

# TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

## Which one is not true?

1

The VSB District supports a wide range of enriched & gifted learning opportunities designed for students within special education. The VSB is dedicated to providing education excellence for the students.

2

Compared to other school districts, the VSB District Learning Service's mismanagement is reducing learning options and harming our children.

3

Besides UTP, the honor programs, challenging programs, MACC, and mini schools have all been struggling in recent years due to VSB's mismanagement.

## How Vancouver School Board District Learning Service's Mismanagement Reduced Learning Options and Harmed Our Children

1. **2021 June**, VSB staff announced they're **cutting the Honor Program at Eric Hamber Secondary** for the upcoming year. High school applicants who chose Hamber because of the program were left to dry. This did NOT go through trustee voting. Parents and stakeholders protested, but were told that because the matter is "operational", schools can simply make the decision to cut. To make matters worse, the original decision was only to cut English Honor while keeping Science and Math (because more in demand), after the parent advocacy both Science and Math were cut as well.

Related media reports:

- [CBC - VSB cuts honours programs, says honours programs create inequities between students](#)
- [CityNews - VSB scrapping honours math, science programs](#)
- [Change.org - Save Hamber Science & Math Honours Programs!](#)
- [Reddit - discussion among teachers regarding this matter](#)
- [Business in Vancouver - Decision to cease honours programs will have economic consequences](#)

2. **2022 January**, VSB announced that they were **changing the Multi Age Cluster Class (MACC program)**, a special education program that takes grade 4-7 gifted students. The original MACC program had been running successfully for decades, had four classes in total (one French MACC class grade 5-7 at Kerrisdale Elementary, two English classes at Osler grade 4/5 and grade 6/7, and one English class at Tecumseh grade 5-7 with a total of 80 students). The "change", it turned out, was **eradicating the MACC program and replacing it with GEC (Gifted Enrichment Center)**, which is a 6-week enrichment course on various different topics that all kids (not just Special Need, gifted children) in the district can apply to attend.

- According to FOI request filed and information obtained, **for the 2022/23 school year there were 46 applications to the MACC program**. These were recommendations from school-based teams who would have evaluated the candidate's suitability and made the recommendation according to the program intake guidelines and based on their in-person experience and understanding of the student. **19 of these applications were denied, citing "candidates do not meet program acceptance criteria", without a single interview conducted between the panel that determines the admission and the declined candidates**. To the unknowing public, DLS declared that there was "no wait list" and simply "not enough interest in the program".

Related media reports:

- [EXCLUSIVE: The VSB Says They're Revisioning The MACC Program. Alumni And Parent Critics Say They're Destroying It.](#)
- [EXCLUSIVE: Inside The VSB's MACC Program Revisioning Being Called An "Erosion Of Public Trust"](#)
- [OPINION: The VSB's Revisioning Of The MACC Is, For Lack Of A Better Word, Disastrous.](#)
- [Change.org - Save MACC! Urge the VSB to Protect this Vital Special Education Program.](#)
- [Peer-reviewed research from VSB - reasons why MACC was revisioned](#)
  - [VSB's Best Practices for Gifted Programming - International Peer-reviewed research](#)
  - [VSB's 6-week recommended service model](#)
  - [VSB's Gifted education to be inclusive](#)
- [Email exchange between Griffin's Nest Newspaper and VSB](#)

**3. 2022 October**, VSB abruptly **notified parents at UTP (University Transition Program) that admission for the year 2023/24 will be stopped**. Initiated in 1993 by the VSB, in partnership with UBC and subsequently funded as a BC Provincial Resource Program by the BC Ministry of Education in 1995, UTP provides academic acceleration preparation (in 2 years), for students whose asynchronous educational and developmental needs exceed available services in regular classrooms. Parents protested and eventually escalated the matter to the province. VSB backed down and resumed admission.

Related media reports:

- [Vancouver Sun - Parents, alumni worried changes to VSB program will harm academic excellence](#)
- [Vancouver is awesome - changes to VSB's Accelerated Education Program upsets parents and alumni](#)

[2023 July 27, VSB celebrates UTP accomplishments: Vancouver students receive prestigious scholarships](#)

**4. 2023 April, The Ideal Mini School**—a nearly 50-year-old program that has long served students who might not fit in elsewhere—was informed that it needed to be relocated from its current standalone building to Sir Winston Churchill Secondary. Parents and alumni of Ideal Mini School argued that the school's unique environment could not be replicated in a larger setting and expressed frustration that the board was not listening to their concerns. Throughout this process, the VSB exhibited a significant lack of communication and transparency. The board refused to answer questions from parents and caregivers or explain the reasoning behind the decision. In protest of the potential relocation, Ideal Mini School students walked out of class and marched to the Vancouver School Board's office. Despite these protests, the Ideal Mini School was relocated in September 2023 as requested by VSB.— a nearly 50-year-old program that has long served students who might not fit in elsewhere — was informed that they need to be relocated from its current standalone building to Sir Winston Churchill

