emerged.

It is also important to appreciate that there have been few if any opportunities for secondary teachers to work with students formally identified as academically highly gifted. Full time positions for teaching gifted students have been almost nonexistent in elementary schools in British Columbia and even more rare in secondary schools. Similarly district level responsibilities for gifted education have typically been incorporated into larger portfolios held by administrators with little or no background in gifted education. The lack of professional knowledge about giftedness and best educational practices within the practice and experience of schools made the development of understandings about gifted learners more difficult to validate for teachers involved in the Transition Program.

In order to achieve the program goal, Transition Program staff had to develop a learning community based on shared commitment to support student learning and goals. This philosophical alignment required learning about the nature of these students and using the learning experiences shared with students to expand their understanding of effective teaching practices. Collaboration among staff together with program leadership facilitated professional craft, knowledge and creativity.

The development of effective practices for teaching in the Transition Program was linked to understandings of the nature and needs of the students who enrolled in the program. For example, the intensity and sensitivity that accompany giftedness were important characteristics to understand for teachers who engaged students in learning and relationships through practices that embodied core values about learning and set high standards for achievement. For example within the small group of students where everyone was known and relationships with intellectual peers enhanced learning significantly, it was critical that teachers actively modeled integrity and the ethics of scholarship to guide not only student learning but also development of character. Critical to the success of the program was the teachers’ in-depth understanding of students’ prior knowledge, cognitive functioning, meaning making and goals. This understanding enabled teachers to enhance their creative teaching in ways that were flexible and respectful and thus to enjoy the higher levels of functioning that the students expressed through humor, insight, and conceptual clarity.

It was also critical to have teachers who could understand and support the learning and developmental challenges common to students whose intellectual profiles were statistically rare. Together as a group the students created a unique, dynamic climate characterized by high intensity, quick wittedness, insight and sensitivity. The intimacy of the group was most often expressed through humor and irony. Within this highly charged learning environment teachers were charged with instruction in ways that would also manage the energy of the group. Teachers described the program experience as academic boot camp and the engagement of the students as high-octane learning. Managing the range of personal and group energy levels within the classroom required the teacher’s complete engagement with both the discipline and the students. Students who were typically more open to inspiration and more likely to question authority were not readily managed by traditional approaches. At the same time as students brought penetrating intellect to tasks they were also learning how to handle their powerful sensitivity within the context of issues of adolescent development. Teachers were in a position to provide them with both stability and reflection as they experienced and experimented with the range of their
abilities and the discipline required to manage themselves in order to achieve productivity and successful relationships. Engaging students' abilities and sensitivity in ways that helped them learn about themselves and the world and in ways that did not humiliate, shame, or demean them was critical to the development of a safe and caring community of scholars. Teachers were not only required to articulate the ethics of excellence but were called upon to constantly model ethical behavior since they were under close scrutiny by the students who quickly perceived double standards and often innocently reflected teacher behaviors as their own learned attitudes and ways of acting towards others. Academically gifted students, for whom conceptual learning was a predominant way to understand and engage with the world and manage themselves and their tasks, experienced heart-wrenching disappointment and existential confusion when the trust given to a teacher was betrayed by a lack of moral sensitivity. By their very nature these students placed tremendous demands on their teachers.

Initially it was student eagerness to participate and willingness to work that inspired teacher efforts to articulate and respond to student needs. Teachers invented names for these understandings such as the 'whoosh factor' to explain the rapid learning curve and changes during a year of participation in the program and the student ability to 'relax into normalcy' to explain one of the effects of the intellectual peer group. However, over time the unusual profiles of exceptional strengths and unforeseen learning differences emerged and presented compelling challenges to program staff’s learning. The secondary school professional culture held to the view that enrichment of curriculum was an acceptable response to highly able learners but that gifted education was unnecessary. With the traditional focus of service as the regular classroom, the generation of other service delivery options was regarded with some skepticism. Added to these factors was historical memory that suggested that programs for this student population were elitist and would not prove viable over the long term.

What began as an accommodation for seven students within a secondary school setting became classes of twenty students. Teachers suddenly found themselves teaching groups of gifted and highly gifted students where simple accommodations were no longer sufficient to deal with students who were also struggling with high levels of intensity and sensitivity. The challenge for teachers in the program was to develop a new perspective on their roles and many factors mitigated against change, not the least of which was no history of gifted education programming in the secondary school system. Teachers were highly dedicated to their disciplines and to the culture of the secondary school and to their students. The Transition Program students represented an additional load often conflicting with teachers' professional commitments to the school and regular teaching assignments. Teachers also often questioned the value of the program and academic acceleration in particular. Since changing their practice to meet the needs of these students was not required by the traditional role or the school administration, teachers chose the degree and kind of responses they made to these students. As a result some teachers who were already sensitive to talent development and appreciating the learning potential of these students were able to support these students in various ways. Other teachers explained the lack of student success in terms of the student as opposed to the pedagogy of the teacher. These perspectives socialized new staff and administrators so that changes to program delivery remained unlikely in the secondary school setting.

Program changes that did impact the teacher role came as a result of catalyst ideas that produced structural changes to the program. These included the Provincial Resource Program designation
and the relocation to the UBC campus. Legitimacy of gifted students' needs, designated staffing and external funding confirmed that the program was not an add-on to the regular school or a drain on school resources.

One example of the influence that relocation had on the teachers in the Transition Program was the closer communication and interdependence that evolved in order for them to work within the smaller designated program facilities. Within that context teachers received more encouragement to work collaboratively and support student development across disciplines. This involved interdisciplinary learning experiences and participation in problem sensing and problem solving with respect to student needs. Space limitations intensified staff relationships with each other, with administration, and with students. Teachers were also required to develop relationships with university professors and university staff in order to access university resources and facilities, and support student participation in seminars and special events designed to enhance their academic studies and help them to construct pre-university student identities.

One of the more demanding aspects of the evolving teaching role in the Transition Program was the monitoring of student learning, assessment of learning difficulties and modification of practices to help individual students achieve appropriate understandings and skills. This was particularly challenging within the context of instruction of advanced level curriculum. Information related to student progress needed to be documented and shared both with the student and the parents and ultimately among all staff. In-depth communication with respect to student learning, progress and behavioral issues or concerns demanded infrastructures that were not typically available within secondary organizations.

These changes to the teacher role were supported throughout all the developmental challenges within program implementation by the articulation of student needs as the reference point for program delivery decisions. The understanding of student needs was based on the characteristics of the student clarified through the learner profile as well as behavior and performance within the program. The link between student needs and the catalyst ideas from research and best practices suggested effective ways to understand and support student learning and development. However these understandings developed only gradually. A reluctance to apply gifted education professional knowledge as previous described decreased as more information became available through program documents and as leadership aligned with gifted education was expressed through district and school administration work on program design and evaluation policies.

It is clear from the historical narrative that the conceptual strength inherent in the program's commitment to student needs was not easily actualized. The infusion nature of these links between theoretical knowledge and practice were difficult to attain in part because they were based on different beliefs about education. For example, the premise underlying the identification of students' giftedness and the enrollment of these students in the Transition Program was that the program was committed to support the development of the potential of the individual using a wide range of strategies and accommodations. This range turned out to be far greater than the expectations inherent in the traditional secondary organization where students were expected in large part to accommodate to the existing system. It has thus been more difficult for teachers familiar with the secondary school culture to identify with a role in which the program is designed to serve the educational and developmental needs of enrolled students, at least until a collaborative process identifies a more appropriate setting to address the student's
needs. It is this process of identifying the underlying beliefs inherent in the gifted education catalyst ideas that have contributed to making the learning process for teachers both time consuming and experience-based. (See Figure 7.0.)

Significant for the learning process was the articulation of best practices for academic acceleration for gifted students first through program documents such as the Conceptual Framework '98 and more recently by the report issued as a result of the 2002 program review. The juxtaposition of ideas from theory and research with ideas developed through practice and program delivery gradually influenced program conversation on giftedness. Teacher learning about giftedness was also developed through challenges from practice presented by stakeholders. For example, two perspectives arose from parent concerns and staff perspectives that paralleled the theoretical discussions of intelligence reported in the gifted education literature. These distinctions provided a useful way to discuss different approaches to intelligence and how different aspects of intelligence, such as multiple intelligences and multi-potentialities can be addressed by broadening the range of teaching strategies and program design options within the program. These distinctions were articulated in the recommendations from the Program Review
and subsequently reinforced by recent reorganization of the program. For example, the two years of the program were clarified as the year of orientation and the year of intensification with less emphasis on sequential curriculum and more emphasis on responsiveness to the learning needs of individual students in light of the goal of preparation for early entrance to university and their unique profiles of strengths and needs.

