

**EXCELLENCE THROUGH ACTION:
AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECT**

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Dedication

Making a decision to embark on a Master's Degree is similar to starting a family. Nobody can truly describe the essence of the process, intensity, emotions, growth, and state of uncertainty that one experiences. There is no doubt in my mind that it has been a memorable journey that has catapulted my desire for adventure into new realms.

The Graduate Studies Office, in particular Joyce Ito and Dr. Rick Mrazek, has flawlessly facilitated this portion of the journey. The guidance of Dr. Richard Butt has provided balance and healthy direction to accompany one of the truly memorable learning pursuits of my life.

As an accomplishment a Master's Degree is a significant transformational development. As a process, it tests your limits and relationships of those around you. Thank you Rod Osiowy for your guidance, support, and friendship. To Wendy, Colleen, Evan, and Nathan, I appreciate that this would have been impossible without your patience, sacrifice, inspiration, and love.

Abstract

Students often claim that schooling and education is irrelevant. Questioning subject matter, methodology and objectives, they want to know why they need to learn what professionals deliver. From a naïve and immature view of the world youth feel powerless to change a system that forces knowledge on them through methods that are contrary to their nature. This project examines the effects of an educational system based on theory and practices of experiential education. An experiential based approach was chosen because the nature of this teaching style matches the natural learning style of young people. Relevancy and natural consequences are foundational concepts that bring educational material to life and nurture actualization on personal and collective levels. The cornerstone of this project is a case study of eleven high school students who were directly involved in all aspects of attempting to effect change in a global context. Their mission was to plan, produce, and finalize videos that would be used to assist community associations in Costa Rica in promoting their causes and services. Assessment, reflection, and final analysis of the project were facilitated through the qualitative methods of individual and group discussion, journals, focus question responses, observation notes accumulated by chaperones, and video documentation. The results were overwhelming, in fact unanimous, in identifying the power of the relation of experiential curriculum delivered in a relevant and directly consequential manner to the efficiency and quality of student learning. When students are given control over their learning and use decision-making and problem solving techniques in a process that produces real change internally and externally, they feel empowered and internalize habits and concepts associated with lifelong learning.

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Chapter One

Introduction

We are living in an age of change as a result of a societal shift from a resource-based, industrial society to one impelled by knowledge. The future will value the production of knowledge and the results it may reap. This paradigm shift is crucial to the survival of our education system. It is reason to examine, reflect, and reconstruct facets that have long outlived their usefulness. Failing to tend to issues that make the system irrelevant and unattractive to learners may result in irrevocable negative public attitudes spelling extinction of the current public system. “Education as an age-specific rite of passage, as an essentially ritualistic certification, will necessarily give way to a much more vigorously monitored, much more carefully assessed investment” (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Why Experiential Education Is Important Today section, para. 1).

Today’s students survive through an education system that presents contradictions and dilemmas when contrasted with the presentation of other organizations in society. Schools, although they have changed over time, still unwittingly seek their foundation in the conceptual framework of schooling of the 1800’s. While students sit and listen to their teachers they dream of manipulating computer programs, soccer practice, and other active pursuits. Our system predominately produces passive students who search for certainty through teacher-pleasing, rote learning exercises that develop them into impulsive decision makers who illustrate inflexible attitudes regarding culture, gender roles, and measure a person according to content knowledge.

This type of foundation for education is not sufficient for today's student. A student graduating today will experience more information during their graduation year than their grandparents do in their lifetime. Students currently in our elementary schools will be working in jobs that have not yet been created. The type of individual that will be successful in acquiring these positions will be flexible, tolerant, non-judgmental, empathetic, and actively employ collaborative global processes that will accentuate their problem-solving capacities.

Dryden and Vos (1999) outline twelve steps for transforming the current school system to better meet the needs of today's student. The steps they recommend support the utilization of many aspects of experiential learning. Experiential education platforms are advocated through the following recommended changes to the education system:

1. Plan schools as life-long year-round community resource centers;
2. Ask your customers first: your students and parents;
3. Cater to all intelligence traits and all learning styles;
4. Use the world's best teaching, study and learning methods;
5. Invest in the key resource: teachers as facilitators;
6. Make everyone a teacher as well as a student;
7. Plan a four-part curriculum, with personal growth, life skills and learning how-to-learn linked with all content;
8. Change the assessment system;
9. Use tomorrow's technology;
10. Use your entire community as a resource; and

11. Give everyone a right to choose.

These recommendations point toward connecting schools and studies with the issues that create culture around the world—a system where curriculum is not compartmentalized and segmented through subject-driven presentations—choosing instead to make connections between concepts, people, and organizations. This provides an interconnectedness that promotes an understanding of the world on many different levels and motivates teachers to develop ways to allow students to experience knowledge in an interdisciplinary manner so that students can use knowledge in new environments and unique ways.

Education and schooling delivered with the students in mind promotes success through experience, natural consequences, and working together. In North American schools, there is a dependence on competition in promoting quality products. This competition, although seen as a healthy component of the maturation process, does more harm than good. Our students are learning that intrinsic value is secondary to external reward. This dilemma that occurs is complicated by the student-teacher dependency created during day-to-day activities that lack the qualities that are espoused by school mission statements.

Our school organizers have chosen practicality of delivery over authenticity of education by providing a school system that teaches to the passive student. In doing so, there is little hope for young people to achieve self-determined goals. For slower learners, school is a living nightmare that involves a cycle of failure. These malfunctions focus attention on the student's deficiencies and blame the victim for their inadequacies. The

repetitive nature of this process lodges deep into the person's esteem and self-concept ingraining behaviors and attitudes that are contrary to the intent of education. During the impressionable years that students are captured in the school system, students that are forced to face their shortcomings as a fault instead of an opportunity for improvement, prematurely entrench negative ideas about themselves and their future. New challenges, because they involve past experiences, will incorporate attitudes adopted from the past.

As professionals, educators are well aware that results are a combination of many factors. In a school setting, features of the materials and their presentation, teaching style, learning style, school culture, home-life, fitness, health, sleep, and a myriad of other determinants affect the learning moment of every student and teaching effectiveness of every professional.

Unfortunately these factors play a minor role when summarizing reasons for student failure. Instead classroom teachers look to the student for answers about their effort and impress upon them the need to try harder. It is not acknowledged that the student has little or no control over the agents that play on the quality of his finished product. It is ignored that the system repeatedly punishes some students for things that are out of their sphere of influence. Children trying to accomplish what adults have prescribed them to know at certain stages of their age. In a sense, these predetermined hurdles create a disability that the system amplifies. This handicap becomes an invisible unacceptable crutch because it is not visible like the characteristics that plague children with visible defects. These students learn that society will treat them as failures and their efforts will have to be Herculean to succeed. Even then, success is questionable because

these students are internally and externally 'flagged'. Inside, they are forming opinions of their worth and socially, their peers, teachers, and parents are all aware of their sub-par performance. The probable result for such a person is a life in society that is void of financial and personal satisfaction resulting from an imperfect system that promoted judgment on an imperfect person.

Throughout the school system long and short-term goals are written. These goals are based in intended learning outcomes that frame the education system. Kohn (1999) cites information he has collected regarding the overall intention of the school system. Whether he is talking to parents, teachers, administrators or others in public or private schools about any age level, he has consistently received the same responses. "Wherever I go, people say they want their kids to be happy and fulfilled, successful and productive, ethical and decent, independent and self-reliant, but also caring and compassionate-and confident, curious, creative, critical thinkers, and good communicators" (p.120).

School should be a place where competencies are exposed and nurtured, uncovering competencies that are relevant in today's world. A place where students can meet their desire to be connected socially, emotionally, and intellectually while uncovering unique qualities. The foundational theories and practice of experiential education promote a culture that articulates education that strives to focus on lifelong learning as the most valuable tenet. It is through the doctrine of experiential education that students develop attitudes, habits, and desires that engrain lifelong learning. By shifting our educational epicenter, the power of the passion to learn drives all the short-term objectives and being blinded by the 'pieces' of education does not overwhelm us.

Project Rationale and Objectives

The purpose of this project is to corroborate theory regarding the effective impact of experiential education on student learning in education. The intent is to illustrate the benefits of having active learners as opposed to passive learners found in traditional style classrooms. Imposed curriculum that is irrelevant and inactive does not promote lifelong learning. Learners need to be exposed to new ideas as they mature. These new concepts should come from the different realms of knowledge in creating opportunity to enhance the advancement of educated citizens. Experiential education provides a curriculum delivery system that speaks to different learning styles, intelligences, and assessment structures.

The central question this project is:

What is the impact on learners when exposed to a curriculum dominated by experiential-based teaching?

This topic incorporates sub questions:

1. What is the philosophy of experiential education?
2. What educational theories and practices support an experiential based teaching classroom?
3. What are the components of experiential based education? (E.g.: planning, classroom culture, evaluation, etc)
4. Why is experiential education effective?
5. What is the impact on students dominated by experiential based instruction?

This final project will:

- Substantiate educational beliefs by gathering information to support philosophy and link with sound educational practice;
- Help promote personal professional development; and
- Enhance expertise and growth by summarizing knowledge regarding experiential education and its place in our school system.

Chapter Two

Methodology and Literature Review

This project uses a case study as its focus for qualitative data and reflection. Therefore, the project is heavily based in the Action Research model of research. “Action research (AR) is a non-traditional form of research which is often community-based and carried out by a practitioner in the field” (Hatten, R., Knapp, D., & Salonga, R.1997. p.1). The emphasis of the Action Research approach to research involves examining ideas with the intent of augmenting knowledge and applying new understanding to improve related conditions.

This project began with the idea that students felt powerless to determine their pathways in the community. In the planning stages it was decided that there needed to be an understanding of student perceptions and investigation of what they could achieve given an opportunity to effect change on a global level while benefiting individually. This individual growth would benefit their community, as these students would be future decision-makers. Once this concern was established, students, teachers, and association directors worked together to plan the action of the case study. “A group then forms to clarify the mutual concern which has been identified. The group makes the decision to work together and focus its improvement strategies on the thematic concern”(Hatten, R., Knapp, D., & Salonga, R.1997. p.1)

The pattern of Action Research follows four basic steps:

1. Development of a plan that is flexible and adaptable to circumstances that may arise during the research. The plan is descriptive in the action(s) that will take place. The intent of the action is to have recommendations that will be applicable to the improvement of focus of the plan;
2. Participants execute components of the plan in a purposeful manner heeding parameters delineated by the group;
3. Data and observations are collected to provide evidence that will be sufficient for a thorough appraisal of the idea. Information is collected as individuals and/or collectively in the contextual setting as an ongoing process;
4. Debriefing occurs in the form of reflective thought and discussion within the Action Research group. During these discussions, perceptions are voiced and interpretations shared leading to further understanding and action.

