

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

Which one is not true?

1

Students who currently enrolled in UTP will not be affected by the pause of the intake and the external review.

2

Experienced teachers were forced to leave just weeks or days before the end of the 2024/2025 school year. Staff were cut, and new teachers were hired only a week before the start of the 2025/2026 school year.

3

With only 20 students in a single grade, the unique structure for learning—mentally, academically, socially, and physically within a cohort of peers—has been damaged.

ADVICE TO MINISTER

IF ASKED ABOUT CONCERNS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS, PARENTS THAT THEY WERE NOT CONSULTED:

- **These changes will not affect students who are already enrolled in the program.**

IF ASKED ABOUT FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM:

- **The Ministry provides \$559,000 in annual funding for the program, which is hosted by VSB.** s. 13, s. 17

s. 13, s. 17

Background:

The University Transition Program (UTP) is a Ministry Provincial Resource Program (PRP) that was created in 1993 to provide an educational opportunity to gifted students to accelerate graduation and early entrance to UBC. The program is funded by the province and is hosted through the Vancouver School District (VSB), in partnership with the University of British Columbia (UBC). The province currently provides \$559,000 to VSB each year to run the program. s. 13, s. 17

s. 13, s. 17

s. 13, s. 17

UTP was designed as a two-year program, supported by 4.4 full-time teachers and counselor, serving 40 students in two grades.

During the two-year program, students meet requirements for the Dogwood and explore UBC faculties through a variety of senior secondary and university level coursework, competitions, field trips, camps and International Global Citizenship Tours. According to the UTP website, students typically achieve early university entrance and commence full time studies at UBC at age 14 or 15. The program supports approximately 40 students annually, between the ages 13 to 15, with a 4.4 FTE teaching staff.

In December of 2022, the Vancouver School District announced changes to the programs admissions process and oversight to bring the program into better alignment with other (PRP) and create more transparency in the application process. The changes include:

- Changing the intake of the program to align with application dates for other VSB special programs.
- Adding the ability for teachers and school districts across the province to refer their students to the program in addition to the direct applications from parents/students.
- Creating a committee review process for all applications.
- Appointing a new district administrator to oversee the Vancouver-based PRPs and other district level programs.

After VSB announced the changes several alumni and parents have raised concerns they were not consulted. s. 13

s. 13

June 3, 2024

Dear Transition Program for Gifted Students families,

I write to inform you about some recent changes to our teaching staff. Based on feedback from previous communications with TPGS families, we are sharing this information with parents only. We will leave it up to the families to disclose this information with your child as you see fit.

As of today, June 3, 2024, we are pleased to welcome Catherine Huynh to the Transition Program for Gifted Students (TPGS), replacing Dr. Shepelev, who has left her teaching position. Ms. Huynh will remain with us until the end of the school year on June 27, 2024.

Looking ahead to the next school year, the TPGS will offer the following courses to students to ensure they have the opportunity to complete the necessary credits to graduate.

- Chemistry 12
- Physics 12
- Pre-Calculus 12
- Calculus 12
- English First Peoples 12
- Literary Studies 12
- Active Living 12
- Career Life Connections 12
- Law 12
- 20th Century History 12

The teachers were forced to leave the program two weeks before the end of the school year, prior to the release of the final review results.

As you are aware, there will be 20 students in year 2 next year, requiring fewer teachers. Following the guidelines outlined in the teacher's collective agreement and based on staff seniority, Mr. Hooton has been informed that he will not have a teaching position in the TPGS program in the 2024-2025 school year. He will continue to teach in TPGS until the end of the school year, on June 27, 2024. He will also have the opportunity to post into a teaching assignment at a different school next school year.

It important to note no decisions have been made about TPGS until the third party review is complete. This change in staff assignment follows standard annual practices across the District.

We extend our best wishes to Dr. Shepelev and Mr. Hooton in their future endeavors. If you have further questions, please email info@vsb.bc.ca.

Regards,

Ankie Carswell

Ankie Carswell

District Principal, Provincial Resource Programs



UTP PAC <utppacexec@gmail.com>

Re: TPGS teaching staff for the 2024-2025 school year

5 messages

Ankie Carswell <acarswell@vsb.bc.ca>
To: UTP PAC <utppacexec@gmail.com>
Cc: info <info@vsb.bc.ca>

Tue, Jun 18, 2024 at 3:31 PM

Hello TPGS PAC,

Yes, I am responsible for the planning and recruiting of the teaching team for the TPGS. I am currently in the middle of the process and will have information to share when it is finalized.

The courses for next year will be:

20th Century History 12

Law 12

English First Peoples 12

Literary Studies 12

Pre-Calculus 12

Calculus 12

Chemistry 12

Physics 12

Career Life Connections 12

Active Living 12

I am in process of staffing and will have information to share when the process is complete. Preliminary staffing information can not be shared.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Carswell

Ankie Carswell

District Principal, Provincial Resource Programs

Vancouver School Board

[1580 West Broadway](#)

UTP PAC <utppacexec@gmail.com>
To: Ankie Carswell <acarswell@vsb.bc.ca>

Tue, Jun 18, 2024 at 9:43 PM

Dear Ankie,

Thank you for your reply.

Recently we have received feedback from many parents regarding the sudden changes in staff and courses. We are wondering if these decisions were made by the tripartite parties, similar to the pause in intake, or solely by the VSB.