An example of how these different perspectives were articulated was the categorical and the developmental approaches to giftedness. (See Table 22.0.)

| Table 22.0 Implications of Developmental and Categorical Approaches to Intelligence |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Transition Program                | Categorical                    | Developmental     |
| 1. Intelligence                   | Fixed                           | Plastic           |
| 2. Academic Learning              | Discrete subjects               | Interdisciplinary |
| 3. Social Emotional Development   | Behavior modification           | Character Development |
| 4. Career Exploration             | Identify interests              | Explore & invent  |
| 5. Student Selection              | IQ, marks                       | Learner profile, goals |
| 5. Student Identity               | High School                     | Pre-University    |
| 6. IEPs                           | Address deficits                | Set goals         |
| 7. Success                        | Marks; scholarships             | Academic Maturity |
| 9. Goal                           | HS graduation                   | U studies & career path |
| 10. Program Delivery              | Year 1 - Gr 8, 9, 10            | Year 1 - Orientation |
|                                  | Year 2 - Gr 11 & 12             | Year 2 - Intensification |
| 11. Curriculum                    | Mastery by grades               | Discipline - concept maps |
| 12. Instruction                   | Lecture, practice               | Problem-based, seminar |
| Acceleration                      | Faster pace                     | Compaction, gap-based |
| Enrichment                        | Extension                       | Indepth, Interdisciplinary |
| Evaluation                        | Rote Learning                   | Synthesis/critical analysis |
| Marks                             | Homework, tests                 | Demonstrated knowing |

While both the categorical and developmental approaches to giftedness were useful to enhance understanding of the program delivery structures, each implied different practices within the program. For example the developmental approach to giftedness referenced in the Conceptual
Framework document suggested giftedness was fluid, recognizable through multiple sources and kinds of data. It also suggested that teaching of these students began with an analysis of prior knowledge and skills and provided learning experiences designed to achieve program goals, bring skills and understandings up to required levels for university studies and develop student aptitudes and potentials related to possible career paths. This approach to student learning required flexible pedagogy and a team approach to supporting student development and successful learning. Alternatively the categorical model suggested that abilities were fixed, measurable through traditional IQ tests and developed through extensive training and practice of skills. Assumptions following from these perspectives on giftedness influenced perceptions of students' needs and how teachers supported student development. As a result a combination of best practices from both perspectives gradually emerged. The usefulness of this distinction has been its contribution to clarifying different perspectives that help to identify assumptions underlying pedagogical decisions.

The understandings about teaching the Transition Program students that have developed have been only recently articulated. Many aspects of the above approaches have linked Transition Program practice to secondary education, stimulating questions about effective practices for gifted learners in all secondary settings. Teacher learning, at the same time, has enabled the program to extend the scope and flexibility of its design and delivery to support the goal of preparation for early entrance to university. As a result the program has developed a culture that supports staff learning while exploring approaches that can more effectively address the needs of the students. The learning exemplified through the articulation of different approaches has facilitated communication within the program and within particular disciplines, linking curriculum and instruction more closely to student needs and goals.

The most recent catalysts for structural changes, namely, the recommendations from the Program Review, program reorganization, and the UBC Senate Committee’s endorsement of Transition Program students’ application directly to faculties, have set the stage for significant changes in program delivery that will also influence teaching in the program. The learning about teaching of academically highly gifted students has only begun to be available as an influence on program development and education for this student population in schools within BC and Canada.

**Policy as Leadership**

Educational policy has played a significant role in the development of the Transition Program. Nine years after its inception, the VSB/UBC Transition Program remains the only program of its kind in BC and Canada. Its inception and continuing existence are a reflection of BC's social commitment to provide appropriate education for all young people including academically gifted adolescents. BC policies have defined the student population, provided guidelines with respect to identification and appropriate programs and services, and outlined a funding formula to encourage school districts to address the needs of these students. These policies have afforded gifted education legitimacy, credibility and economic support as well as standards for program delivery.

Policy decisions have also served a leadership function within the development of the Transition Program. For example, through the office of the Director of Student Services and after
substantial negotiation supported by representation from UBC, an application was submitted to
the Ministry of Education for Provincial Resource Program status and related funding. This
application applied policy to focus attention on the program's original goal and related needs of
the target student population. When this application was approved it provided external
validation while confirming the Transition Program's identity as an innovative and unique
program. The new status also reframed the program from a school-based accommodation to a
provincial program and required that half of its students be selected from outside Vancouver
public schools. This new requirement called for an expansion of the program information and
recruitment efforts as well as the candidate identification process. The program's new legitimacy
was expressed through the posting of teaching positions which stipulated that applicants needed
to have a commitment to program goals and an ability to address the educational needs of the
target student population. It was this new funding that made possible the establishment of a part
time teacher coordinator position.

Significantly the vision for the program was reconstituted through leadership within the policy
body of the Transition Program Steering Committee. The Committee engaged in considerable
discussion of issues related to declining student enrollment. Experience with recent program
graduates who were successful in university together with advice from the Seattle program
reconfirmed the need for a separate program identity. The Committee developed a proposal to
relocate the program to the UBC campus in order to promote a pre-university identity for
students, enable program organization and delivery to respond to student needs, and facilitate
extension of infrastructure and access within the university. To support these efforts the
Conceptual Framework document was developed, approved by the Steering Committee and then
presented to the program participants including staff, current and graduate students and their
parents. This document described program integrity through its articulation of the theoretical
foundation for program design and delivery, role expectations and ways in which program
delivery needed to address student needs.

Thirdly the issue of university entrance requirements for Year Two Transition Program students
was brought to the attention of district staff and the program management team through the
expressed concerns of parents of students in Year Two of the program. In order to resolve
specific student concerns the program management committee initiated discussions with a
representative from the Registrar's office. Ultimately the UBC Liaison professor organized a
meeting for the program management team with the University Registrar. As a result a proposal
was prepared for the UBC Senate Committee on Admissions. The proposal requested
modification of university entrance requirements for Transition Program graduates that would
focus them on application to faculties and pave the way for achievement of high school
graduation retroactively. The proposal received unanimous approval of the Steering Committee
including parent representatives who reported strong support from the parent group. In
November 2002 the UBC Senate voted to support the above proposal. The resulting change to
the institutional infrastructure will impact the program design and reinforce the original goal of
the Transition Program, namely, preparation for university entrance as opposed to coverage of
five years of high school in two years.

Policy has played a critical role in the evolution of the Transition Program because the issues
hindering program development have largely been systemic. The goals, perseverance, and
subsequent success of the students have challenged the traditional organization of education
systems. Internal changes have been limited by perceptions of the impenetrability of these long-
standing assumptions about learning. From a systemic perspective the Transition Program has gradually taken shape through an interesting process of transformation. Policy change can also be framed through reference to first order change and second order change. First order change "occurs within a given system which itself remains unchanged" (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974, p. 10). Second order change is where the "occurrence changes the system itself [where there is a] change from transformation to transformation...which is a change of [the system's] way of behaving" (p. 9). It is the invariance factor within first order change that prevents a system from generating within itself the conditions for second-order change. Second order change presents an opportunity for education systems to engage with the concepts of the information age where meta values can transform current practice into a community of partnerships and seamless bureaucracies, similar to what has been previously referred to as a communiversity environment (Marland, 1971).

The policies which made the Transition Program possible and which supported its accommodation within the regular secondary school were the policies of first order change. These same policies that held program's development stable did not support new program ideas that could stimulate second order change. A new order of program operation was made possible through extraordinary efforts. Catalysts played an important role in this transformation from first order to second order change, and of course, the acid test for the transformed environment will be whether the policies within and across institutions continue to change.

This process of change within the Transition Program has evoked a number of policy challenges. Three specific challenges are the development of coherence of policies across institutions and other social policies, the development of an articulated process model for policy making, learning and change, and lastly, the exploration of changes of metaphor within policy-making.

The Transition Program's development challenged the coherence of policies and their interpretations across institutions. Considerable time and individual efforts were required where the needs of highly gifted students did not fit within the policies of the institutions or alternatively, these policies penalized the students by restricting access or opportunity by age-grade criteria. For example, students who qualified by age and grade designation could not participate in some academic competitions because they were also enrolled in a university course. In addition there were policy areas where gifted students were overlooked and policies remained insensitive to their needs. For example, the excellence of students that enabled them to enroll in the Transition Program limited their access to awards and scholarships designed to recognize and support excellence. As a result some students did not receive the dollars provided by the Ministry of Education to encourage and recognize high levels of achievement because the distribution of funds was organized according to schools with no flexibility to allow recognition for the program's population and goal. There can be no disagreement that academically gifted students represent a resource that society cannot afford to lose. A commitment to develop the range and diversity of this student population suggests an examination of educational policies and related infrastructures is important. One such current policy review is considering high school graduation requirements and a second is the university senate's consideration of the proposal for early entrance for Transition Program graduates.