Action Research has qualities that are applied in a formal fashion that should assist in developing or improving theories. It is a system that insists on collaboration between the practitioner and research group, problem-solving skills in the search for data, and the application of results to the relevant situation. The characteristics of Action Research are neatly summarized in the CRASP model developed by Zuber-Skerritt.

Action Research is:

Critical collaborative enquiry by

Reflective practitioners being

Accountable and making the results of their enquiry public.

Self-evaluating their practice and engaged in Participative problem solving and continuing professional development. (Hatten, R., Knapp, D., & Salonga, R.1997. p.1).

Philosophy of Experiential Education

Experiential education originates from many different frameworks. Chickering and Gamson (1987), suggest that “students must do more than just listen: They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems” (Bonwell, C. & Eison, J. 1991. p.1). The vitality of this type of education finds its source in vigorous employment of the student in an experience that must utilize “higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation” (Bonwell, C. & Eison, J. 1991. p.1). The rudimentary character of experiential learning incorporates complex thinking levels that are exhibited in a creative and emotive manner. Many approaches to learning result in higher level thinking but experiential education initiates the thinking through students’ experiences and a framework that motivates the learner to make decisions about goals, learning events, evaluation, and consequences.

Learning requires connections to be made between previous experience and new occurrences. These connections are intricately woven in our memory and conceptual network enabling us to attempt to make sense of the world. People, events, ideas, and information that bombard us daily need to be registered according to our collective conceptual bank. Improving our ability to understand and manipulate new material is dependent upon already accepted information. Traditional classrooms characterize teachers as the decision-makers. They do the planning, presenting, and evaluating of the learning. The teacher drives all assumptions yet consequences are a burden of the student.

In this sense, the teacher is omniscient appearing to know everything about children in their charge. This seems peculiar considering the amount of time that a teacher spends with each student. It is improbable that teachers can effectively collect an understanding of all students through questioning techniques, classroom lessons, teacher interviews, and student records. The time and quality of interaction and relationship between student and teacher is further questioned by class size, equal opportunity to become involved, learning style, teaching style, and perception of class environment. From the time instructional units are started to their completion, students have many distractions that will decrease their ability to comprehend new material and offer observations in relation to what they already know. With the onset of formal testing relating to intended learning outcomes, the teachable moment has been diminished and an inaccurate documentation of the student's knowledge have increased.

The video that our mind plays in our last moments on earth is the encyclopedia of our personal accounts on earth. It is a narrative that captures our social, psychological, and intellectual events that we have chosen to retain. These are the experiences that we use regularly or have influenced us deeply. These events that comprise our 'story' were contextually experienced and adopted in time-specific circumstances. They have been maintained because they are transferable to new dimensions. David Boud (1994) refers to these moments that have been influential to our maturation as the "personal foundation of experience" (Boud, D. 1994. p. 1). These exposures, together with an insignificant percentage of vicarious learning, contour our perceptions and assumptions, morals, feelings, etc. in our ability to make decisions when facing current dilemmas and surroundings. A persons' emotional balance while advancing along their path in life is

rooted in the skills they have developed in the areas of decision-making, goal setting, communication, relationships and other fundamental areas that comprise a belief system created by a variety of personal experiences. Actions, in the form of what individuals say, do, or omit, in their daily existence represent a glimpse of each person's belief system and approach to learning.

In the traditional classroom, this personal window is largely ignored while teachers attempt to impress their own visions (past and present) upon a captive audience. Teachers need to realize sound educational practices, perceptively and deftly employing and immersing students in a curriculum that influences the learner to use their experiences when incorporating new information. Compelling learners to actively engage their thinking skills for the purpose of decision-making and critical thinking about material presented embody the rudimentary nature and pedagogy of education.

Models of Experiential Education

A preference by some educators to recognize and acknowledge learner knowledge and experience resulted in the growth of the experiential education movement. The traditional practice of the teacher as the expert and student as the intellectual subordinate were challenged as ineffective and counterproductive to educational goals. Schools were devalued as the sole authoritative organizations of education. The idea that learners can become knowledgeable in a variety of locations was justified, promoted and acclaimed. For the student involved in an experiential education model, all environments were valuable sources of learning.

Experiential education did not peak in popularity until the 1970's. However, educational theorists have espoused its effectiveness well before its social fame. The cultivation of experiential education began with visionaries like Dewey (1938), Knowles (1970), Kolb (1984), Freire (1970), and Boud (1993) who used their environmental circumstances and experiences to present discussions that sought to question the dominant educational discourse. They suggested a movement to deconstruct and transform education into an institution that reflected the true nature of learning. In support of their musings recent neurological research has detailed the brain as an assembly of interconnected neurons. "Every sensation we receive," Arthur Chickering has noted, "every move we make, every emotion we feel, every thought we think, every word we speak involves a network of those interconnections. The fundamental thing we need to do, to achieve learning that lasts, is connect the new learning with one of those pre-existing networks"(NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Experiential Education: What It Is section, para.10). "Testing ideas in action--Experiential Education--is among the most powerful means available for connecting new learning to the existing neurological networks" (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Experiential Education: What It Is section, para.10).

John Dewey.

In *Experience and Education*, John Dewey (1938) threatened the way educational systems did business. Dewey saw education as a relationship between individual growth and the democratic and social nature of education. The manner in which this growth occurred was delivered through a process accentuated by the learner doing activities. Included in Dewey's theory was a depiction of how "individuals create new knowledge

and transform themselves through a process of learning by performing new roles”
(Fenwick, T. 2001, p.3).

Dewey points out that how educators believe learning takes place is not always accurate. Education is a complex process that is impacted by many factors. Every person internalizes educational experiences into social, emotional, intellectual, psychomotor, and spiritual compartments. These cognitive cubicles are constantly being pruned and expanded in a process that is characterized as growth. These individual capacities are mutually related complementing each other and formulating an individual’s distinctive qualities. Alone, the depth and breadth of these dimensions do not imprint the complete weight of their importance. Personal assumption and perspectives that include previous encounters and developed attitudes affect the sensation and power of each domain. Although learning is sometimes an assumed process, there are cases, where students do not learn from occurrences or their results are dysfunctional. In both situations, where learning occurs or does not, Dewey felt that the value of the learning was impacted by two factors.

“The first is continuity: the learner needs to be able to connect aspects of the new experience to what he or she already knows, in ways that modify this knowledge”
(Fenwick, T. 2001, p.3). To the experiential educator, education is the culmination of all experiences that a person is subjected to throughout their life. In some situations, the individual chooses to be involved whereas others simply happen to a person. These occurrences will consist of conscious or unconscious efforts to adapt to the situation. Relationships between people, animate and inanimate objects, and the environment are

the continuity of human existence. Formal and informal education plays a large role in a person's ability to successfully navigate the intricacy of daily affairs. Educating involves making individuals realize that it is impossible to not be affected by day-to-day occurrences due to the nature of being a living organism. It is an opportunity to make each person realize that their human uniqueness involves being affected by our surroundings and, if we desire, we can effect our environment in a determined, intentional way. With this in mind, education is a two-way, intimate association that is ingrained into our personal weave. These 'personal' portraits of fabric form the interconnectedness of our society that reflects current trends and determines future course of action.

The second factor Dewey emphasized is interaction of the learner. Environmental interaction, designing and analyzing, modifying and assessing circumstances promote learner understanding of the elements of a situation allowing selective manipulation of portions into a comprehensive whole. Personality is an example of education. Becoming aware, appraising, and adopting attitudes and mannerisms require learner engagement with his environment. Those qualities we choose to incorporate into our presentation of self are a result of thousands of interpersonal exchanges. These interactions require an individual to acquire and adopt characteristics through decision-making skills that are very evident during the educational process. This process is active, selective, and fine-tunes our presentation of chosen attributes that speak to our identity and directly reflects our education. Over time our tendencies change and our ability to contemplate in a multidisciplinary, empathic way evolves. In certain cases, some personal qualities remain similar to past contour; usually these emerging schemas experience metamorphosis with

exposure to new experiences. The role of an educator is to observe personalities and create opportunities that allow and ensure that understanding happens and the educational process is coherent. This type of maneuver is very sophisticated and requires a neutral execution that allows the student to present current thoughts that mesh with fresh information resulting in a coalescing of thoughts that give birth to innovative developments of character.

Education attempts to overcome and impress many topics, skills, and attitudes on students. Experiential education where the emphasis is to use what is already known as the starting point is the best way to impact students. Watch a student who is motivated to blow a bubble or whistle and you will learn about education. The focus is pursued on the face as they practice repetitively, slowly developing skill and knowledge about correct and incorrect maneuvers. The beauty of the situation is the intensity of learning that is taking place due to the desired product. For the educator, witnessing the passion and process of this type of learning commands allegiance to active, participatory education that is relevant in the planning, process, and evaluation stages.

To substantiate the importance of learning students require standards that set high expectations and outline criteria. Setting the content in terms of student interest and understanding, a connection with self, others, and community (local, regional, federal, and global) adds relevance to the value of the material and activities. In developing self-esteem an risk-taking environment free of retribution allows for the celebration of success and the perception that failures are an opportunity to succeed. The role of schooling is not a reflection of the 'real world' nor are the methods intended to simulate a training ground

for individuals to become the next crew of workers in the sustainable economy. School is a place where the young can grow through guided experimentation and opportunities that might not otherwise be available.

Malcolm Knowles.

Malcolm Knowles promoted learner-centered education in the 1970's. His emphasis was proposed in a model of andragogy that focused on adult learning. Although the target audience was older learners, Knowles' model had implications for all ages. His ideas that spoke to the critical aspects of flexibility, prior experience, and enthusiasm of the participants formed the crux of the model that was affected by Carl Rogers.

Carl Rogers stressed that teachers were moderators in the educational process. The relationship between teacher and student was one of personal and intellectual quality. In his evaluation, teaching someone directly did not occur. 'Self' was a fundamental element in Roger's educational doctrine. The self became "more rigid under threat" and "to relax its boundaries" (Smith, M.2002.On Education section, para.1) the sense of provocation had to be removed. Therefore an environment free from threat of any kind and emphasized real-life experiences was the most effective in affecting change in learners. In this setting, educators need to present three dimensions to encourage learners to be receptive to education. Being genuine, valuing learner characteristics, and establishing an empathic climate should be central concerns for the teacher. Carl Rogers' model found some its ideas in the teachings of John Dewey and was applied by educators like A.S. Neill.