Secondary. Ideal Mini School parents and alumni argued the school can't be replicated in a larger learning environment and said they didn't feel the board was listening to their concerns. While the VSB has shown an astounding lack of communication and an astounding lack of transparency through this entire process. The board has refused to answer questions from parents and caregivers, and has refused to explain the reasoning behind this decision. Ideal Mini School students walked out of class and marched to the Vancouver School Board's office in protest of the potential relocation. Despite of the stakeholders protest, **2023 September, The Ideal Mini School was relocated as VSB requested.**

Related media reports:

- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/ideal-mini-school-vancouver-relocation-churchill-1.6813056>
- <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/ideal-mini-school-parents-upset-with-sudden-churchill-secondary-relocation-decision>
- <https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/local-news/devastated-disappointed-vancouver-students-protest-vs-b-save-ideal-mini-school-6883825>
- <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/vancouver-school-board-s-plan-to-relocate-unique-program-sparks-protest-1.6363762>
- <https://globalnews.ca/news/9655407/vancouver-school-board-ideal-mini-school-relocation-debate/>

**5. 2024 January 26**, without any prior notification to parents, **DLS staff went into UTP** classroom, directly announced to the 40 students (13-and-14-year-olds impressionable teens) that **admission for the year 24/25 will be stopped**. To many of these sensitive kids, this is like a death sentence to the program they loved and found support in, many were left grappling with shock, anxiety and a sense of betrayal. Parents, alumni and other stakeholders are protesting again and could be taking legal actions against VSB.

- [Admissions paused – no intake for 2024/2025 pending external review](#)

The rationale given for this halt was an independent review by the Ministry as well as “mental health concerns” which VSB claimed was confidential. However, it is crucial to highlight that mental health issues are prevalent across all schools, just as reviews by the Ministry are common practice, yet we have not seen any instances where the ministry has closed down entrance into a school due to either—especially a program designed to provide a vulnerable group of kids their only access to specialized educational resources vital for their development.

In addition, unlike what DLS seemed to portray, this review is long overdue and welcomed by the UTP community. The program had always been periodically reviewed while the last one was done in 2016, but never did the review process hinder the normal operation, let alone the admission process that's integral to the program's success.

DLS is undermining enrollment under the guise of the review, so that this Provincial Resource Program will fade on its own. **It's a tactic that's been successful in undermining MACC (to the point where it'll die on its own), and many other Special Education programs where there would otherwise have required stakeholder consultation and independent and**

**transparent case reviews.** DSL's tyrannical actions are slowly but systematically killing some of the most successful Special Ed programs that've been running for decades, reducing learning choices for our children!

Advocates' petition has gathered more than 1000 signatures: [save UTP petition](#)

66 current and graduated students have sent a signed letter to the Premier, Minister of Education and Vancouver School Board: [student-signed letter of appeal](#)

Related media reports:

- <https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/bc-gifted-student-program-paused>
- <https://www.ehnewspaper.ca/articles/university-transition-program-faces-uncertain-future-after-sudden-pause-in-admissions>
- <https://www.tricitynews.com/human-resources-education/bcs-gifted-students-program-paused-over-mental-health-concerns-8308793>  
<https://www.cbc.ca/amp/1.7123173>
- <https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/highlights/shining-beacon-of-hope-families-devastated-by-gifted-program-being-paused-8379589>
- <https://www.richmond-news.com/local-news/richmond-parents-demand-resumption-of-gifted-student-program-8380074>  
<https://academica.ca/top-ten/decision-to-pause-bc-gifted-students-program-receives-mixed-reactions/>
- [The Jas Johal Show: Parents call on saving gifted students program after being cancelled by School Board](#)

**6. 2024 February 7th, Lord Byng** Secondary School abruptly announced the **cancellation of the senior Byng Arts English** cohort courses for Grades 10, 11, and 12 and the **Byng Arts Social Studies cohort** course for Grade 10s, without prior consultation with parents, students and stakeholders. This unexpected announcement was incredibly shocking to many Byng Arts students, prompting a variety of responses — most of which were, unsurprisingly, negative. Not only will these course cancellations prevent Byng Arts students from expressing themselves creatively, they will also decrease the opportunities for Byng Arts students from different faculties to interact and collaborate with each other in an academic setting. Additionally, this will put an **abrupt end to almost 25 years of Byng Arts English and Social Studies courses, of which many educators have patiently dedicated their time and efforts to.**

Advocates' petition has gathered nearly 1500 signatures. <https://chnq.it/xQxhtphCK5>

**7. 2024 April**, due to obstacles created by DLS for **MACC** applicants and blocking the intake news from most school resource teachers, the Multi Age Cluster Class (MACC) program will not have new students joining for the 2024/2025 school year. As a result, **families from the Osler MACC are being asked to move to the Tecumseh MACC next school year**, marking the end of the **30-year-old program at Sir William Osler Elementary School**. Predictably, the only remaining **English MACC at Tecumseh and the French MACC at Kerrisdale** will likely close after the next school year for the same reasons.