Viewed from its historical narrative, the perspectives of participants, and program decision-making, the Transition Program's evolution has been supported by educational policies.
Tensions that have developed during program implementation have been resolved through reference to policies consisting of formal text within institutions and government bodies. Interpretation of policy has typically fallen to the highest level of administrator available within the organization. Within the Transition Program where student learning was organized differently, policies were reinterpreted according to principles and guidelines that made sense for the program staff, the parents and the students. However the interpretation of policy and the flexibility required within the program were continually faced with negotiation. The process of defining appropriate practice given the unique circumstances of individual students took a great deal of administrator time. The time required to support this process was not readily available for the school administrator and often required a choice between providing needed service to the secondary school or responding to needs within the Transition Program. Conflicts have arisen when different interpretations of policy have been expressed through practices within the program that did not make sense from the perspective of students and parents who questioned and thus influenced policy interpretation and decision-making. The policy decisions arising from these conflicts represent the negotiated values that form the foundation that supports the Transition Program's on going development. Many of the changes within the operation of the Transition Program are linked to the policy interpretations which have been refined by the questions and analysis that have been explored over many years of program experience. It is within the conceptual maps of policies that the design and operation of the program have been clarified and refined in order to provide service that is based on integrity and commitment to student success and well-being. It is clear therefore that articulation, mediation and understandings constructed at policy levels of institutions and government contribute to future directions and opportunities for education generally and gifted education and the Transition Program in particular.

Assumptions embedded in policies also have an impact on program development. One of the reasons why the development of the Transition Program has been fraught with difficulty is that the policies which have been enabling in terms of articulating and legitimizing needs have also been written in terms of categories of services creating patterns of rewards and penalties. For example, The challenge of negotiation across institutions and contractual obligations has been a reflection of the category-based policies. Policies focused on addressing deficits as opposed to talent development have resulted in a deficit mindset to which program development must be aligned in order to receive consideration for resource distribution. The deficit mindset has permeated the structures of organizations and the delivery of its programs. It is this mindset which makes the negotiation of creative initiatives particularly challenging within educational organizations where financial resources are diminishing.

Policymaking can be understood in terms of its economic, political and ideological dimensions (Ball, 1990). Ideally, political considerations negotiate the economic realities in order to address the highest values of the society expressed through the ideological lens. Thus policy making can move through the categorical approach that identifies and addresses deficits to another level where it now includes a focus on creative development of potential of all kinds and in all populations as a means to address issues and generate a social culture where all abilities and talents have value and are recognized, needed and supported. The articulation of this process can promote the learning and change that are fundamental to the needs of the knowledge economy.
Gifted education offers an interesting exemplar for this process because of its innate focus on the strengths of individuals. It defines equality not as sameness but as appropriate responses to the educational needs of each individual. The emphasis in gifted education practice is not on 'having' abilities or talents but on developing them, not on avoiding work but engaging in the work that is necessary to maximize talents and abilities, not on personal gain but rather on finding a place in society from which to provide service to others. Giftedness has often been compared to a 'hair-shirt'; it can be irritating, uncomfortable, and at times a great burden if it is turned inward and worn against the skin. But if abilities and talents are focused beyond self and directed toward service to others, these abilities can become a joy and a source of meaning and rewards of many kinds. A system view of this process of development has been described as 'holographic networking', which first invites individuals to identify their own strengths, second, to identify the strengths of others, and third, to link strengths (Leathem, 1983). Individuals are encouraged to work toward a shared vision of preferred social cultures in the ways and through the talents and abilities that are available to them, using existing policies as viewing points and prisms rather than guidelines and prisons. The movement from self-interest to community involvement in understanding policy and policymaking places priority on shared values of cooperation, loyalty and caring about others.

Within this process of policy learning it is useful to support the development of new metaphors to describe systems and organizations and how they function. Dr. Robert Moore of the Special Programs Branch of CIDA suggests that, "A change of metaphor is more powerful than a change of doctrine" (1984). One example of the use of a change of metaphor is to look at the goal of policies in terms of a fusing of horizons (Ahrendt, 1958.) Hargreaves (1997) has suggested that the use of this kind of metaphor can help us move from seeing schools as clearly bounded systems to recognizing the collapsing of distinctions between inside and outside as increased flexibility, and that our organizations and systems can function more creatively as semi-permeable organic membranes. The development of new metaphors can be encouraged through practice and research.

Gifted education, for example, has precipitated expansion of the metaphor of diversity used to describe the special populations served by Advisory Committees in the Vancouver School Board from a focus on deficits and remediation to a focus on talents, their development and contribution to creating better educational programs and services for all students. For the past year Advisory Committees within the school district have engaged in a conversation focussing on understanding the strengths inherent in special student populations. This conversation has stimulated collaboration across areas that have typically remained isolated. The diversity conversation has been focused on identifying, articulating, and linking strengths of diverse students and engaging understandings developed through the wide range of talents, abilities, and assets to explore alternative organizational frameworks for education. The special populations served by Advisory Committees include: Aboriginal Education, English as a Second Language, Gifted Education, Inner City Education, Modern Languages, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism and Special Education. As a result of the discussions using diverse lenses focused on student needs, a pattern of complementary values and strengths has emerged from which a map for a future culture that better supports diversity is being developed. These ideas moved into conversations with school district and university educators, parents and community representatives, and young people from different special populations. Initiatives supporting diversity include diversity schools and a VSB/UBC partnership focused on a multiculturalism teacher education cohort. Policies that typically isolated special populations are being
reinterpreted to encourage collaboration and development of alternative perspectives on patterns of practices to support the development of all youth. A process of learning is infusing policies that typically have functioned as static categories of service. As a result competition for limited resources is being slowly transformed into cooperation and sharing; isolation is being transformed by strategic decisions to work together on issues and program development. One outcome of this collaboration was a symposium entitled, "Celebrating Diversity - Igniting Potential" including a think tank, a focus on practice, and a parent/child/youth day, October 24-26 2002. (See Appendix G.) These events exemplified a focus on the development of conversation where diverse populations explore their mutual strengths and assets and consider alternative contexts within which abilities, talents, interests, and needs of youth can be creatively addressed and developed.

With the support of the institutional partners, the perspectives of students and parents including program graduates, and through practices developed within the Transition Program, policies within government and institutions need to be reinterpreted to take into account how gifted students are best served by schools and education systems. For example, the Senate Committee on Admissions accepted the proposal to broaden university entrance policies for Transition Program students based on their successfully completion of the two year program and meeting faculty entrance requirements. Reinterpretation of policy regulation while supporting the intent of the policy provides necessary flexibility to address the population of academically highly gifted adolescents. This process represents a positive step forward in the debate between excellence and equity, suggesting that policy can recognize potential as well as demonstrated achievement.

Creative approaches to policy making, policy interpretation, learning and change are critical to future development in education generally and gifted education as one example of special student populations. Policies need to provide legitimacy and incentive funding for the education of special populations as well as encourage alternative program development that will address the changing profiles of society and support development of talents and abilities of all diverse youth. Coherence of policies across institutions can result in reduced costs and community support. Changes in policy and policy making can have significant implications for the education that will be available for future students.

Emergent Understandings, Issues, and Directions

From this study it has become clear that program success can be attributed to a number of key developments. First, the program was initiated to address an authentic student need. It was not a prefabricated program looking for implementation. Second the scope of the concern was broadened to involve institutional partnerships that enhanced the knowledge and experience base for program planning but also shared ownership and resources for program implementation. A significant aspect of this partnership has been the four university professors who have led seminars and supported students within the disciplines of English, History, Mathematics and Physics. A third variable that proved critical to the program's identity was expert knowledge in the area of gifted education. This knowledge was provided through the UBC liaison coordinator, the Faculty of Education's gifted education faculty, the district gifted education teacher, the parents from the Gifted Children's Association of BC, the District Gifted Education Advisory
Committee, and the Transition Program. A fourth significant development that influenced the Transition Program was the articulation of the conceptual framework. This document clarified the parameters of the work and the relationships within the program. The fifth major force for change and program success was the relocation to the UBC campus and access to UBC facilities and resources exemplified through the students' individual library cards. Lastly, the most recent documents of significance are the Program Review Report and the Proposal for the UBC Senate Committee on Admissions. These items have supported the potential for profound reorganization within the program. It is important to note that the program would not exist had it not been for the commitment to gifted students and program improvement maintained by Vancouver School District's Director of Student Services, Steering Committee members, Associate Superintendent of Learning Services, program students and their parents, and the support of Senior Management, the Vancouver School Board and school administration and program staff.

While the program was able to achieve success based on these variables, a number of understandings and areas of need have emerged during the process of program development. These items are opportunities to enhance program development through research, program practices or both.

The developmental approach to giftedness has become significant to the understanding of program delivery. It is important to further this understanding with staff, administration and gifted education specialists from the university including the university liaison professor. Staff development in the area of gifted education is of critical importance to the goal of staff collaboration. Staff development extends beyond the program to preservice teachers and other secondary staff members. The change in metaphor from abilities to development presents an attractive conceptual tool for engaging secondary teachers and administrators and alternate secondary program staff in an examination of practices that identify and support gifted learners.