Malcolm Knowles' (1984) model considered concepts learned in the human relation forums. Informal gatherings in homes, schools, or any other place that people associate in active discourse have educational worth. Liaisons established in associations form the foundation of society and perpetuate conventional attitudes and behavior reinforcing customs that are accepted by the majority.

Knowles (1984) believed that the following valuable outcomes were promoted:

1. Learners advance their understanding of the intricacies of their 'self' in a relevant and mature way. Dialogue that nurtures a process of self-discovery to realize the measure of need, inspiration, ability, desire, and ambition identifies a beginning point for development and goal-setting;
2. The second area encouraged and nurtured through education are affirmation, respect, and affinity toward the promotion of positive human relations. Being able to separate the individual from his ideas or perceptions encourages an attitude of empathy. Ideally the manifestation of this empathic attitude results in advocating and production of enterprises that advance the betterment of all people;
3. Adopting an attitude of life as a vigorously animated and powerful journey that is consistent only due to the constancy of change. Confident and constructive approaches to the beneficial and harmful incidents that happen to an individual in their lifetime encourage people to see events as learning opportunities. An attitude focusing on positivism enables acquisition and advancement of wisdom, knowledge, and lifelong integrity. Being able to

control emotional responses and focus on reasons for difficulties assist learners in dealing with situations instead of the peripheral results.

Symptomatic responses center around feelings. Problem solving is impeded by emotional reaction as thinking is dealing with the primal state of fight or flight. In relations, evading sensation-based autonomic type responses is usually a weak skill. Opportunities to practice level-headed response to emotional situations promotes problem solving strategies in learners;

4. Education must be dualistic and promote proficiencies for an individual to thrive as an individual personality in a collective society. “To achieve these potentials requires skills of many kinds- vocational, social, recreational, civic, artistic, and the like” (Smith, M. 2002. Adult Informal Education section, para.5). Guiding students to a realization of their capabilities, how to enhance them, and use them in a proactive manner so that they exist in a balanced state is an important role for educators;
5. Enriching student understanding and appreciation for the events that has led humankind to its prevailing state is another outcome. Dissecting past events, attitudes, and trends will enhance the possibility of effective results for current challenges and future happenings. Appreciating struggles, ingenuity, heroics, and successes that have been the crux of previous learning provides information for a synthesized evaluation when applying existing, accepted wisdom to new conditions; and
6. The dedication of a portion of the educational system to the examination, justification, and application of social change. The adoption of change as the

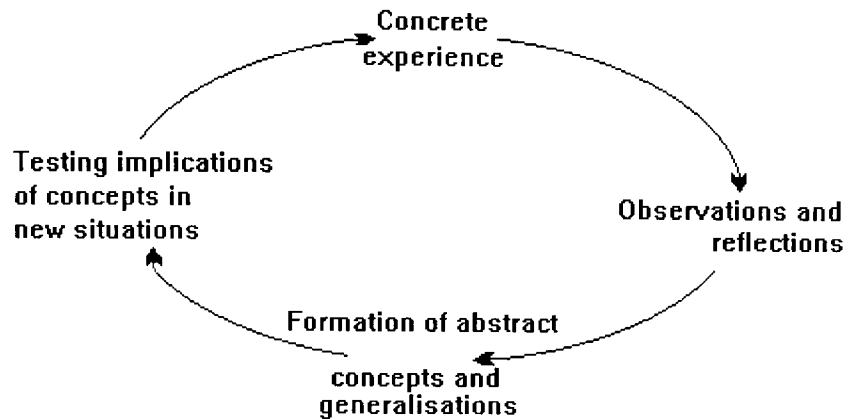
only life constant and necessary to the effectiveness of the democratic process necessitates individual involvement in societal business. Irrespective of social, financial, intellectual, gender, or racial status, individuals are obligated to intelligently seek involvement with the institutional systems that impact everyday undertakings.

Knowles culminates his experiential educational model with a summarizing admonition by recapitulating the words of Robert Maynard Hutchins. He cautions, we “cannot wait for the next generation to solve”(Smith, M. 2002, Adult Informal Education section, para.12) our predicaments. Time is of essence, passing quickly and “our fate rests with the intelligence, skill, and good will of those who are now the citizen-rulers. The instrument by which their abilities as citizen-rulers can be improved” (Smith, M. 2002, Adult Informal Education section, para.12) is driven by and the challenge of our education system.

David Kolb.

David Kolb articulated a model of experiential education that considered different learning styles and ventured to define the importance of experiences that were concrete in nature. Experts that influenced his work were Jean Piaget, John Dewey, and psychologist Kurt Lewin.

Kolb's (1975) theory centered around four elements in his experiential learning circle model.



The diagram implies that the learner most likely begins the process by becoming involved in a concrete action. The reality is that comprehension can be established at any position in the circle. The implications of the proceedings and their connection to the contextual framework follow the learner's understanding. For cognizance to grow the learner needs opportunity and practice in the application of the knowledge to test future outcomes in similar and dissimilar contexts. With this in mind, learning takes place in a spiral fashion (as opposed to a circle) as a result of the changing dimensions of environment and learner insight regarding past events and present situations.

The experiential quality of this model is accentuated by citing exposure and manipulation of concrete events as the interacting agent for understanding. The model is consistent in the commitment to learner participation by acknowledging the connection between developed, accepted belief with the learner's current investigation to reshape knowledge and behavior. This is no surprise as those who impacted Kolb's theory stress

the function of experience in the learning process. Dewey's emphasis of the developmental nature of learners, Piaget's theory of cognitive development, and Lewin's stress on previous exposure all honor Kolb's emphasis on participant experience.

Paulo Freire.

Paulo Freire (1970) in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* pushed educational theorists to consider education as an act of progressivism. According to Freire, education needed to consider action to promote personal and collective liberation. Education "should not involve one person acting on another, but rather people working with each other". In Freire's model, an excessive amount of formal education produces an disproportional amount of influence on the learner perpetuating a state of oppression.

Domination and aggression are intrinsic parts of every social interaction and form a central tenet in Freire's model. Reasoning behind his interpretation was founded in his belief that interaction is a hostile act due to the "virtue of race, class or gender" (Gadotti, M. & Torres, C., n.d., para. 3) that served as a source for the development of a victim-oppressor affiliation. These authoritarian relations exist for reasons of "religious beliefs, political affiliation, national origin, age, size, and physical and intellectual handicaps" (Gadotti, M. & Torres, C., n.d., para.3).

Paulo viewed education as the instrument to counteract the habitual reasoning and practices that made oppression a tradition. The expression that he used for diminishing and extinguishing the cycle of domination was humanization. The humanization pedagogy attempted to cultivate the concepts of "dialogue and ultimately conscientization

as a way to overcome domination and oppression among and between human beings” (Gadotti, M. & Torres, C., n.d., para.4).

The overall idea of equality between educator and student made Freire’s model successful in the realm of experiential education. The model modified the role of student by including dignity in the learning process and relocated the teacher to a position (beside the student) that implied positional equality. Together, the student and teacher ventured on a mission to simultaneously acquire knowledge. Through orientation to the situation and experimentation in a variety of directions, the two roles worked harmoniously in their quest for liberation.

Empowerment and critical consciousness were the focus of this liberatory style education. The emphasis to improve the masses instead of a few arbitrarily chosen individuals who advance at the cost of the others provided a different look for empowerment. “Liberation achieved by individuals at the expense of others is an act of oppression” (Heany, T.1995. The Freirean Philosophy section, para.1). Mutually beneficial enterprise and disposition enhance the potential for overall empowerment. The complete elevation of the single entity together with the community is more compelling than the advancement of established special interest groups that rule political and social arena.

The process of learning requires that curriculum development is a shared exercise and empowerment is universal. Teachers, learners, parents, and others who are affected actively build a curriculum in a learning community founded in equal opportunity. These groups create a curriculum emphasizing competencies that nurture growth at many levels

and meet the needs of all learners. “Education is a component of and subordinate to a liberatory praxis which seeks to transform the social order” (Heany, T. 1995. The Freirean Philosophy section, para.3).

Three phases of development provide the foundation for the acquisition of critical consciousness. These stages are:

1. Semi-intransitive consciousness describes the first level of consciousness. It is a stage where the learner is limited in their perception and hindered by a focus on survival. Challenges that originate outside of the learner’s internal, biological frame of reference are turned away in favor of immediate needs related to their existence;
2. Naïve transitivity describes a level where the individual enters into dialogue about issues outside of their direct environment. They begin to ponder answers to questions about others and the world in an effort to widen their capacities. These ventures are simplistic in nature and characteristically result in over-simplification, nostalgic forays, an underestimation of resources, convivial in quality, and willing to settle for sentimental results to the investigative process. Naïve transitivity is a constant in everyone’s life and a permanent stage that tempts learners when searching for acceptable answers to questions;
3. The last phase is critical transitivity representing melioration of the learner’s depth of interpretive problem solving. Reflection is used to test one’s hypotheses and discoveries resulting in alterations. Learning is balanced by

“the attempt to avoid distortion when perceiving problems and to avoid preconceived notions when analyzing them, by rejecting passivity, by the practice of dialogue rather than polemics, by receptivity to the new without rejecting the old, and by permeable, interrogative, restless, and dialogical forms of life” (Heany, T.1995. Critical Consciousness section, para.3).

Community-based education and active participation of all stakeholders were the central principles of Paulo Freire’s model. The rejection of educational systems due to their proclivity to entrench the dominant discourse and oppress society was an attempt to balance justice for those who traditionally had little hope effecting change. The old idea of giving a starving man a fish versus teaching him how to fish so he can get his own food would parallel Freire’s model. Allowing those who are oppressed the possibility to direct their own future by guiding literacy and knowledge will give them an opportunity to achieve wealth and privilege. Learning connected to existence and liberation enables people to develop an understanding of themselves and others in a relevant manner leading to possibilities that have inspired individuals and civilizations to great heights.

David Boud.

Anything learned is from experience is the credo of David Boud. Anytime our senses become involved in a situation that causes our brain to reference our database of previous circumstances resulting in something learned means we have had an experience. Therefore, when we are enlightened to new possibilities the process includes reflection on past experiences. Negative or positive attitudes are a result of past activity where

humiliation extinguished the behavior or success promoted adoption. Boud's (1985) model shares characteristics with other experiential theories:

- Experience is the foundation of, and the stimulus for, learning;
- Learners actively construct their own experience;
- Learning is a holistic process;
- Learning is socially and culturally constructed; and
- Learning is influenced by the socio-emotional context in which it occurs.

