

D R A F T

Prospectus

An Educational Program and Facilities Plan for Schools in the UBC Area: Early Childhood to Post Secondary

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“It is our collective responsibility as a school district to ensure the highest quality of learning experiences for all students, with a focus on student engagement, learning and development in a safe, inclusive environment.” Statement of Core Purpose, Vancouver Board of Education

Introduction

The Vancouver Board of Education has a rare and unique opportunity to establish an educational program and set of facilities which will combine the best of professional practices, physical facilities and educational resources to serve and fulfill the learning of young people in a common community. As the board’s administration, we envision realizing this opportunity in partnership with the University of British Columbia, in direct support of that institution’s expressed interests and in concert with the fundamental interests of the families and collective neighbourhood served by the schools.

In short, we envision an interconnected set of facilities that will accommodate a continuum of learning and development from early childhood to adulthood as a family of schools within the UBC community. These will be progressive, engaging schools, grounded in the essentials of optimal learning while utilizing partnerships and creating opportunities to connect the educational program with the full capacities and prospects of our students.

To this end, this prospectus outlines an Educational Program Plan and corresponding Facilities Plan.

Educational Program Plan

Foundation:

The Statement of Core Purpose of the Vancouver Board of Education (quoted above) is our point of intent and connection for everything we consider and do as a publicly mandated educational enterprise. In serving this purpose, we see the learner as the ultimate judge of the quality and usefulness of the learning experiences we provide. As educators we see our role primarily as one of enabling the learner - of any age and circumstance – to acquire her or his full education as an involved, competent and self-directed individual and citizen.

Through its own recent and extensive inquiry, the Vancouver Board of Education (aka the VSB) has identified six conditions considered essential to a person's optimal learning. These conditions and the background to their identification are described fully in the VSB document *It's All About Learning*. They are summarized in the acronym "LEARNs", as follows.

- Learning
 - Diverse rates and styles of learning are recognized and supported.
- Engaging, Experiential
 - Engaging experiential learning opportunities within and beyond and classroom are routine.
- Active, Passionate Teaching
 - Active learning experiences are created by teachers passionate about their work.
- Relationships
 - Relationships are respectful, supportive and purposeful.
- Need for Flexibility and Choice
 - Flexibility and choice in the classroom, school and school system are accommodated.
- Safety
 - A safe and supportive environment exists.

We consider these conditions essential to the fulfillment of our core purpose. In turn, we consider our core purpose to be embedded in our statement of mission:

To enable students to reach their intellectual, social, aesthetic and physical potential in challenging and stimulating settings which reflect the worth of each individual and promote mutual respect, cooperation and social responsibility.

Taken together, these conditions and the purpose and mission they serve form the foundation for building an educational program and learning environment faithful to what we know about the learner as a student, employee, parent or community partner; that s/he is a social, cognitive and meta cognitive being who brings to the learning experience a capacity rich in abilities and a background in prior knowledge that are to be respected and embraced in the design of learning and instruction, indeed in the design of the school itself.

With this foundation in mind, and given the unique opportunities posed by the UBC campus and community setting, we envision the following as key, distinguishing elements for the educational program.

Key Elements

1. A Continuum of Learning Experience and Development, Early Childhood to Post Secondary

Given all we now know about the learning of people at various stages of their development and the significant impact transitions can have on the continuity of their learning, the educational program would connect with children and their families at an early age and provide consistency and continuity in their learning experience throughout each subsequent stage of their development: primary, later childhood and early adolescence, later adolescence and early adulthood. Correspondingly, school facilities would be designed to effectively accommodate the learners at each of these stages of development.

2. Major Emphasis on Engagement and Experiential Learning

Direct engagement in experiences of interest and relevance to the learner would be a major emphasis throughout the educational program. This would take multiple forms such as project-based learning, field studies and community involvement as well as school-based activities, all of which would be highly experiential and hands-on.

3. Student to Student Learning Collaboration and Mentorship

Collaborative and cooperative learning processes among learners as peers and between older and younger students would be integral to the educational program. Such processes may extend to the direct and regular involvement of UBC undergrad and grad students through such vehicles as the UBC Learning Exchange, an initiative which has amply demonstrated the remarkable effects of connecting university students with elementary and secondary aged students on subjects and projects of mutual interest.

4. A Science and Technology Focus for Learning

Among other outcomes, last year's Educational Facilities Review – Phase One yielded a strong interest in developing a science and technology focus for the educational program in the UBC schools, particularly at the secondary level. It is felt that such a focus would support an apparent interest among students and families currently associated with the schools at UBC as well as among those in a UBC – Dunbar Neighbourhood of Learning. Such a focus would not be exclusive of other disciplines and interests, but could effectively draw upon human and physical resources on campus and within faculties, many of which are already regularly connected to elementary and secondary aged learners and their schools across our district. This is particularly the case with the UBC Faculty of Science which has, for some time, been highly involved with, and supportive of the interests of our students.