A second issue is the development of the intellectual peer group. The experiences within the Transition Program have suggested that there is much more occurring within the group of similarly able peers in the program and continuing to create a 'grad peer' culture than has been understood to date. For example, it has been suggested that the peer group in the Transition Program can be described as a "social context" in which exists a qualitative change of setting that "elevates the experience of the participants beyond that of a conventional educational milieu" (Coleman, 2001, p. 174). It is within this social context that student learning is magnified. Indicators of this social context include changes in the students' sense of who they are, what they might be capable of doing, their ability to associate with strangers and be successful, being liked by others whom they see as significant, feeling free to express themselves and still be accepted, finding peers and adults who get as excited as they do about abstract and ethical topics, and being a 'minority of one' and still surviving. Comments from Transition Program students and their parents in this study emphasized these as points as they reflected on the ways in which the program had affected them. Further understanding of this phenomenon can generate different approaches to learning in many diverse settings and with many different groups.

It is also important to observe the intellectual peer group within a university campus environment where students can recognize each other as pre-university students, and to examine its influence on teacher decision-making with respect to gifted learners' educational needs. Students who have attended university early have been asked about their interactions and classroom
experiences with older students. The reaction of most of the early entrants has been that 'at university, no one questions age'. This experience of acceptance of their individuality and respect for their abilities is reported by students as an important aspect of their education that was often lacking in their elementary and secondary schools.

A related issue based on Transition Program observations is the way that gifted learners developed a positive sense of themselves through their relationships with others. As part of their social-emotional development, gifted students learned to balance their exploration of exceptional and lesser strengths in areas of talent and interest. Sowa and May (1995) suggest that, through their experiences with their environment, gifted children and adolescents may come to rely on their analytical and rational skills when making judgments about actions to solve social problems or relieve stress. An over-reliance on this cognitive appraisal may generate actions that do not help them fit into the environment in appropriate ways. Alternatively, a reliance on compliance and behaving in accordance to the expectations of others may result in the individual being at risk for emotional health. Participation in an intellectual peer group supports the development of the self-concept of the gifted student by providing comparison with similar peers as well as a valuing of personal identity. The significance of the peer group in the Transition Program may be understood in terms of its contributions to the social-emotional development of participating students who find, sometimes for the first time, a place where, as some students have expressed it, 'it is okay to be who I am' (TP Student, 2000).

A third issue is the development of programs and services for academically gifted students in regular secondary schools. Various Transition Program applicants as well as enrolled students and their parents have expressed the need for more alternatives for academically gifted students in regular secondary schools. These needs include advanced placement by course and by grade, faster-paced learning, compacted and conceptually challenging curriculum, opportunities to work as part of an intellectual peer group and instructional approaches that complement the learning styles of these students.

The Transition Program's focus on the needs of academically gifted adolescents as well as understandings and approaches that support the development of the potential of these students, has had a lighthouse effect in terms of the practices and perspectives of other educators. While initially the information about effective approaches to this student population were transmitted primarily through parents, in recent years visitors to the program have been educators from various parts of the Lower Mainland as well as the Interior of British Columbia and from as far away as Toronto representing the Ontario Ministry of Education. The Transition Program models a range of approaches which can be used by other secondary schools to address the needs of their academically gifted students. Changes in practice include attitudes toward students and opportunities related to accelerated placement for students. In numerous cases, students have been accepted into the Transition Program and their profile of abilities and the Transition Program design have been shared with the secondary school in which they have been enrolled or accepted. As a consequence of this information, the secondary school has created an alternative path to support academic acceleration for the student within that school. The outstanding achievements of students in the Transition Program who might otherwise not have achieved such success have prompted many schools to revisit the notion that program development for gifted students is important. Examples include secondary schools in the Lower Mainland. Both school administrators and senior subject teachers have recommended highly gifted adolescents who were at risk for dropping out of school and were socially and emotionally fragile to the
Transition Program. They have reported significant development of personal and academic confidence evident in these students after their enrollment and participation in the Transition Program.

The Transition Program has contributed to professional knowledge and best practice through articulation of a sound program model based on program integrity. The Conceptual Framework document has been well received by other educators interested in developing an early entrance to university program in other settings. The program experience has underscored the usefulness of an implementation plan for innovative programs in a school setting. One of the original program administrators recommended that the conceptual foundations of the program be articulated before the program was implemented and that staff needed to be introduced and prepared for the innovation and involved with the refinement of the proposed plan. The collaborative process promotes shared ownership and provides staff with the understandings that will guide the development of the program's implementation and the development of effective practices to address the needs of the enrolled students. Other key elements include the development of a philosophical alignment among staff, administration, students, parents, and other program planners and institutional partners with respect to the nature and needs of the gifted student who is choosing to enroll in an early entrance to university program. When staff share a common understanding of student needs and are committed to support the program goal, they can approach the tasks of differentiating curriculum and instruction more readily and find collaboration across disciplines more effective. The philosophical alignment and commitment to student needs enhances on going program development that in turn benefits program planning, staff development, and program management and administration.

Further knowledge generated by the uniqueness and the innovative nature of the program needs to be examined through continuing research, monitoring and reporting, and a system for communicating information and knowledge to school districts, students and parents, institutional partners, and the larger community. Time needs to be provided for staff including support and district staff to develop and articulate knowledge and skills related to the teaching and planning for and with this student population. For example, additional professional development days are important to familiarize staff with student profiles so that program planning retains a focus on student needs. Time is also needed to clarify understandings with respect to asynchrony in development and the management of intensity and sensitivity. These conversations are important to the alignment of the teacher role to student learning needs. Support for program development and improvement is required so that the many excellent ideas generated by participants including staff, students, and parents as well as interested others can be examined and actualized to enhance the program's effectiveness.

A fourth consideration is the better identification and support of individual needs of academically gifted students. Identified special needs of the students who are gifted include some aspects of learning disability or needs related to English as a Second Language, emotional fragility, and individual profiles that have uneven combinations of greater and lesser strengths. This latter group of students can be vulnerable to high frustration and need support for the development of coping skills designed to access their strengths to support areas of relative weakness. In order to respond to the individuals who have these exceptional talents in different areas but also significant needs in other areas, individuals need to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. This is particularly important for highly gifted students who may have previously learned how to hide their areas of need by avoiding challenging work and relying on areas of strength or...
peers. These students often are reluctant to have their needs identified for emotional reasons and are choosing less challenging options rather than accessing the developmental help and support they need. Different approaches and strategies need to be articulated as part of the student's educational plan and more flexibility within the secondary program structure needs to be available to facilitate appropriate placement, program opportunities and support for these students. Understanding these unique needs and appropriate strategies needs to be provided through a combination of research and practice. For example classroom teachers need to be able to access resource teachers who specialize in these areas of development, such as Vancouver's District Resource Teacher for Gifted Learning Disabled and Gifted Emotionally Fragile.

Areas of special need that have been identified include gifted girls. The girls who apply to Early Entrance to University programs are often uneasy with their giftedness and need additional support within their environment in order to access their potential abilities. Kerr (1994) suggests gifted young women typically develop an advanced social intelligence that makes it more difficult for them to leave friends and female peers with whom they have built interdependence and enroll in a program to advance their personal educational goals. Given the importance of gender balance within a program and the concern for gifted girls who may not recognize the opportunities to develop their potential or see them as legitimate and accessible, it is important to build a base of understanding and infrastructure which supports identification, appropriate environments and the authentic relationships in which the gifted girls can find place, validation, support and the advanced level of challenges they need in order to develop the level of excellence of which they are capable.

Another area of knowledge that is significant to program delivery and young people's development within the program is the high intensity and sensitivity that characterizes the lived experiences of these students. Dabrowsky's perspective on the emotional development of gifted individuals described through his model of 'Positive Disintegration' is an example of an explanatory theory that is very helpful for these students (Nelson, 1989; Piechowski, 1991). The model uses the concept of "over-excitabilities" to describe areas of intensity experienced by gifted students. Gifted students can readily identify with the emotional, imaginational and intellectual over-excitabilities. The model also presents students with a framework that offers insight into development of maturity, confidence and acceptance of their giftedness. The opportunity for the students to participate in action research focused on enhancing understandings in this area is one way to develop further knowledge for themselves as well as the larger community.

A fifth issue is parent education and support with respect to the developmental challenges of giftedness. Parents of academically gifted students are often a group of adults who look for opportunities to engage with gifted education literature. Exploring giftedness through the adult years with parents could prove helpful to the dynamics within a family whose members are also vicariously experiencing the Transition Program. A surprising number of parents who have met through their children's enrollment in the Transition Program are maintaining close friendships despite the fact that their children have continued on into university and graduate school. These parents are often highly anxious about the choice to enroll in an early entrance to university program. They need information about giftedness to be better able to support the program experience but also to support the development of students through various kinds and degrees of struggle. As parents of gifted students they may not have had access to a parent community where giftedness is acknowledged and supported. The skills of collaboration and accessing the
education system are additional topics for a parent education program. Building parent support systems provides support for students, staff, the program, and other parents.