(Boud, D.1999. para.4)

Boud's model examines previously ignored aspects of the learning process and encourages educators to consider them as a legitimate component. By giving credence to prior learning, participative activities that demand engagement of the learner, and paying attention to "complex human processes that require more than knowledge and intellectual understanding" (Boud, D.1999. para.5) in conceptual presentation Boud has provided educators with additional reasons for recognizing experiential-based models of learning.

Boud believes the learner intentionally directs learning and is constantly seeking knowledge and educational possibilities. These potential activities can be formal or informal learning opportunities. In this way, Boud's model promotes the idea that people are constantly learning new things in a variety of environments. Institutions, like schools, do not own exclusive rights as the only setting that promotes growth. The distinction separating these two types of education: formal and informal, is that the management of informal learning rests with the learner.

This model uses reflection as a process where learners “recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it” (Smith, M. 1999. Reflection section, para.1)

Reflection constitutes three parts:

1. The return to past experiences includes the recollection of events to isolate outstanding qualities of the event;
2. Recognizing (or connecting with) emotions necessitates the learner to segregate isolate responses into functional and impeding impressions. Useful feelings are to be catalogued as part of personality, benefiting growth while the impediments are dealt with as a source of information about avoiding aspects of experiences that destroy motivation to learn in an active manner;
3. Assessing experience encourages the learner to reflect on initial learning aspirations for wanting to be a participant in the activity. Existing knowledge integrating with new ideas broadens the conceptual base of the individual.

This model promotes learning through reflection to evaluate the learner’s role in the situation, producing dialogue that constructs a clarification of change and leading to a commitment to act by implementing a constructed plan that makes action effective.

It could be construed that models of experiential education ignore the possibility that some learners do not have the awareness to realize that they have

had a learning experience. In this case, returning to experience would not occur and an event that should be natural is omitted, stunting growth. Therefore the learner would not engage in thinking. Boud et al (1993) argue that “experience has within it judgment, thought and connectedness with other experience” (Smith, M. 1999. Reflection section, para.3). Experts acknowledge the interdependence between individual experiences and what the person experiences. These components of experiential-based education can stand in isolation compromising the strength of the relationship. An example of this would be the accuracy when a persons’ recollection of an event is altered over time. Relying on the impressions placed on our thinking by mood, audience, and environment, an experience takes on new or distorted elements with each retelling. The result is a unique embellishment on each return to the experience. Emotions attached to the moment of relating the memory and past event further complicate recall, producing inaccuracy that the learner probably conceives as truth.

David Boud contributes a model that stresses the identification and impact of experience when considering the process of transforming past events into future learning. The model advocates the use of reflection to teach the learner to realize the most benefits from activities. Boud rejects the idea that formal educational settings are the main source of learning; in fact he states that the majority of learning occurs in the absence of organized lessons. Exposing the learner to be aware and accept the power and process of reflection will prepare the individual to use flexible and insightful decision-making when new situations are encountered along the path of lifelong learning.

Components Of Experiential Learning

Components of experiential education bring to light the importance of sound educational practice. The learning process requires a passionate commitment to transcend the learner's current state of knowledge and behavior. Motivation, process, relevancy, meaningful discourse, memorable environment, empathic attitude, high yet realistic standards, consultation, networking, etc. are a few of the many elements that need to be conveyed in the complex multi-directional learning practice. Experiential education encompasses educational demands in all components: curriculum, teaching and learning styles, assessment, and classroom culture.

Curriculum.

Dewey noted that "events are present and operative anyway; what concerns us is their meaning" (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Experiential Education: What It Is section, para.2). It is unavoidable to be unaffected by experience. The challenge for curriculum writers (e.g.: teachers, students) is the method to be used to create meaning and relevance out of experience. In its purest forms, Experiential Education is inductive, beginning with "raw" experience that is processed through an intentional learning format and transformed into working, useable knowledge.

Mechanisms like problem solving with an emphasis on creativity; team building to promote connections, and conflict resolution for the eventual pitfalls are areas that form the fundamental approach to curriculum in experiential education. These operations are used within a framework that involves learner and teacher to synchronously reflect and theorize about their experience rising to new hypotheses and goals. Goals set the path

for endeavors that lead to new learning. Between reflection and goal setting is the ongoing assessment of events that transpire causing the participants to modify theories, goals, and understandings. Curriculum is a living work in progress where those involved reap the benefits and withstand the pitfalls. Psychologist Carol Gilligan has intimated, that curriculum focusing on intellectual and moral growth "represent attempts to order and make coherent the unfolding experiences and perceptions, the changing wishes and realities of everyday life" (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Experiential Education: What It Is section, para.7). Experiential education promotes a curriculum that is void of the "assumption that truth is independent of knowing" (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Experiential Education: What It Is section, para.9). All learning needs to include understanding of the experience; mastery of the desirable aspects, and application of these newly adopted elements. Daniel Goleman reports in his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, "the ways in which prior experience conditions our responses to current experiences--offering physiological evidence that we learn from experience and must pay attention to the design of experiences for our students" (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Experiential Education: What It Is section, para.10).

The curriculum of experiential education emphasizes the quality of experiences. The idea in developing curriculum is to enhance the opportunity and outcome of each endeavor. Educators must be aware that factors surrounding the quality, ranging from null to ultimate, of educational value involved in experiences must be considered in the planning stages. These factors include:

- Possible amount of intellectual and moral growth;
- Long term community development as a result of the activity; and
- Potential divergent learning that might result from the initial goals.

To increase the effectiveness of curriculum and maximize planning considerations, planners must know the character of those involved, be able to match experiences to the characteristics of the participants so that the best outcomes can be acquired, and use their wisdom to anticipate hazards that may befall the group as learning progresses. Dewey's contention indicates action whereby planners conceptualize experience in a way that fosters thinking applied as a "plan for deciding upon subject matter, upon methods of instruction and discipline, and upon material equipment and social organization of the school" (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.What Counts As Experience and The Responsibility of the Educator section, para.4). It is this theorizing that has led to the development of many strands of experiential education programs ranging from outdoor education, internships, cooperatives, to Outward Bound programs. Each design attempts to use planning through experience to mold outcomes to serve the best interests of the learners so that chance for success is a priority and process.

Developing curriculum is driven by the intentions that are connected with desired results. Curriculum facilitators use intended learning outcomes as the central theme for all experiences. Although these intentions cannot unequivocally predict all possible outcomes, these starting points must be the constant throughout learning activities. To maintain the best probability of discovering intended outcomes, planning must avoid haphazard techniques and give way to authentic elements. Lecturing, reading about,

videos, or other secondary sources of experience does not provide the most powerful learning situation. These types of activities simply relay interpretation of an event through another person's perspective. Authenticity requires curriculum that embeds the learner in the actual event promotes relevancy and impact directly in a sensational manner.

Teaching Style in Experiential Education.

In My Pedagogic Creed John Dewey speaks to the nature of methodology as an item directly in relation to the "development of the child's powers and interests" (Flinders, D.& Thorton, S.1997. p.21). Dewey further states that development is determined by an emphasis of active over passive and that consciousness initiates action. His belief in experiential education was summarized in his comment regarding time spent in preparation and presentation would be more justified and "more wisely and profitably expended in training the child's power of imagery and in seeing to it that he was continually forming definite vivid, and growing images of the various subjects with which he comes into contact in his experience" (Flinders, D.& Thorton, S.1997. p.22).

Teaching style in experiential education is one area where educational reform can be felt immediately. An interest in the whole child and attempts to affect profound growth is a core idea for teaching style. A combination of patience, creativity, and confidence in good teaching habits form an approach that will reap rewards and live through setbacks. Teaching style is neither a miracle cure nor is it a change that happens overnight. Like all things in education it is something that is founded in planning and nurtured through review and modifications. In shifting to a teaching style that promotes

experiential based learning it is important to realize that the purpose of the change is to make “schooling more beneficial “to children of all backgrounds, talents, and interests” (Damon, W.1995.p. 201).

The teaching style of a teacher founded in experiential learning models delivers a language and pattern that is personalized for every child. What transpires between the teacher and student is a craft that requires special attention. Instead of attending to the dynamics of institutional demands in regards to these interactions, the teacher delivers a model that builds on the natural abilities of the learner. From these competencies new lines of thought evolve and spontaneous interests erupt. Simultaneously, the relationship must provide “children with essential new skills, powerful new ideas, and the thirst for further knowledge” (Damon, W.1995. p. 202). The composition of this type of teaching style provides comfort for the child by using his accepted experiential background yet drives him forward to test new avenues of thought.

Teachers need to realize that student-teacher relationships directly determine the quality of instruction. Teacher delivery of their authority ascertains the instructional relationship between individuals and the entity of the class. Authority is exercised and communicated in an appropriate manner and “has three benchmarks: fairness, specificity, and truthfulness” (Damon, W. p. 212). Specifically, the instructional relationship is derived from “(1) the standards and expectations that the teacher holds for the student, (2) the teacher’s understanding of the student, (3) the teacher’s ability to communicate with the student, (4) the teacher’s willingness to innovate and individualize instruction, and (5) the teacher’s own grasp of the subject matter” (Damon, W.1995. p. 212).

A well-established teacher-student relationship allows the process of learning to smoothly evolve in the experiential classroom. Teachers systematically discover student interests and needs to get a better understanding of the role that each individual might play. This is important, as students will be required to take an active part in planning, especially goal-setting, and individual propensities should be catalogued so that the process proceeds as smoothly as possible. Activities are mutually decided and take a variety of forms. Diversity of experience and reporting impact validates the significance of learner history and choice.

Within the description of activities, expectations and responsibilities are mutually communicated and clarified. Initial clarification is the beginning of a regular communication system that seeks to restate and reinforce the established goals. Communication happens regularly between all stakeholders in the learning action. Experiential goals are not limited or constant for all involved so the teacher must facilitate an understanding and articulation of goals for each participant. Accompanying goals is a description of the learning structure, materials, environments, and assessment structure. In experiential education, flexibility needs to be a continual characteristic since learning often extends beyond intended outcomes. To minimize the effect of flexibility, it is desirable to include documentation the “defines expectations, responsibilities, timelines, and projected outcomes, and a letter of agreement or commitment among all partners to the experience that acknowledges responsibilities and defines protocols and procedures to be used in situations that might arise” (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Best Practice section, para.5).