5. Sustainability and Global Citizenship Emphases for Learning and Development

To a quite extraordinary degree, matters of sustainability and of global citizenship have emerged as points of highly aware and actively responsive involvement among our students, largely on their own volition. Accordingly, the VSB, both as an organization educational enterprise, has made a commitment to pursue sustainability in all its functions as an environmentally and socially responsible institution, and to centrally involve and support our students as engaged learners and citizens in this regard. Further, we are committed to recognizing and expanding our students' awareness of, and contributions to causes of global citizenship.

We are also aware of the priority, broad involvement and significant contributions of UBC in this regard, on both a local and global scale. Thus, we feel there is an extremely rich and exciting opportunity for the UBC schools and university to employ these emphases as common catalysts for learning, development and community involvement.

6. Active Partnerships with UBC Faculties

Much of the foregoing may have subsumed partnerships between our schools and certain of the UBC faculties. While we do not presume this to be a given, we would certainly welcome and support such partnerships as we know they would greatly enhance and expand the scope, variety and quality of learning experience for our students. We feel the possibilities for such partnerships with and between UBC faculties are extraordinarily rich and unique.

Specifically, we feel the VSB and university family of schools have an opportunity to build deep and extensive ties with the UBC Faculty of Education. With the proximity of the schools to the campus and the variety of programs currently offered at the schools it is a logical extension that the faculty, student teachers and teachers would work together to study and improve teaching and learning. Some primary opportunities present themselves:

- *Teaching Training:* The University Hill family of schools would be able to provide UBC Faculty of Education teacher candidates the opportunity to gain supervised experience in the early childhood to post secondary continuum. Essentially, the family of schools can present the faculty with a microcosm of the province in this regard
- *Faculty:* Faculty members would have a unique opportunity to work collaboratively with classroom teachers in the development and training of new educators. For example, methods instructors could, using online video streaming, observe the teaching and learning occurring at any one of the schools. Ideally, the faculty and teachers would be working collaboratively to 'teach' the new educators and review what occurred in the classroom.
- *Professional Development:* With the Faculty of Education as an important stakeholder within the schools, professional development opportunities for all

teachers within the schools could be enhanced. Initiatives involving secondary and elementary teachers/students could be organized and developed.

- *Continuing Education:* Teachers who are interested in furthering their education with advanced degrees could utilize their collaboration with Faculty members as course work/grad paper requirements.
- *New Teaching Methodology/Research:* With enhanced relationships fostered between the family of schools and the Faculty of Education, there is the opportunity for innovative teaching strategies to be implemented and assessed. There is also an opportunity for action based research projects to be designed, formulated and implemented collaboratively with the Faculty of Education.

These, then, are the key elements proposed for the educational program. Taken as a whole, they hold certain implications for the design and configuration of the school facilities.

Facilities Plan

As already mentioned, there is an opportunity to create an early childhood to post secondary continuum of learning with all schools, their community and the university working together to provide seamless transitions for the learner. In concert with this continuum, new and existing facilities would be designed and organized respectively to best accommodate desired groupings of learners.

A new facility built on the Acadia site would have a joint, common area and two distinct wings that would accommodate desired groupings of learners; a flexible structure that would allow for different organizational groupings including the possibilities of primary, intermediate and secondary schools or elementary, middle and secondary organizational structures.

A secondary school would be constructed on the NRC site.

Structural design elements at each of the new schools would, as determined necessary, provide for the key educational elements of the program. Such design elements would include:

- flexible learning spaces for small and large group learning activities;
- central, flexible group assembly, presentation and performance space;
- seminar, conference and observation spaces for staff and faculty partners;
- fine arts and physical activity spaces;
- multi-purpose areas;
- library / learning resources areas;
- features of sustainability and environmental responsibility;
- technologically supportive infrastructure.

In Conclusion

As mentioned at the outset, we feel the prospects for the new schools to be built in the university community are rich in their promise to optimize all that we know to be both essential and possible for the learning and development of young people as educated, competent and vitally engaged citizens. We believe the facilities should be designed as effectively as possible to support the educational program, and built as expeditiously as possible to serve the immediate needs and interests of the community. Most importantly, we feel a true partnership between the University of British Columbia, the Vancouver Board of Education and the community we jointly serve is the key to our realizing the promise embodied in each of our young learners, now and in the future.

Through such partnership, joint commitment and shared resources, we believe we can seize this opportunity to create a learning environment and community which will serve as an outstanding example and reference for our city, our province and, possibly, our world.