A sixth area for development is an alumni association for program graduates. The development of the culture of program graduates has been supported on a very limited basis by the partnership institutions. There is need for the appropriate program space to allow these students to draw sustenance from the perspectives of their peers while providing support for young students. They require advisement and opportunities to extend their own development and explore interests. In addition to a web site where students can keep track of each other it is important to provide longitudinal and short-term follow-up on these students who have been formally identified as gifted and as graduates of the Transition Program are pursuing university studies. The valuable information that exists within the program needs to be examined and shared through research and advances in practice.

Lastly is the area of institutional partnerships. The development of opportunities for students, staff, university faculty, parents, and the community within the construction of partnerships is only beginning to be developed. Understanding this process and enhancing its availability so that the seamless infrastructure of the ‘communiversity’ can begin to be realized is an important challenge worthy of extensive exploration. A foundation for future collaboration may be the blend of research and practice that can support evolution of programs and services for students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations follow from the understandings developed through the study and especially the voices of the participating students, staff, and parents. These recommendations recognize the support for this unique and innovative gifted education program provided by the Ministry of Education, Special Education Branch, by the President's Office of the University of British Columbia, and the faculties and professors supporting the program, and by the Superintendent, the Associate Superintendent of Learning Services, and the administrators, members of Senior Management, and the exceptional teaching staff that has been associated with this program and responsible for its ultimate development.

1. Program leadership and administrative support.
   • Full-time Program Coordinator
   • Staff provided with gifted education professional knowledge
   • On-site academic advisement and personal counseling
   • Collaboration with VSB district gifted education coordinator, UBC gifted education teacher education and UBC Faculty liaison and instructional staff

The program coordinator role is critical to operation and development of the program. The role requires leadership with respect to the program goal and direction based on a commitment to address student needs and promote practices that enable all students to be successful whether within the program or elsewhere. Promoting talent development for staff as well as students and modeling developmental approaches to communication and problem solving with all stakeholders is critical to the continuing development of the
program. Organizing two-year plans for students in consultation with district staff and psychologists during the screening process for new candidates is a pivotal contribution to program and staff development. Engaging all partners in a collaborative model for program support and development is a necessary aspect of the role for the next stage of the program’s evolution. Sensitive issues related to students, staff, and parents require leadership to be available on a full time basis.

Program staff while learning on the job also require opportunities to reflect on practice, to develop understandings through professional knowledge sources, and support for the integrated planning and collaboration required for the operation and development of the program. Opportunities to access professional knowledge in gifted education through the university as well as engage in action research associated with the program are recommended.

Students require on-site support for academic advisement, social-emotional development, and special issues related to giftedness, career planning, adolescent development, and relationships. Both one-on-one advisement and small group support sessions are recommended. Scheduled learning opportunities for all students should be provided to promote understanding of giftedness and development of self, service to others and community roles. Learning should incorporate individual interests through mentorships, internships, and work experience options and build knowledge about university infrastructure and how systems work.

The program’s collaborative model of leadership, coordination and creative development requires continued support. The collaborative model opens opportunities with respect to both research and liaison with UBC Teacher Education as well as staff and students across Faculties. Linkages to current and developing gifted education programs will encourage innovative program development in the Lower Mainland and the province.

2. Program Organization needs flexibility.
   - Liberal Arts balance
   - Student Choice
   - Exemplary space, resources and equipment
   - Access to computer technology and computer science courses and faculty
   - Development of policies to create seamless infrastructure between institutions
   - Communication system including website

A balanced liberal arts program of Humanities and Mathematics/Science core courses need to be complemented by student chosen electives related to areas of interests, strengths, and potential career paths.

Exemplary space, resources and equipment together with access to university labs and special learning opportunities available through UBC need to be developed.

Students require access to faculty, graduate students and courses as well as opportunities to visit and work with mentors in the fields of information technology and the fine and performing arts.
Proposals such as the one related to modifications to university entrance policies need to be developed to provide support for graduates of the Transition Program. These include requirements for high school graduation and support and recognition for students applying to graduate school in other universities in North America and abroad.

Communication of program information requires development of various devices including a web-site, newsletter, and special events in order to disseminate information to secondary schools in the province and in Canada. Program links to other universities in Canada and the United States and other Early Entrance to University Programs need to be established.

3. Curriculum and Instruction need to respond to nature and needs of gifted learners.
   - Integration of interdisciplinary curriculum
   - Preparation for university focus
   - IEP’s as program planning tools and progress monitoring devices
   - Prior knowledge, learning outcomes and gap-based instruction

The integration of curriculum across disciplines needs to be articulated with academic learning skills and strategies linked to advanced learning opportunities in diverse settings including the university, business, industry, and the broader community.

4. Institutional Partnerships
   - Seamless infrastructure
   - Teacher education training in gifted education
   - Five Year Plan for collaborative programs and services

Approaches to enhance opportunities for students and extend the partnerships of the organizations and community require establishment of a planning group.

5. Research
   - Action research
   - Longitudinal research on program graduates
   - Short term monitoring and follow-up

On going monitoring of student career paths and longitudinal research as well as follow-up research need to be undertaken within the university.

An expanded research plan for longitudinal and other research projects involving UBC faculty and graduate students needs to be established within the Transition Program. Transition Program students and staff need opportunities to be engaged in research projects related to areas of talent and interest. Research projects need to be recognized for university and/or graduation credit. Publication of research leading to development of a professional publication and conference events to promote the contributions of research and practice to improving programs and services for this unique student
population need to be organized. Collaborative research expanding gifted education to other special populations such as Aboriginal Education, Multi-lingual and Multi-cultural education, and Inner City Education need to be developed through the university and the school district.


Support for graduates of the program needs to be organized between the Transition Program and the university. Students require academic advisement, social-emotional support, study space, and mentorships. Students should be encouraged to provide tutoring through assistantships within the Transition Program. Development of scholarships and support services for these students needs to be undertaken by the university in collaboration with the Transition Program.

7. Program Extensions

A residential summer program for academically gifted students on the UBC campus needs to provide support for potential candidates for Transition Programs and to serve as one of the Transition Program's outreach services. A Talent Search Center and a Center for Teaching Excellence at UBC in partnership with the Vancouver School Board can further support identification and program development designed to address the needs of gifted students. One example is a mentorship program involving UBC faculty and graduate students as well as individuals from industry, business, and the community at large.

8. Plan for Program Development and Evaluation

Plans for development and review are needed to help provide perspective on how the program is addressing its goal as well as student needs. This information will assist current program improvement and provide useful information where replication of this initiative is under consideration.

9. Knowledge Generation and Sharing

Through liaison with Vancouver District Alternative Secondary Programs, the Transition Program needs to share research on the needs of gifted adolescents and promote mentorship of secondary teachers in order to develop their knowledge and skills with respect to gifted education and academically highly gifted students. Establishment of a systemic distribution of information about the program throughout the university, school districts, and the community at large through documents, website, electronic media, community events, partnerships with other programs, innovative projects, Emeriti Professors, Alumni parents, and program graduates needs to be organized. Support for program replication needs to be articulated to other universities and school districts.
Concluding Thoughts of Practitioner as Researcher

The experience of practitioner as researcher has been a pivotal part of this study between 1997 and 2003. The process of examining questions arising from practice and using research to inform and sensitize perspectives that have ultimately enhanced responses and advanced understandings has been a rewarding aspect of the researcher practitioner journey. Reflection on action and in action viewed through various theoretical lenses has heightened appreciation and admiration for the complexity of the leadership role in education and the challenges inherent in the 'performance art' of educational innovation.

An original concern about undertaking this study was researcher bias. It is hoped that acknowledgement of this bias together with research methods involving multiple perspectives of program stakeholders have served to address the concern and allowed the study to contribute useful understandings regarding the Transition Program’s development. It is hoped that future research focused on this unique program and the exceptional students who choose this alternative educational experience will expand this beginning work and advance knowledge of the needs of gifted learners and how these needs can be supported and appropriately addressed. The goal is to shed light on how educationally innovative program opportunities designed for optimal talent development of all our youth can allow all students including those who are gifted to thrive.