The teacher in the experiential education delivery style promotes a wide variety of activities. Outcomes can be directed towards single or multiple groups but usually need fine-tuning to meet the needs of the individual. This aspect produces the intensity, value, and diversity of learning as learners can articulate outcomes in terms of their perceptions, sensations, and understandings. Part of the reason for unique outcomes is the combination of common and exclusive intentions indicated in the planning stages. These indicators provide for direction and guidance but they are not restrictive to the point of defining patterns and sequences of the stages of learning. Students do not have to pretend to be excited by a subject (e.g.: dinosaurs) that they have been subjected to since grade three yet they are free to spend time processing material that causes difficulty. The learner determines to what degree a subject will be mastered and how each pursuit will become meaningful.

Today's world is overloaded with information and the likelihood of anyone keeping pace is remote. Learning is dependent on attitudes and skills that are indirectly related to content. Teachers promote this attribute by encouraging reflection that leads to relearning. Reflection also serves to help people to recover and learn from negative experiences. In a supportive way, teachers stimulate adjustments, reaffirming sessions, emotional balancing, and rejuvenation to promote equilibrium in the classroom. Classroom stability promotes interpersonal experiences like trust and teamwork that boosts students when overcoming individual barriers in learning.

The teacher realizes that reporting is an individual process. Learning styles determine tendencies that place learners at ease when discovering and retelling

realizations. Whether it is a simple event or intricate in nature, students have their preferences regarding their final accounts. Experiential education effects great changes during student learning so the nature of reporting needs to allow personal strengths to be utilized. In the system of reporting, the student continues to learn as skills of communication; audience, mode and impact must be considered. Sophisticated impact that results from learning demands that description of the results be more complex.

Experiential Education and Learning Styles.

One of the most powerful tools in a teacher's repertoire is knowledge and understanding of learning styles. This knowledge provides the capability for educators to make the classroom a place where more than one approach to development is appreciated and desired. "Different social groupings, alternative activities, more complex projects have all been introduced as efforts to create opportunities for students to use their various strengths in dealing with course material" (Robatham, D. 1999. p.1). Learning style research has provided teachers with stable instructional strategies in dealing with the diverse needs of the learner. These strategies are especially valuable in experiential education because they parallel a student-centered attitude.

A teacher who realizes and adopts the effectiveness of learning styles becomes more aware of their environment, learning materials, learning cycles, and their teaching style. Locked into routine, teachers seldom realize that their teaching may have become stale and ineffectual. Often believing in the traditional approach of the teacher as the main element of learning, teachers can become caught in a cycle that results in classroom control difficulties, poor assessment results, and unhappy classroom citizens (including

parents). Basically, a classroom directed by this type of attitude holds little intrigue for the learner, as all aspects of the environment are more relevant to the teacher than the students.

In an experiential classroom learning styles are important in all stages from planning to assessment. Considering that in all phases there are many “powerful learning opportunities in areas like decision making, team work, communication, and problem solving that transcend content-based or curricular goals” (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Best Practice section, para.4) it is part of the teachers mandate to ensure that the student be involved. On occasion, there may be opportunity for students to network with the community agencies or associations if the project requires their involvement. A student faced with a group of qualified, interested, people who are all gathered to facilitate successful intended outcomes, will realize the genuine value of the endeavor.

There are several ways that teachers can create opportunities to honor learning styles. Approaches that include alternatives, learning cycles, and/or complex activities apply learning style theory to the classroom providing learners the best chance for success.

In the planning stages it is very easy to simplify the process by allowing students to create traditional products. Students, like teachers, can fall into a routine of providing minimal effort and lackluster performances purely out of boredom, lack of knowledge of options, misunderstanding of teacher expectations, and years of habit. To avoid this, teachers need to model and divulge expectations in discussions about the multitude of

ways to report. This is not to indicate that traditional methods are to be excluded.

Traditional methods must be included in any array of product styles, as some students need this option to perform at their best. The unfortunate aspect of tradition is that it has often been a system where only one performance option was provided when many would be better for learning styles and a representation of student learning. Alternative ways of demonstrating outcomes provides a better measure for assessment. Assessment that is multi-dimensional, accurate, and more descriptive of the growth of the student. Within this approach to learning styles, the teacher enjoys a new look to ways of substantiating curriculum. Poetry, hands-on activities, learning centers, plays, dioramas, etc. all speak to multiple mechanisms for evaluation that present multi-sensory choices for the student to showcase their talents.

“The teacher who wants to not only offer additional opportunities but also wants to challenge students to develop their learning skills in other learning style preferences can design a systematic set of activities that utilize all learning styles before completing an assignment” (Robatham, D. 1999. p.1). In these packages, students need to complete a minimum amount of activities that incorporate skills from the various learning styles. When the student has finished all of the activities, he will have been exposed to his learning style strengths and possibly improved areas of weakness. Using a learning style model assists the teacher, student, and other participants in planning the integration of experiences with learning styles.

Kolb and Fry (1996) described four main types of learning styles:

1. Converger utilizes abstract conceptualization and active experimentation demonstrated through the following qualities: strong in practical application of ideas, can focus on hypo-deductive reasoning on specific problems, unemotional, and has narrow interests;
2. Diverger is based in concrete experience and reflective observation. They exhibit strong in imaginative ability, good skill at generating ideas and seeing things from different perspectives, an interest in people and broad cultural themes;
3. Assimilator is an individual who emphasizes their abilities in abstract conceptualization and reflective observation. They accomplish this through a strong ability to create theoretical models, excellence in inductive reasoning, and concern for abstract concepts rather than people; and
4. Accomodator who, as a learner, thrives on concrete experience and active experimentation. Their greatest strength is doing things, they are risk takers, perform well when required to react to immediate circumstances, and solve problems intuitively. (Smith, M. 1996. Learning Styles section, para.1)

Instead of focusing on the content to be learned the participants are forced to adjust their viewpoint to organize learning according to the preferences of the learner. These preferences are the starting point of a system that will extend the learner into to

new quadrants of learning styles. “Course material becomes organized around themes or problems with the emphasis on how students develop skills using the content”

(Robatham, D. 1999. p.1).

Another approach to including multiple learning styles in the classroom is to create complex projects that serve as the central idea for all activity. Due to the complexity of the work that has to be applied the student will unintentionally utilize many learning styles that will incorporate multiple intelligences, attitudes, and skills. Instead of all learners starting at the same point and following identical paths, there is a ‘shotgun’ type initiation to the unit and learners select best options for completing tasks. Examples of this would include “project-based learning, especially when connected to community-service initiatives, provide a typical semester-long, complex activity for students to bring their different preferences together into a cooperative effort”

(Robatham, D. 1999. p.1).

When all the planning, strategizing, and assessing is completed, it is important that students have an opportunity to validate learning in a celebratory environment. Recognition, praise, and gratitude for actions that have been authentic in nature and relevant to individual or communal learning deserve respectful accolades. The event is the final episode that solidifies all the reasons for the various efforts that are needed to complete something of value with efficiency. “Acknowledgment gives learners an opportunity for defining, implementing, and assessing their practice and learning” (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Best Practice section, para.9). Much is learned in the celebration as it takes on an element of reflection about positive and negative

aspects of the learning actions. The most powerful possibility is that learners will realize that ““I have learned something that matters, used it to accomplish something. I will remember it because it matters and what I've accomplished.” (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997. Best Practice section, para.9).

Assessment.

Assessment in experiential based classrooms is a continual process that is meticulously connected to the intended learning outcomes set in the planning stage. Assessment is accomplished at every checkpoint of the activities and takes the form of reflection and monitoring of progress. This is not a difficult process as learning is defined and indicators of success are in place before any activities are initiated.

Assessment is articulated and stated in writing during planning. Parameters of expectations, predictions, quantity, quality, roles of individuals, measurement tools, and evaluation schedules are determined prior to the onset of action. These descriptors provide a format for self, peer, facilitator, and participant evaluation to occur. As well, natural consequences can effect their decision about the effectiveness of performance during any portion of the endeavor.

Unlike traditional methods of assessment where a culminating event holds large impact on deciding the amount and quality of learning, assessment in experiential education is a persistent process. Constantly evaluating aspects of student execution promotes success. Students who receive continual and meaningful feedback about their performance have opportunities to adjust. Assessment information measured against initial outcomes communicates areas of strength and weakness. These communications

are not final and promote dialogue about past practice and future direction. In the culminating analysis, there is a diagram that portrays a series of growth prospects and the reaction of the learner to each of them. This procedure diminishes the amount of questions that can cause evaluation to be an uncertain collection of information. The critical portion of assessment lies in the planning operations where care must be taken to ensure that outcomes are measurable.

In measuring outcomes there are several ways that can result in realistic and accurate measurement. In a continuous format it is best to gather qualitative and quantitative data. To record visualizations and establish a concrete guide, it is a good idea to develop a matrix as part of the planning. A matrix will assist in collection of information that is more descriptive than yes and no answers. A substantiation of why outcomes have resulted in a certain way can be investigated when data has depth and breadth. Identifying who, what, where, why, when, and how leads to an analysis of learning that is meaningful, relevant, and applicable to future learning in a variety of environments and enables substantial amounts of personal growth to occur. Assessment in this light does not serve as a culmination but a step towards new, extended, and/or remedial learning.

There are many methods for collection of assessment data. Data can be gathered through narratives, interviews, surveys, focus groups, or a myriad of other procedures. Whatever the approach, it is imperative that the system allows time for reflection. In experiential education the need to take time to analyze possible meaning and implications of assessment information. While the word "reflection" is derived from roots that mean,

"to look back over," it should actually begin at the start of the process and be integral to all phases of the activity itself (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997. Best Practice section, para.7). Reflection used correctly defines the activity and promotes internalization of the experience at all levels. Time spent reflecting is time the learner uses to connect to old information and make sense of new learning. Reflection encourages the participant to clarify intended learning outcomes and analyze the effectiveness of the events that were a result of these objectives. The comparison sets up an image that describes the path of growth that started with initial assumptions and ended with reflective analysis of those beginning thoughts. It is through this contrast that the learner realizes the amount of growth that has been achieved, speculates about future endeavors, and plans events that will present similar acquisition for knowledge and competencies.

Classroom Culture.