On January 26, VSB, when the Ministry, and UBC announced a pause in admissions to the TPGS for the September 2024/2025 intake to facilitate an external review. The announcement assured us that students currently enrolled in the TPGS would not be affected, and no changes or decisions would be made before the completion of this review.

In VSB's January 30th letter, Associate Superintendent Alison Ogden stated: "We want to reassure current Transition Program for Gifted (TPGS) students and their families that the admissions pause will not affect their academic progression. Students who are in their second year will be able to complete their courses and graduate from the TPGS in June 2024 as planned. Students in their first year can continue to attend the program until June 2025. We guarantee all current students who wish to complete their studies at TPGS will have the opportunity to do so."


Considering that the external review is still in process, we are confused as to why the changes happened without any advance notification. This seems inconsistent with the promise we received earlier. Could you please provide more details about these changes? Thank you!

Best regards
UTP PAC

[Quoted text hidden]

2 attachments

 **20240130 Follow up_ TPGS admission pause.pdf**
90K

 **20240126_ltr_TPGS families.pdf**
191K

Alison Ogden <aogden@vsb.bc.ca>
To: UTP PAC <utppacexec@gmail.com>

Wed, Jun 19, 2024 at 5:03 PM

Hello. Current Transition Program for Gifted (TPGS) students' academic progression will not be impacted by the pause in admissions. Students who are currently in their first year will be able to complete their courses and graduate from the TPGS in June 2025. As you are aware, there will be 20 students in year 2 next year, requiring fewer teachers to cover the courses required for graduation.

It is important to note that no decisions have been made about TPGS until the third party review is complete.

Kindly,

Alison Ogden (she/her)
Associate Superintendent

Vancouver School District
1580 West Broadway, Vancouver BC V6J 5K8
e: aogden@vsb.bc.ca | p: 604-713-5097



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With deep gratitude and respect, I am honoured to be learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).

The replies from the VSB District Principal and Associate Superintendent about the staff change showed that they knew nothing about the unique nature of UTP.

UTP was designed as a two-year cohort of students and a team of teachers and psychologists who took on the roles of teacher, mentor, counselor, coordinator, and student supporter. This structure cannot be changed by simply adjusting the teacher-to-student ratio.

[Quoted text hidden]

UTP PAC <utppacexec@gmail.com>
To: Alison Ogden <aogden@vsb.bc.ca>, Ankie Carswell <acarswell@vsb.bc.ca>

Wed, Jun 19, 2024 at 7:02 PM

Dear Ms. Ogden,

Thank you for your reply! Can we confirm that, based on your explanation, the decision to cut teachers was made solely by the VSB and was decided when the 2024/2025 intake was paused?

Best regards
UTP PAC

[Quoted text hidden]

Alison Ogden <aogden@vsb.bc.ca>
To: UTP PAC <utppacexec@gmail.com>

Thu, Jun 20, 2024 at 2:09 PM

Hello. The Transition Program for Gifted Students is a Provincial Resource Program (PRP) which receives inter-ministerial funding directly from the Ministry of Education and Child Care to operate. Staffing is based on a student to teacher ratio of 10:1. The program has been staffed based on enrollment and in alignment with funding provided. Given that there will be fewer students at TPGS next year, there will be fewer teachers required to deliver the high school graduation program.

[Quoted text hidden]

The rollout plan showed that the VSB had already decided to change the structure of UTP teachers when they paused the intake on January 26. This is evident because they specifically notified the teachers' union and requested their onsite attendance.

Rollout plan

| Date | Activity | Responsibility | Status |
|------------------|--|--|--------|
| Jan 25 AM | Finalize Draft materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues mgmt plan KMs Letter to current students/families Letter to applicants Letter to stakeholders FAQs | Jiana – for VSB Scott/Meghan – for Ministry David – for UBC | Done |
| Jan 25 AM | Notify Premier's office | Mary | Done |
| Jan 25 PM | Notify Vancouver Secondary Teachers Union (so they can be in attendance on Jan 26) | Alison | Done |
| Jan 26 | Heads up to ministry internal staff | Scott/Meghan | Done |
| Jan 26 | Heads up to UBC leadership | David Shorthouse | Done |
| Jan 26 AM | Receive approval of materials | Jiana, Scott/Meghan, David | Done |
| Jan 26 @12:45 pm | Notify VSB trustees and stakeholders via email | Jiana Alison (District Parent Advisory Council, Vancouver Association of Secondary School Administrators) Helen (Trustees) | |
| Jan 26@1:00 pm | Notify TPGS staff in-person | Rosie and Ankie Vancouver Secondary Teacher's Association rep | |
| Jan 26@1:05 pm | Notify current students in person | Rosie and Ankie | |
| Jan 26@1:05pm | Notify students' families via email | Alison | |
| Jan 26 @1:10 pm | Notify applicants via email | Ankie/ OAA | |
| Jan. 26 @ 2pm | Heads up to UBC Faculty of Education admin related to program | Paula Sabti (UBC FoE) | |
| On going | Notify UBC/VSB/Ministry comms staff if media inquiry is received and align responses | VSB: communications@vsb.bc.ca Ministry media relations: [REDACTED] s. 15(1)(l) UBC: Matthew Ramsey | |

Last updated: January 26, 2024

Drafted by: Jiana Chow, Communications Manager