Out of respect for the population of academically developmentally advanced young people and recognition of these individuals as valued members of the elementary, secondary, and university cultures arose support for development of appropriate educational programs and services and the Transition Program in particular. These students have taught us a great deal about how accommodations that support giftedness can be built into the organizational structures of educational institutions. From our experiences with gifted students, we have seen how institutions through their leaders, teachers, and policies can learn how to make education services more available, systems more transparent, and bureaucracies more open and flexible for all. Ultimately the conversations among the institutions, organizations, and groups that make up the fabric of society can benefit from the gifted education lens as they look toward creating a preferred future for all members. Herein lies the social meaning of the Transition Program. With each participating student who is encouraged to fulfill his or her potential, and supported to transform his or her talents into socially valuable services and creative productions, the Transition Program is offering society an alternative perspective on how education systems can nurture society's greatest natural resource, its young people. If our goal is to promote optimal developmental outcomes for all children, then we are well advised to heed the advice of both elders and history who encourage us to become a learning society dedicated to identifying and supporting the development of the rich diversity of talents and abilities of all youth. If we attend to their needs, the students will lead us to optimal education in our schools.

"Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."
Leonard Cohen, "Anthem to the Future"
References


Gallagher, J.J. (2001). The Association for the Gifted Board Meeting, Kansas City, MO.


Herman, S. (1999). Report on Israel's gifted education policies and programs. Presentation to Gifted Education Advisory Committee, Vancouver School Board. (Based on visits to programs and interviews with educators in Israel.)


Maker, C.J. (1982b). Teaching models in education of the gifted. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.


### Appendix A: List of Transition Program Study Abbreviation and Source Documents

1. **Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| DAC:         | District Advisory Committee for Gifted Education  
              A representational committee reporting to Student Services Advisory Committee (1987-96) and to Advisory Council (1997-2003) |
| FTE:         | Full Time Equivalent = full time teaching position designation of 1.0 FTE |
| GCA:         | Gifted Childrens' Association of British Columbia  
              A parent organization initiated in the Lower Mainland and now a provincial organization with chapters in many school districts. |
| IEP:         | Individual Education Plans  
              Planning documents for gifted students |
| LEC:         | Learning Enrichment Centers  
              Pull-in programs offered in some elementary schools in the 1970's & 80's. |
| MACC:        | Multi-Age Cluster Classes  
              Special district classes for identified highly gifted elementary students. |
| PAC:         | Parent Association Councils  
              Membership composed of parents of a school. |
| PMPY:        | Program for Mathematically Precocious Youth  
              The initial program at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore supporting early entrance to university for highly gifted students. |
| SMT:         | Senior Management Team  
              The Vancouver School Board's senior district administrative staff. |
| TP PD:       | Transition Program Staff Professional Development  
              Records and notes from full day and half day teacher professional development sessions. |
| TPMC:        | Transition Program Management Committee  
              Members: Program Coordinator, Secondary School Administrator,  
              Associate Superintendent of Learning Services, District Gifted Education Teacher, UBC Coordinator |
| TPPA:        | Transition Program Parents' Association  
              Membership composed of parents of enrolled students. |
| TPPSG:       | Transition Program Parents' Support Group  
              Name for the informal gathering of Transition Program parents in 1994. |
TPSC: Transition Program Steering Committee
The policy body supporting the Transition Program composed of representatives from the three institutional partners: Vancouver School Board, University of British Columbia, and BD Ministry of Education.

VSB: Vancouver School Board

2. Source Documents and Files, Vancouver School District

- Correspondence files for Transition Program and Gifted Education (Vancouver)
- Gifted Education files for minutes of District Advisory Committee meetings, notes, and policy documents
- Reports for Gifted Education
  - Gifted Education Position Paper, 1987
  - Report to the Director of Student Services, 1988
  - Report to the Vancouver School Board, 1992
  - Colloquium on the Highly Gifted, 1995

- Vancouver School Board Meeting records for minutes from public Board & respective committee meetings
- Transition Program files, records and notes located at District Learning Services courtesy of the Director of Student Services & the Associate Superintendent of Learning Services
- Transition Program Parents’ Association minutes, reports courtesy of the parents and Transition Program files
- Transition Program Staff meeting minutes and notes
- Vancouver School Board Meeting records for minutes from public Board & respective committee meetings
Appendix B: Topics for Transition Program Guidance - E Block

ELEMENTS OF A COURSE FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS PREPARING FOR EARLY ENTRANCE TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The following topics were offered in the guidance block known as “Block E” for the students in the Transition Program at University Hill Secondary School (1993-95) by D. Danylchuk. The purpose of this block was to support social-emotional development as well as encourage explicit knowledge and personal awareness of life-long learning skills, attitudes, and understandings as they relate to self, others, and society.

1. Being “system-smart”: an introduction to system theory
2. Progoff’s Intensive Journal Writing Workshop
3. Critical and creative thinking skills including metacognition strategies
4. Differentiating levels and kinds of questions and problems
5. Organizational strategies and skills
6. Discipline and attending/focusing
7. Brain research and the mind as a tool: intelligence, hemisphericity
8. Time management and organizing strategies e.g. ‘time as money’
9. The university as an organic entity: structures, systems, needs, goals, operation
10. The university learning tools - library
11. Group dynamics, communication and relationship skills
12. Myers-Briggs Type Inventory: understanding personal preferences
13. Creative problem solving and future problem solving: decision-making models
14. Change theory e.g. transformational theory (George Land)
15. Future studies and planning: timelines, preferred futures, and action plans
16. Etymology and vocabulary as concept building
17. Metaphor and Imagery and Analogies: Tools that enhancing thinking and problem solving
18. Eminence and its roots: stewardship and humility
19. Career exploration through mentorship
20. Identifying and pursuing “passions” in areas of work and study
21. Logical fallacies, conceptual frameworks, paradigms and patterns: interconnedness and interdependence through interdisciplinary integrated studies
22. Research skills: data accessing, analyzing, and presenting
23. Field trips, camp experiences, and tours: Seattle Transition School, student exchanges, orientation camp
24. Continuums of Great Ideas
25. Standards of excellence and intellectual integrity
26. Producing required work: ‘how to’s for writing essays, making presentations, writing exams, asking for help, persevering
27. Behaviors of intelligent persons (Costa)
Appendix C: Space Needs for Transition Program

The Vancouver School Board - University of British Columbia
Transition Program

Supporting Early Entrance to University for Academically Gifted Adolescents
A Ministry of Education Provincial Resource Program

July, 2000

Transition Program Space Requirements for 2000-2001

"Commencing in September, 1998, the program was operating in the
two classrooms and a lounge with office space provided on the second
floor of the Auditorium Annex on the West Mall of the UBC campus."
Transition Program Study, 2000

Current Program Space: 2 classrooms
1 public lounge with washrooms plus office space

The following space is required to support the program's refinement of its delivery of curriculum
and courses as follows:
- core courses and elective options,
- university course visits, audits, and enrollments,
- independent study options,
- student study space
- counseling space
- teacher preparation space with storage capabilities
- space for the Transition Program graduates enrolled at UBC
to develop a grad peer culture to support current students.

Additional Space Requested:
1 classroom for student electives and independent study options
1 classroom for student study area
1 classroom for computer work for students
1 classroom for teacher preparation area and storage area
1 office space for counseling and academic advisement
1 classroom for Transition Program Graduates enrolled at UBC
2. Please describe the nature of the student for whom the Transition Program is intended. What educational needs did you anticipate the Transition Program would address for your child?

3. How did you anticipate the Transition Program would address these educational needs?

4. From your experience, what needs did the Transition Program address effectively?

5. From your experience, what needs did the Transition Program not address effectively?
6. How might the Transition Program be improved to address more effectively the above needs?

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7. Please describe what constitutes success for the participants in the Transition Program from your perspective?

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8. Have your expectations for success changed during the course of your involvement in the program? If so, please explain how and why they have changed.
09. Please rate the following program elements in terms of their contribution to the achievement of success for participants by using numbers 1 through 5. Indicate priority rating as follows:

1 = not at all helpful; 2 = a little helpful; 3 = fairly helpful; 4 = very helpful; 5 = critical to student success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Elements</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Comments/Suggestions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory information provided</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student application/screening</td>
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<td>Student ability assessment procedures</td>
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<td>Student orientation week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program conceptual framework</td>
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<td>Curriculum content</td>
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<td>Curriculum organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction I.e. compacting, pacing</td>
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<td>Program response to student needs</td>
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<td>Preparation for high school graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for university entrance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social-emotional support for students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program planning with students (IEP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program communication with parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic advisement/career exploration</td>
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<td>UBC campus location</td>
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<td>Parent communication with parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in academic competitions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counseling for students and parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions with UBC liaison professors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of UBC campus facilities I.e. library</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum-related resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student study, time management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student organization &amp; skill development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreation, social &amp; physical activities</td>
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<td>Amount of homework</td>
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<td>Summer program support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual peer group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
10. Please add any comments you wish to make about the program and/or anecdotes or examples from your experience which illustrate your perception of program/student success.
11. Please offer your suggestions for program improvement. Thank you.
12. Please note that confidentiality will insure that individuals will not be identified throughout the study or the research reports. In addition it would be helpful to be able to verify data received by contacting the respondent directly. If you are willing to communicate further with this researcher about this study and your thoughts about your experiences as a parent of a Transition Program student, please provide your name, telephone number and e-mail address in the space provided. A web-site is expected to be developed before December and will allow all Transition Program parents to communicate with the researcher both through e-mail as well as through a research forum. This communication will be limited to parents and this researcher. The researcher will initiate communication using e-mail addresses that are provided. Thank you for your support of this research request and your thoughtful responses to the research questions.