Experiential education develops a classroom culture that attempts to produce “a unique pattern of circumstances, values, learning styles, pressures and opinions that will interact in complex ways to generate a new and unique learning climate” (Robatham, D. 1999. p.1). The teacher works to facilitate learning and adapt all aspects of the environment to the needs of learner groups. This is an important shift compared to traditional methods, as course requirements are secondary to student needs. Students do not need to worry about fitting into prescribed streams as the streams are determined by student characteristics. The intent is for learner to take control of their learning in a self-directed manner. To achieve greater ownership of their education, students need to feel that the environment is a “co-operative learning environment, which the learner perceives

as being democratic, flexible, challenging, and most importantly, non-threatening” (Robatham, D. 1999. p.1).

To promote this kind of atmosphere, teachers need to be sensitive to obstructions that are produced by the system, student, or teacher. Areas like learning and teaching style, motivation, self-esteem/concept, flexibility of attitudes or framework, decision-making skills, and past learning experiences all impact the quality of the environment and those individuals seek to grow.

The process of developing an atmosphere that focuses on experiential learning takes time and patience. Students are predominately used to education that impresses control and structure upon their learning. Moving from being dominated by others to having to make decisions that demand responsibility is a difficult task. A process that is cautious in slowly providing opportunity for the learner to make decisions and realize the results is necessary. Guidance and conferencing are necessary so that students understand that education is their responsibility yet they are not alone. Structures to assist them are part of an experiential based environment. The most important part of this atmosphere is the planning of clearly understood intended learning outcomes. These outcomes are communicated and reiterated in planning, regular meetings, evaluation, and at times when natural consequences force review or reflection. “As the student begins to assimilate and apply new skills and knowledge associated with self-direction, their needs will alter as they gradually shift from one end of a control continuum at which the lecturer dominates, toward self-control” (Robatham, D. 1999. p.1).

The challenge for all involved in creating self-directed, experiential learners is the degree that students will be able to accomplish their role. Many students will balk and rebel against having to take ownership in moving from traditional to self-driven education. This is where the experience and wisdom of the teacher comes into play in deciding the needs of the students. Acting as an educator, parent, counselor, and any other role necessary, the teacher must illustrate perceptiveness in guiding participants during the transitory stage. Like all development, students will exhibit a varying array of abilities, pace, and advancement peaks. In this situation, it is best for the teacher to incorporate into their perspective an attitude that allows for differentiation of presentation when dealing with individual students. In an experiential learning environment, the overall idea is to make the student more important than the content so that all have an opportunity to be successful.

The experiential learning environment:

- Respects the individuals ideas and choices;
- Gives the individual the right to 'confront' difficult situations with the view to there resolution;
- Provides opportunity to take on challenge in an atmosphere of support and caring (the challenge may be intellectual, emotional, physical, mental, or all four);
- Generates space and time to stand back and reflect when pressures or doubts become too strong;

- Cultivates a realization that the attempt at doing something new or different is more significant than the result;
- Produces awareness that effective learning requires small controlled steps outside comfort zones. (The HRD Group Ltd. 2003, p.1)

Effects of Experiential Education

The advantage of getting students to know themselves is a colossal shift that experiential education promotes. Teachers who spend the time to learn about their students through an organized system will help their class atmosphere and future of their students. "It is harder to find out the background of the experience of individuals," Dewey recognized, "and harder to find out just how the subject matters already contained in that experience shall be directed so as to lead out to larger and better organized fields" (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Common Misconceptions section, para.2).

Experiential education creates attitudes and endeavors that promote communication, observation, critical thinking, questioning, and creative work that are stifled in the traditional classroom. Presented in an effective way, experiences challenge students to analyze and synthesize thoughts and events of previous thinkers. In a sense they are following in the steps of those who have changed society throughout time by researching examples and actively pursuing their own related projects in a new age context.

Many instances in society are compartmentalized. We send our children to school; our elderly to 'homes', and opportunities for mingling is remote. The missed prospects to

advance an understanding of other people are sadly replaced by ineffective lectures, video, books, or the Internet. Experiences that should be felt and integrated into the educational landscape are merely observed in superficial ways. Experiential education insists on addressing the needs of the whole person. Ways of knowing are first-hand, affecting the senses of the learner immediately so that they are ingrained with more intensity. “The goal is to become aware equally of the world, and of one's self, and the constant interaction between the two. If anything, Experiential Education demands that we pay even greater attention to the problems of how we know what we know and why we know what we know, in ways that traditional education usually doesn't offer” (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Common Misconceptions section, para.3).

Students learn about the hidden curriculum of education and society. What might appear turbulent and untidy in a classroom might be generating thinking on levels that are rarely realized in linear-style atmospheres. Education cannot afford to speak about outcomes that are not represented in the behavior of the professionals who instruct. To ask students to be respectful while teachers are rude to students teaches students about the imbalance of power in our society. As well, it promotes action that will enhance the status of those who might be oppressed (e.g.: females, disabled). Teachers in experiential based classrooms acknowledge that the control shift that creates an impression of chaos is necessary in empowering students to lead their own educational goals.

Teachers, who wish to be skilled at experiential education, become involved in ongoing professional development. To avoid falling back into the thinking of traditional schooling, professionals must constantly be knowledgeable and able to apply cornerstone

areas like the shifting of time usage, coordination of the different levels of systemic organizations (e.g.: district, provincial), be conversant in the theory and practice of experiential education, learning styles, Multiple Intelligences, and be confident in their decision. Teachers who keep abreast of current pedagogy soon realize that experiential education is not restrictive. Instead it is an ideology that embraces a variety of effective teaching practices regardless of their source.

On many planes, experiential education is adventurous and possibly viewed as hazardous. Giving students control is risky business for some professionals. Removing the class from a controlled environment and accompanying them into communities where events are not lock step and a multitude of outcomes could occur is the empowering portion. Placing societal beliefs in a position to be scrutinized creates a precarious situation and helps to promote effective learning because there is risk and youth thrives on adventure. It makes sense that education uses the aspect of adventure to make education exciting and meaningful so that learners can see the purpose and value in their activity as real. “The goal is not to give up control, but to practice “due diligence”--create an environment with a level of risk calculated to allow for short term failures and long-term successes” (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Common Misconceptions section, para.6).

The definition of success involves cognitive, physical, emotive, social, and psychological positive growth of all individuals. In this concept, stress plays a role and is defined in terms of good and bad stress. The nature of discomfort is determined by the risk factor attached to each type of tension. “Assumptions, stereotypes, and/or

expectations can all cause discomfort where no real risk is involved. Such discomfort is real, however, and should never be taken lightly” (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Common Misconceptions section, para.6). This idea of becoming imbalanced to promote gain is rooted in Piaget’s “optimal distance” concept. Piaget’s idea was one that recognized “that achieving a new level of skill or insight (a point of "equilibrium") is likely to require a period of transition or dissonance” (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Common Misconceptions section, para.6). In other words, one of the skills of the experiential educator is to produce situations that place the learner in precarious experiences that test their assumptions. A learner in a state of discord must mentally, physically, and socially adjust to recover equilibrium. It is this effort in an experiential arena that encourages evaluation of present belief systems and motivates retention of changes that illustrate growth.

“When one looks at the learning style preferences of the present generation of students, one finds concrete, socially contextual learning the preferred mode” (NSEE Foundations Document Committee.1997.Practical Payoffs section, para.2). Experiential education includes more strategies than those that simply nurture abstract learning. In doing so, the majority of learners are given more chance to demonstrate their capabilities and be successful. The juxtaposition between learner preference and systemic demands is diminished. Learners feel welcome and comforted by an approach that looks to develop educational goals tailored to their acquired skills and thoughts, seeking to advance them through experiences that question the learner and their world.

Chapter Three

Case Study

Context: Education and Schooling.

Southeast Kootenay School District is similar to most educational regions in that it strives to provide students with quality educational programs. Many schools have a mission statement that use words like equitable, quality, opportunity, safe, supportive, professional, and caring when publicizing their intent. Professionals aim to implement student-focused decision- making, goal setting, personal relevancy, engaging leadership, and empowerment delivered in an inspiring manner. High expectations and standards that motivate students to strive for excellence in programs that invest in the future are delivered using challenge and reward.

Mount Baker School is a safe, caring and respectful, community that enables quality relevant and individualized learning. (Mount Baker Senior Secondary Agenda, 2002. p.5)

The mission statement sets up a huge undertaking considering available time and the location where students spend a majority of their time during lessons. The possibility of realizing the full impact of the mission message is questionable in the current educational system. Internalizing learning so that it will result in personal social action seems to be a rare outcome. The relationship between programs that focus on university preparation while diminishing the importance of lesser subjects like Art and Drama only

points to a system that serves the minority of our students. A very small percentage of students continue on to university while everyone experiences art and drama in many ways throughout a lifetime.

I don't watch t.v. so much cause I just go outside and shoot baskets or something. It feels a lot better than just sitting around (Journal Entry, July 18)

I really want to learn more Spanish because it is fun (Journal Entry, June 12)

Then my host mother showed me how to do the laundry and I did my washing. It's weird because some of the chores that I hate at home (laundry) I enjoy here. I don't know if it is because it gives me a sense of security and something familiar, or because the view from the laundry sink is absolutely beautiful.(Journal Entry, July 30)

Many high school students recognize the plight of the school system and are bombarded by attitudes that make efforts to effect change. Their own reality is complicated by daily news releases that highlight the triumphs and difficulties of personal relationships including the images of wealth and global conflicts. In light of a society and world that may appear to be in decline, young people feel isolated and helpless to change the global situation. Although there is a common bond between people of all ages around the planet, it is difficult to realize similarities between people when the information is distributed without human contact. It is more likely that students will develop cynical, pessimistic attitudes that discourage youth empowerment. The image is one of juxtaposition and produces the dilemma that has plagued educators throughout time: education versus schooling.

I hope we don't have too much trouble down there (Journal Entry, June 5)

The thought of all the diseases scares me-I haven't decided if I should get malaria pills or not (Journal Entry, April 22)

It's 12:40 a.m. right now and I hardly slept last night. I'm kind of excited but I'm also scared because I don't know what to expect (Journal Entry, July 14)

The Project

In September of 2002, three educators and eleven students embarked on a process of discovery. They wanted to assess the situation of youth empowerment and the attitudes that are produced as a result. Their plan was to measure the feelings of a group of a representative group and compare it with a larger youth population. All participants, adult and youth, were members of Mount Baker High School in Cranbrook, British Columbia, Canada.

Empowerment is a complex situation that incorporates community, regional, national, and global factors. It is not that we are tremendous travelers or that our worldliness encompasses all knowledge, it is that empowerment is ultimately dependent on perception of ones' ability to effect change.

To begin the planning process, teachers formulated ideas into program objectives. These aims were then shared with a group of possible participants. After a promotional stage that included communication with each potential participant, those who could commit were accepted. From this point of the project it was important that the adults secure information about current thinking on perceived youth power in a changing world. As suspected, there was a general feeling of ineffectiveness in regard to youth being able to reconstruct existing structures in a meaningful way.

To teach the young about problem solving, decision-making processes it was necessary to model and present an environment of trust, flexibility, and belief in the young people willing to wrestle with the challenge before them. The group did not distinguish between teacher and student unless it was absolutely necessary for safety. Students were put in a position of making decisions and reaping the results of those decisions.

Responsibilities were of an individual and collective nature. Students needed to plan all objectives of the project under the theme of the general idea of youth empowerment.

Besides this everyone was responsible for:

- Passport application and acquisition,
- Fundraising organization that involved speaking with community associations and businesses,
- Grant applications to access monies for the group;
- Spanish language lessons,
- Developing their knowledge base about Costa Rica so that a general understanding of the country and its people would be established for all group members,
- Scheduling vaccinations,
- Completing and returning all necessary forms,
- Attending weekly meetings and highlight events that happened prior to the trip, and
- Ensuring to adhere to all payment deadlines.

On its own, this was a change from usual policy at the school as students were thrust into a role of personal responsibility. In all cases the students met all standards.

From the beginning of the project students were asked to maintain journals that would be examined in confidentiality by the researcher. Journals were to include anything relevant to activities associated with the project.

Our schedule of events (see Appendix A) started with planning that considered knowledge development about Costa Rica, filming techniques for public promotional videos, traveling tips including everything from packing to vaccinations, and Spanish. Accompanying knowledge was improving the comfort and rapport level among all participants, itinerary decisions and finalizing, FAQ's, and connecting with other organizations. Our networking involved a search for sponsors, prospect of practicing video production skills, research to find information from people who had done similar projects in similar environments, or necessary steps needed to satisfy components of goals of the project.

No matter how much you can prepare there are realities that cannot be anticipated. This characteristic is partially due to individual preferences and perceptions, or because these happenings were not expected. Time spent in Costa Rica brought growth to everyone. To define growth would require a consideration of individuals venturing in a multitude of different directions, a change from their present state. As with any project, predictions fell short, were opposite to what happened, or were simply incorrect.

In the final analysis, all participants experienced development through an intense course of activity. Experiential activities did not require direct teaching but promoted students to espouse revelations that they had learned through experience. This method of

learning served to motivate everyone to learn more and become involved in opportunities they would scoff at in their home environment. Communication, even in a place where language was a barrier, produced a commitment to the people who hosted us. As a group we embraced the culture we experienced and in doing so started to comprehend the meaning of our own existence.

What Education Is.

Education is the sum of experiences that an individual is exposed to during their lifetime. People, relationships, senses, feelings, motility, individualism, collectiveness, and spirituality are examples of the vast multitude of conscious and unconscious occurrences that bombard people on a daily basis. It is impossible to not be affected because we are living organisms. The unique quality of humanity is that we are affected by our surroundings and, if we desire, can effect our environment in a determined, intentional way. In this sense, education becomes a two-way intimate association that is ingrained into our personal weave. These 'personal' portraits of fabric reflect the interconnectedness of our society.

On the bus we stopped and saw a tree sloth. Then here at the hotel we saw a yellow and black toucan. Tonight we saw fireflies too. It is so amazing here! (Journal Entry, July 26).

I had an argument with my dad the other day. He thinks I will regret going to Costa Rica because of the expense, but I know I won't. He doesn't understand how much I am learning and how much this means to me. I love traveling and have always wanted to work with people from another country. (Journal Entry, June 14).

Education is multi-leveled. Each individual personalizes education in a social, emotional, intellectual, psychomotor, and spiritual manner that materializes in growth. All these dimensions are interrelated existing together to create an individual's ensemble of characteristics. As single entities, these dimensions do not impress the full force of their significance. As well, the sense and force of each sphere is determined by individual interpretation in relation to previous encounters and developed attitudes.

I'm so glad I came on this trip. I changed a lot, it's hard to explain how but I know I did. I wonder if I still feel and act the same way I do here as in Cranbrook. My friends and people are different there so it'll be interesting. I would really like to know how other people think I've changed like how they see me now. Because I'm really having trouble remembering what exactly I'm normally like (Journal Entry, August 13).

Attitudes and mannerisms are examples of habits and routines that we incorporate into our presentation of self. Acquiring and adopting a disposition requires education to occur. The process of selecting character attributes directly reflects an individual's education. Propensities change as time progresses and ability to think at different levels, with empathy, evolves.

What The School Is.

School is society's attempt to formalize education for the masses. Using sound theoretical reasoning and pedagogical systems, students face daily lessons that attempt to perpetuate values, information, and skills that public organizations deem worthy. The undertaking attempts to develop well-rounded, educated citizens using approaches from the individual to the collective, concrete to the abstract, what is known to the unknown, past to present to the future, in a way that captures the imagination and passion of the

learner. There is no tried and true method of schooling so educational overtures and their success rate is a reoccurring topic of controversy for the pundits.

In school, professionals spend time managing students, dealing with the management of the system, planning and delivering lessons, evaluating students, and reporting to parents in an effort to provide an effective communication system that gives everyone a feeling of ownership. Students spend time on studies, social skills, value adjustment, evaluating right and wrong, choosing pathways, and attempting to please or harass those who oversee their progress.

School is the organization that attempts to provide the missing link in some students' lives. Societal position and perception due to changing values regarding child rearing, family structure, educational content, inclusion, teacher role expectations, cultural and gender equity, self-esteem, and many other special interests shape the meaning and activities of school. School has expanded to provide a balance that includes replacing missing, prerequisite family or age-specific experiences and growth activities. School tries to do more with fewer resources.

School is the building where students spend a minimum of twenty-five percent of each day interacting. Students relate to adults, peers, mentally and physically challenged, people from different cultures and with different values. They experience curricular and extra-curricular events, successes and failures, ills of society, verbal and physical attacks of self, prejudice, and other elements of youth culture in an involuntary situation. School is the place where the milieu sometimes forces learning and reflection to happen whether the individual is ready or not.

The Subject Matter of Education.

The term, 'the educated citizen' is often used to provide the rationale for school curriculum. Our education system starts a child's schooling by providing a smattering of a variety of studies then moves to a modified specialization in later years with some courses required for graduation. Specializing too early limits the possibility of making informed decisions about paths that could be followed. Generalizing in the educational career for too long produces students who are a 'jack of all trades but master of none'. By the time the middle teen years are reached, it is felt that students are responsible enough to make decisions regarding their intellectual and skill development. Intricately woven with subject matter is the development of the process of learning content. Education waffles back and forth from emphasizing content to process to content failing to acknowledge the synchronous nature of the two by giving both equal status.

After that we washed our clothes here at lunch. You put them in a machine that washes them with soap, and then you take them out and rinse them in the sink thing to get all the soap out. Then you put them in a compressor thingy for a bit, then hang them to dry when they're done.(Journal Entry, July 31)

Just meeting and getting to know someone like Mauricio has made it a special experience. He certainly has a gift for working with people, and has undoubtedly impressed upon us all that people in other countries are real human beings who are warm, energetic, enthusiastic, caring, and have concerns, joys, and stresses just like any one of us. This was also reinforced as our relationships with our host families developed, and in our work with the Cost Ricans in our video projects. Just getting to

know people in another country and of another culture like this, reminds us that people everywhere are real people.(Journal Entry, July 26)

Teachers teach students, they don't teach Math, French, Science, or any other subject. Yet futile battles in schools subject the listener to phrases like 'prime teaching time' for core curriculum and hierarchy battles between subject area teachers in high schools point to a void in this understanding between professionals. Brain research, multiple-intelligence, and the recent emphasis on problem-solving proficiency should lead any individual to the realization that subject content is secondary to the correlation of the topic to the child's sphere of existence.

Subject matter is the framework that assists in the planning process for the presentation of ideas. The important educational contribution happens when the teacher deftly makes the connection between content and the student's realm of knowledge. This event is the essence of teacher. To teach subject matter in isolation simply devalues the time of the student and instructor. It is similar to a plumber learning every specification required to build a house but never applying the knowledge on the jobsite. The educated citizen knows the relevance of subject matter and relates it to immediate, past, and future situations in a multi-disciplinary approach.

The Nature of Method.

Experiential education that uses what is already known as the starting point is the best way to impact students. Watch a student who is motivated to blow a bubble or whistle and you will learn about education. The focus is pursed on the face as they practice repetitively slowly developing skill and knowledge about correct and incorrect maneuvers. The beauty of the situation is the intensity of learning that is taking place due

to the desired product. For the educator, witnessing the passion and process of this type of learning commands allegiance to active, participatory education that is relevant in the planning, process, and evaluation stages.

This morning I woke at 5:30 to go on a walk thing. It was cool. We saw a poisonous dart frog, monkey, and some really big trees. (Journal Entry, July 26)

I've been listening to my Spanish tape lots lately because I want to be able to communicate with my host family-especially the kids who won't know English at all (Journal Entry, June 27)

Standards that set high expectations and outline criteria for varying results inform the students that the learning is valuable. Rationalizing the content in terms of the student, connecting with self, others, and community (local, regional, federal, and global) adds proof to the worth of the material. An attitude that points to success as one plateau of attainment and failures as an opportunity to reach desired plateaus develop self-esteem and an environment of risk-takers. School is not a reflection of the 'real world' nor are the methods intended to simulate a training ground for individuals to become the next minions of the sustainable economy. School is a place where the young can grow through guided experimentation and opportunities that might not otherwise be available.

The School and Social Progress.

The idea that the future rests in the lap of youth is realistic and necessary for our continued existence. Biologically, life fades and the remains must be left in the form of knowledge and essence. Diverse perspectives in today's world make legacy plans very intricate and problematic. Deciding what information is perpetuated and what concepts become fossils is an emotional debate that may never be resolved by the power brokers of

the day. The resiliency of thought will be determined by successive generations according to the practical application of a construct. Survival will depend on a constantly changing society and the ability of components to adapt like a chameleon in a rainforest.