Name: ________________________________

Telephone: __________________________  E-Mail: ________________________________

25. Comments, questions, requests addressed to the researcher:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

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____________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU.

208
02. Please describe the nature of the student for whom the Transition Program is intended. What educational needs of this student did you anticipate the Transition Program would address?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

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03. How did you anticipate the Transition Program would address these educational needs?

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04. From your experience, what needs did/does the Transition Program address effectively?

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08. Have your expectations for success changed during the course of your involvement in the program? If so, please explain how and why they have changed.
09. Please rate the following program elements in terms of their contribution to the achievement of success for participants by using numbers 1 through 5. Indicate priority rating as follows:

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10. Please add any comments you wish to make about the program and/or anecdotes or examples from your experience which illustrate your perception of program/student success.
11. Please offer your suggestions for program improvement.
Please enter Year and Month of entering each of the following:

Entry to Year One of Transition Program

Entry to Year Two of Transition Program

Entry to Grade 12 Regular Secondary School Program

Entry to another Grade placement in Regular Secondary School

Completion of Grade 12 graduation requirements

Entry to First Year University/College (list name of institution)

Entry to Second Year Post Secondary Institution

Entry to Third Year Post Secondary Institution

Entry to Fourth Year Post Secondary Institution

Entry to Fifth Year Post Secondary Institution

If you did not go directly to a post secondary institution after graduation from Transition Program or Completion of Grade 12, please describe what you chose to do and when you resumed or plan to resume your education.

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1. How did you first hear about the Transition Program?

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2. What educational needs did you anticipate the Transition Program would address for your child?

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3. How did you anticipate the Transition Program would address these educational needs?

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4. What other alternatives did you consider to address these educational needs?

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5. Please describe how the Transition Program addressed your initially identified educational needs?

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13. Please offer your suggestions for program improvement. Thank you.

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16. If you are attending university please answer the following questions.

[ ] Full time study  [ ] Part time study

If part time, please describe your program of study.

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17. If a full time university student, please list courses in which you are registered for 1999-2000:

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18. If possible, please list major areas of study and/or areas of interest and faculties or programs:

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19. Please list courses previously completed and grades achieved for each

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227
20. Please list Grade 12 final grades for the following core subjects:

Mathematics 12

Physics 12

English 12

History 12

Geography 12

Chemistry 12

Creative Writing 12

Calculus

List any additional courses including AP levels:


21. Career goal, if established or career path possibilities that you are exploring:


22. Please describe the kinds of help you would appreciate having as a university student having graduated from the Transition Program:
23. Please comment about these achievements and your perception of your personal success within the Transition Program and after completion of the Transition Program and any relationship you see between your Transition Program experience and your experiences at university. Your perspective is important and appreciated.
24. Please note that confidentiality will insure that individuals will not be identified throughout the study or the research reports. In addition it would be helpful to be able to verify data received by contacting the respondent directly. If you are willing to communicate further with this researcher about this study and your thoughts about your experiences as a Transition Program student, please provide your name, telephone number and e-mail address in the space provided. A web-site is expected to be developed before December and will allow all Transition Program students to communicate with the researcher and other students both through e-mail as well as through a research forum. This communication will be limited to students and this researcher. Communication will be initiated by the researcher using e-mail addresses provided. Thank you for your support of this research request and your thoughtful responses to the research questions.

Name: ________________________________

Telephone: ___________________________ E-Mail: ________________________________

25. Comments, questions, requests addressed to the researcher:

________________________________________________________________________

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THANK YOU.
01. Did you choose to teach in the Transition Program? Yes  No  If yes, please explain why you were interested in this position. If no, please indicate how you came to teach in the program.

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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer program support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual peer group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Please add any comments you wish to make about the program and/or anecdotes or examples from your experience which illustrate your perception of program/student success.
11. Please offer your suggestions for program improvement.
12. Please note that confidentiality will insure that individuals will not be identified throughout the study or the research reports. In addition it would be helpful to be able to verify data received by contacting the respondent directly. If you are willing to communicate further with this researcher about this study and your thoughts about your experiences as a teacher of a Transition Program student, please provide your name, telephone number and e-mail address in the space provided. A web-site is expected to be developed before December and will allow Transition Program staff to communicate with the researcher both through e-mail as well as through a research forum. Communication will be initiated by the researcher using e-mail addresses provided. Thank you for your support of this research request and your thoughtful responses to the research questions.

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Telephone: ________________________ E-Mail: ______________________________

25. Comments, questions, requests addressed to the researcher:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU.
01. Did you choose to teach in the Transition Program? Yes No If yes, please explain why you were interested in this position. If no, please indicate how you came to teach in the program.

02. Please describe the nature of the student for whom the Transition Program is intended. What educational needs did you anticipate the Transition Program would address?

03. How did you anticipate the Transition Program would address these educational needs?
04. From your experience, what needs did/does the Transition Program address effectively?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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05. From your experience, what needs did/does the Transition Program not address effectively?

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________________________________________________________________________

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06. How might the Transition Program be improved to address more effectively the above needs?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________
07. Please describe what constitutes success for the participants in the Transition Program from your perspective?

08. Have your expectations for success changed during the course of your involvement in the program? If so, please explain how and why they have changed.
09. Please rate the following program elements in terms of their contribution to the achievement of success for participants by using numbers 1 through 5. Indicate priority rating as follows:

1 = not at all helpful; 2 = a little helpful; 3 = fairly helpful; 4 = very helpful; 5 = critical to student success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Elements</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Comments/Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory information provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student application/screening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student ability assessment procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student orientation week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program conceptual framework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction I.e. compacting, pacing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program response to student needs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for high school graduation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation for university entrance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional support for students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program planning with students (IEP)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Program communication with parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advisement/career exploration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBC campus location</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent communication with parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in academic competitions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling for students and parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with UBC liaison professors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of UBC campus facilities I.e. library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum-related resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student study, time management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student organization &amp; skill development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation, social &amp; physical activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer program support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual peer group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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11. Please offer your suggestions for program improvement.
12. Please note that confidentiality will insure that individuals will not be identified throughout the study or the research reports. In addition it would be helpful to be able to verify data received by contacting the respondent directly. If you are willing to communicate further with this researcher about this study, please provide your name, telephone number and e-mail address in the space provided. A web-site is expected to be developed before December and it will support ion through e-mail as well as a research forum. The researcher will initiate communication using e-mail addresses that are provided. Thank you for your support of this research request and your thoughtful responses to the research questions.

Name: ________________________________

Telephone: ___________________________ E-Mail: ________________________________

25. Comments, questions, requests addressed to the researcher:

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU.
Appendix D: Transition Program Study Cover Letter

November 03, 1999

Dear Transition Program Student/Graduate/Parent/Staff or Steering Committee Member:

Re: An Implementation Study of the Transition Program

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in a research study focused on the Transition Program, a Provincial Resource Program designed to identify and support academically gifted adolescents who are committed to a goal of early entrance to university. This study is being undertaken in accordance with requirements for the completion of the doctoral degree in Educational Policy and Leadership sponsored by the Department of Educational Studies at The University of British Columbia.

Research on the Transition Program was initiated to examine development and implementation of this innovative program that is unique in British Columbia and Canada. The study will look at how students, their parents, program planners and staff perceive program success based on their particular experiences during the years of program implementation, 1993-1999. The study will be helpful to Transition Program decision-makers as well as secondary school gifted education program planners. Study results will be shared with the funding agency, The Ministry of Education, as well as the founding partners, the Vancouver School Board and The University of British Columbia. Results will also be shared with program staff, administration, students and parents. Your participation in this study is important and appreciated.

Enclosed please find a copy of a survey designed to ascertain your perspectives on your Transition Program experiences. In addition to the survey a number of students, parents, and staff will be invited to participate in interviews or focus groups to discuss some questions from the survey. Please note that the time required for completion of the survey is approximately 20 minutes and that individual and/or group interviews and/or focus groups are expected to require not less than 45 minutes and not more than 90 minutes. Please return the survey using the enclosed stamped and addressed envelope prior to December 10, 1999 or as soon as conveniently possible. When a completed survey is returned it will be assumed that consent to participate in the study has been given. Participating students are asked to sign a consent form permitting course/grade achievement data and information collected as part of the application/screening process to be used in this study for research purposes only. No individual results will be identifiable. Parents will be asked to sign this consent form for all students under the age of 18. In the case of interviews or focus groups, every participant will be asked to indicate consent by signing a consent form prior to the interview/focus group. Parents will be asked to sign consent forms for students under age 18. Prior to participation in an interview/focus group, students will be asked to give verbal assent. If you are unable to participate in the study please return the survey using the enclosed stamped and addressed envelope. All data collected for this study will be kept confidential by means of a coding system as well as by being placed under lock and key. Data will be used only for research purposes.
### Appendix E: Rating of Program Elements by Program Participants

#### Table 23.1 Summary from All Participant Groups: Parents, Students, Teachers, Principals, Steering Committee members, University Professors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Elements</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Ts</th>
<th>Ps</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>Up</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory information provided</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I&amp;II</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>Gs</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>I&amp;II</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student application/screening</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student ability assessment procedures</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student orientation week</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program conceptual framework</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum content</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum organization</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction i.e. compacting, pacing</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program response to student needs</td>
<td>L</td>
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<td>L</td>
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<td>Program planning with students (IEP)</td>
<td>L</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program communication with parents</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
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<td>Academic advisement/career exploration</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
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<td>UBC campus location</td>
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<td>L</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent communication with parents</td>
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<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
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<td>Participation in academic competitions</td>
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<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions with UBC liaison activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of homework</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Summer program support</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual peer group</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total (M)**: 106
**Total (L)**: 50

Code: M = Most helpful; L = Least helpful; Program Years: I, I & II, II only, Gs = Grads
Ts = Program Teachers; Ps = U-Hill Principals; SC = Steering Committee; Up = UBC Instructing Professors

249
Table 23.2 Rating of Program Elements: TP Parent Responses by Program Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Code: A = 1993-94; B = 1994-96; C = 1996-98; D = 1998-00</th>
<th>Only Year One</th>
<th>Both Yr I &amp; Yr II</th>
<th>Only Year Two</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Elements</td>
<td>A  B  C  D</td>
<td>A  B  C  D</td>
<td>A  B  C  D</td>
<td>M  L</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>3 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student application/screening</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>5 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student ability assessment procedures</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>7 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student orientation week</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L M M M</td>
<td>L M M M</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program conceptual framework</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>3 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum content</td>
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<td>L M M M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum organization</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M L M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction i.e. compacting, pacing</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>L M M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Program response to student needs</td>
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<td>L M M M</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>2 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for university entrance</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>3 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M M M M</td>
<td>L M M M M</td>
<td>M M M M M M</td>
<td>5 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program planning with students (IEP)</td>
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<td>L L M M</td>
<td>L M M M</td>
<td>1 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program communication with parents</td>
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<td>M M M M M M</td>
<td>M M M M 2 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic advisement/career exploration</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>M M M M M M</td>
<td>4 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBC campus location</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>L M M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in academic competitions</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L M M M</td>
<td>M M M M</td>
<td>2 1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>L M M M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactions with UBC liaison professors</td>
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<td>L M M M</td>
<td>4 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of UBC campus facilities i.e. library</td>
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<td>M M M M</td>
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<td>L M M M</td>
<td>3 1</td>
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<td>Student study, time mg't &amp; organization</td>
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<td>M M M M</td>
<td>L M M M</td>
<td>4 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation, social &amp; physical activities</td>
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<td>L M M M</td>
<td>L M M M</td>
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<td>8 0</td>
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<td>5 14 23</td>
<td>82 37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total (L)</td>
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<td>1 5 0</td>
<td>18 4 0</td>
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</table>

Ranking Code: M = Most Helpful; L = Least Helpful
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Elements</th>
<th>Only Year One</th>
<th>Both Yr I &amp; Yr II</th>
<th>Only Year Two</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A  B  C  D</td>
<td>A  B  C  D</td>
<td>A  B  C  D</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>L  L  M</td>
<td>L  L  M</td>
<td>4 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student application/screening</td>
<td>L  L  L  M</td>
<td>L  M  M</td>
<td>L  M  M</td>
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<td>Student ability assessment procedures</td>
<td>L  M  M  M</td>
<td>L  M  M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2 2</td>
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<td>Student orientation week</td>
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<td>M  L  M</td>
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<td>4 2</td>
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<td>Program conceptual framework</td>
<td>L  M  M  M</td>
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<td>M  M  M</td>
<td>L  M  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction i.e. compacting, pacing</td>
<td>L  M  M  M</td>
<td>L  M  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>7 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program response to student needs</td>
<td>L  M  M  L</td>
<td>L  M  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for high school graduation</td>
<td>M  M  L  M</td>
<td>M  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for university entrance</td>
<td>M  L  M  M</td>
<td>M  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-emotional support for students</td>
<td>M  L  M  M</td>
<td>M  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program planning with students (IEP)</td>
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<td>L  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program communication with parents</td>
<td>L  L  M  L</td>
<td>L  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advisement/career exploration</td>
<td>L  L  M  L</td>
<td>M  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UBC campus location</td>
<td>L  M  L  L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent communication with parents</td>
<td>L  L  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in academic competitions</td>
<td>M  L  L  L</td>
<td>M  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling for students and parents</td>
<td>M  L  M  L</td>
<td>M  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with UBC liaison professors</td>
<td>L  M  L  M</td>
<td>M  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of UBC campus facilities i.e. library</td>
<td>L  L  M  L</td>
<td>M  L  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum-related resources</td>
<td>M  L  L  L</td>
<td>L  M  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student study, time mng't &amp; organization</td>
<td>L  L  M  M</td>
<td>M  M  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation, social &amp; physical activities</td>
<td>L  M  M  L</td>
<td>M  M  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of homework</td>
<td>L  L  L  L</td>
<td>L  M  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer program support</td>
<td>L  L  L  L</td>
<td>L  M  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual peer group</td>
<td>M  M  M  M</td>
<td>M  M  M</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (M)</td>
<td>3 2 7</td>
<td>2 14 12</td>
<td>5 14 23</td>
<td>82 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (L)</td>
<td>0 9 0</td>
<td>1 5 0</td>
<td>18 4 0</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ranking Code: M = Most Helpful; •L = Least Helpful
Appendix F: Suggestions for Program Improvement from Transition Program Students

Table 19.0 Suggestions for Program Improvement from Transition Program Students

(Arranged by Year of Program Participation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93-95</td>
<td>Better communication across institutions to ease university entrance requirements. Personal guidance. Students undergoing dramatic changes (normal school to Transition to university) need a lot of support emotionally and spiritually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-95</td>
<td>Strict student selection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-95</td>
<td>Focus less on fulfilling the criteria for completion of specific courses and more on giving broad understanding of concepts needed for further education. Special adaptation of all curriculum instead of just using usual high school curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-95</td>
<td>Each student to choose one subject to emphasize. An extra &quot;enrichment block&quot; weekly for students to pursue chosen disciplines, possibly led by a university professor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-96</td>
<td>Greater variety in range of materials covered; more university preparation in Yr. II.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-96</td>
<td>Better monitoring of student pathways: closer contact with counselors, learning skills coordinators, and psychologists. I felt I was very much alone in my struggle for excellence during my time in the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-97</td>
<td>Move off UBC campus. Interactions with high school kids - the best part. Twelve-year-old kids will not find decent friends outside the program, no matter how mature they are. I would not have entered the program if it had been offered at UBC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95-96</td>
<td>More information for students about level of commitment required for success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-96</td>
<td>Flexibility an important part of the program to address individual student needs in very different ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96-97</td>
<td>More consultation between teachers in different subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97-98</td>
<td>Have a student input box.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97-98</td>
<td>Train teachers to teach and plan for individual students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-99</td>
<td>Set aside time for other activities i.e. visit Art Department. Inter-school activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-99</td>
<td>Attend more relevant university lectures &amp; events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-99</td>
<td>A three-year program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-0</td>
<td>More attention to Humanities; more field trips; shorter school day; and homework balance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-00</td>
<td>Improve collaboration between teachers, students, and parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-00</td>
<td>Improve access to labs (in some subjects) and to technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-00</td>
<td>More Physical Education periods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-00</td>
<td>Less homework which will lead to more sleep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98-00</td>
<td>Everybody's different. They can't change it just to suit me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Celebrating Diversity – Igniting Potential Graphic

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY • IGNITING POTENTIAL
Responding to the Diversity of our Youth and the Range of their Needs

FUTURE

HARMONY

UNDERSTANDINGS

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Values

Humanities

English as a Second Language

Modern Languages

Multiculturalism & Anti-Racism

Inner City

Kaleidoscope Of Learner Assets & Needs Lenses Of Advisory Committees

All Students

Sciences

Aboriginal Education

Gifted Education

Social and Emotional and Physical Learning Parents and Community

Historical and Philosophical Roots

Goal
To develop a framework and action plans to improve educational services for our youth using a range of lenses that recognize their diversity, their abilities, talents and needs.

Vancouver School Board, District Learning Services, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada 2002

253