We are a destructive species. In my book, I read “The frog does not drink up the pond in which it lives”. It has got me obsessing about us as a species. Perhaps being down here, surrounded by pristine forest on the brink of destruction has made me worry about its safety and (since we are invariably connected) our safety (Journal Entry, August 13)

The youth inherit the world and they will determine whether ideas live or die. Youth will champion causes, social change, and notions when they have blossomed into people of action. This labor of love phase will not be determined by the identification of a specific age but is governed by an intellectual and emotional maturity that will be generated over time. The period that will nurture this maturity will include the library of experiences from school.

I think it would be cool if Cranbrook/Kimberley area showed more initiative for recycling/recycling type ideas (Journal Entry, August 3)

School is like a house. It is not the structure that determines the quality of the affair but the human element that delivers the impact for the participant. Teachers must realize that school must present situations and environments that test individual and collective student beliefs. New ideas that provide varying viewpoints allow for discourse, confirmation, and/or reshaping of accepted policy. The process of evaluating ideas in collective and individual settings can provide individuals with a structure that allows the application of thought, experience, and emotions. Through these types of scenarios the

status quo will be continually scrutinized for its merit. If necessary, alterations can be made transforming society into a stronger situation for the needs of society.

I think it is awesome to be around people like the people from our group that all care about things like this. (Journal Entry, August 5)

The school system of today is rife with dysfunctional families, mental and physical disabilities, dependencies, co-dependencies, imbalances, mixed messages, moral and social dilemmas, professional deficiencies, and negativity that is compounded by declining funds, aging buildings, low staff moral, lack of parental support, and a general negative attitude regarding the competency of the school system. More demands with fewer resources make it difficult for students and adults to achieve the lofty target of most mission statements. This doesn't mean that the task is impossible but it is difficult to achieve.

Sitting in a desk, listening to lectures, watching videos, and doing group posters do not impact on the brain or the soul. Education beyond schooling takes teachers and students who are willing to take risks. It requires people who are prepared to step outside of the prescribed educational box and look beyond for ways to process information in a meaningful way. The intent of the planning may realize the goals but everyone will be affected differently. There will be common themes but past learning and experiences will coalesce distinctly in each individual. Experiential education impacts into the roots of a person. There is a realization that you are being pushed and pulled into new realms that force you to stretch, survive, and innovate to an extent that causes positive and negative emotional scarring. This process brings about an educational epiphany that consummates any mission statement.

It makes me wonder what is going to happen and also what I am going to choose for myself. Or perhaps what I'll let others choose for me (which I am less inclined to, but also realize that not choosing is in itself a choice (Journal Entry, June 21)

The Proposal: Youth Social Justice Media Project: Costa Rica

The project is designed to develop Canadian youth leaders. Many youth are cynical and apathetic regarding their perceived impact on the world. The aim of this project is to change those attitudes to foster youth empowerment as demonstrated through proactive behaviors. The importance of encouraging the integration of a global perspective in working locally to impact internationally is paramount in binding the reality and goals of individual and collective culture. For example, actions of government affect individuals every day. There are governmental rules for water quality, driving your car, how much money you'll pay in taxes, and tuition paid at public universities. The government impacts all of us. Most teens believe that they are only one person and are powerless. A woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat for a white man in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. She became the catalyst that sparked the civil rights movement that produced many important social justice victories in America.

Many of us are also unaware of differences between cultures. An example includes the introduction of the Chevrolet Nova in Latin America, where in Spanish no va means "doesn't go" -- probably not the impression GM had intended. Subtler brand dissonances can occur as well. The colors red and green are often used for positive emphasis in the U.S.A. In China red can have negative connotations, and green can mean bad news in some Buddhist countries and Israel.

This project will increase student knowledge of cultural characteristics, and global societal, environmental, and geographical issues on an international scale. By working on familiar issues internationally, students may understand that local issues are really global, and that youth can initiate change through their actions. We live in a small world, and humans everywhere face many similar challenges. First hand knowledge of this may encourage students to make their homes better places.

I realize it is really important to do things for your own community, but you understand and appreciate things more after traveling and working with people of different backgrounds and cultures. (Journal Entry, August 11)

Professionals involved will receive direct exposure to the benefits of experiential education. Expected impact on the development of the chaperones includes a greater understanding of the learning process in the cognitive domain while focusing on the affective. Cognitive and affective domains can be found in Appendix A.

Students understand the effectiveness of action research projects as an educational tool when they are actively engaged with regional and municipal organizations in social and environmental issues. The learning that results from the overlap of two cultures while working on a common goal will be evident through student journaling. Teachers will return with greater understanding, skills, and motivation to improve themselves and the students they serve. An ability to deliver related resources and curricula will benefit any school environment.

The project, not trip, was something that was a year in development, with expectations that were in part fulfilled, and in part disappointed. Not that the disappointment is a bad thing, it's just that when you have an idea of how things

should go, and the actual event doesn't have the same anticipated universal impact, there is inevitably some disappointment. But in a diverse group, there will always be a variety of responses to anything. No two people on this project have experienced the same events, growth, perceptions of each other and of me and will no doubt take away something of value, eventually, even if it's not directly discernable now to them. (Journal Entry, August 14)

The final product of this endeavor will be video productions created in Canada and Costa Rica on themes of common environmental and social concern. Side benefits resulting from these final projects will be the creation of a curriculum template for teachers who wish to implement similar projects in the future. The focus of the template is environmental issues, but it is adaptable to other social challenges. Other end products will include a comprehensive narrative video that tells the story of youth taking on issues in a world that can seem out of control to them. A proposed speaking tour to centers across Canada, in partnership with UNESCO, will feature these student leaders sharing their experiences and insight about future direction.

People are taking over the world and if we don't as a species change our ways there won't be any world left to live on, let alone take over. (Journal Entry, August 13)

Specifically, with our partners and resources, we were able to address the following questions through research, quantitative and qualitative:

1. Do youth in the remote area of South East Kootenay feel that they are empowered to make changes in the world for the better?

2. How can youth develop leadership skills conducive to developing responsible citizens who contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy?

We formulated the following objectives based on research:

1. Youth need meaningful projects to develop empowerment and a voice.
2. Youth need to make connections with people and societies around the world, and share their findings with other youth.
3. Youth need to understand popular media so they can experience a sense of control, rather than being controlled.
4. Youth need to discern meaningful information from sources with conflicting messages.
5. Youth need to experience that they do make a difference through caring, and taking on challenges to make the world better, environmentally and socially.

Our partners, listed below, provided a multitude of perspectives and insights that might of been ignored if we would have planned in isolation. Partnerships was a critical area of the project so starting with groups in our own community was imperative to setting the tone, attitude, and structure for future action.

Partners and resources:

- ❑ Canada World Youth, ACI ,
- ❑ The Central American Institute for International Affairs,
- ❑ Consortium For International Education
- ❑ Institute for Central American Development Studies,
- ❑ The Audubon Society of Costa Rica,

- CEDARENA (Centro de Derecho Ambiental y de los Recursos Naturales),
ASCONA,
- Fundacion Neotropica, Fundacion de Parques Nacionales,
- Commission to Costa Rica for UNESCO,
- Canadian Commission for UNESCO,
- National Parks Canada,
- Kootenay Columbia Fisheries Renewal,
- Cranbrook Volunteer Bureau,
- Canada Mental Health,
- BC Youth Options,
- RCMP
- College of the Rockies,
- Grassroots Canada,
- East Kootenay Health Services Society,
- Public Health Nurses,
- Community Healing and Intervention Society,
- National Film Board,
- Pacific Cinematheque,
- Young Mothers,
- Nights Alive,
- WILD Studios,
- Shaw Cable,
- Rocky Mountain Youth Theatre, and

- MBSS Spanish program.

Group Preparation.

Two student members of the group were the catalyst for the project. As students they were very active in seeking programs that would provide support for local community projects that they had initiated. Their actions were recognized and appreciated by a teacher at Mount Baker Senior Secondary. He realized that student impact could effect change at many levels. Although the students were being effective in their own community, this drama teacher realized that there was still something missing. These two students were having success in their community but still lacked faith in their ability to influence changes in the larger picture.

Having been a socially conscientious individual for many years and having the experience to recognize quality in youth, the teacher set out to examine the possibility of taking these two students, and other like-minded students on an experience that tested their strengths at impacting other youth in different cultures. The intent was to illustrate the fact that “thinking globally and acting locally” did make an impression on many different levels. Plus, global experience helps to get individuals thinking locally.

What if all of Africa doesn't want to be connected to the Internet (or Stock Exchange). Who are we to say that they need these things for the improvement of their society (Journal Entry, August 14)

After realizing the hard work and dream of the two students the teacher (Rod Osiowy) began planning an experience that would have mutual benefits for all participants. Preparation for the trip started early in the school year as Rod and chaperones created a list of students who might be interested and would value a trip with

the objectives as outlined. It was important for the participants to have already shown active interest in societal dilemmas, video production, and cultural exchange. As well, the students needed to commit to time, energy, and financial requirements designated before, during, and after the trip. The curriculum was neatly laid out and the elements of the hidden curriculum (e.g.; group dynamics, understanding cultural differences, language barriers) were considered and planned for as best as possible.

Starting in January, the group met once a week in an effort to become somewhat functional in basic Spanish. The other objective of the chaperones was to get to know the kids on different levels (e.g.: moods, humor, mannerisms, quirks) so that an understanding of these character components could be incorporated into the student management for the trip.

Part of the management for the trip involved satisfying district regulations surrounding the Freedom of Information to protect the individuals involved in the project. Protection for participants falls into several categorical concerns:

- Respect for human dignity is concerned with the integrity of the research in relation to the interests of involved individuals that are dependent upon the project;
- Respect for free and informed consent presumes that individuals can make informed decisions about the research and releasing of information. This portion of FOIP involves communication about objectives of the research and how the results will be shared so that participants can authorize consent;
- Respect for vulnerable persons aims to protect those who might be coerced or manipulated by others who might have influence to exploit them;

- Respect for privacy and confidentiality acknowledges a person's right to control information about them. In our final report and throughout the project anonymity was a working agreement as names were never used or discussed;
- Respect for justice and inclusiveness outlines ethical considerations for fairness in the procedural, methodological, and protocol areas; and
- Balancing the harms and benefits promotes a balance between gains from research and harm to participants. The project carried out did not inflict any harmful effects on any participants. (Source: University of Lethbridge, http://www.edu.uleth.ca/faculty/research/HSR/HSR_Policies_Proced10-09-01.pdf)

Due to the fact that participants were members of a high school and under the direction of teachers, permission forms were required (Appendix B) to alleviate any concerns about any of the above areas for parents and participants.

All of the chaperones were experienced in traveling with groups abroad and realized that emotional cycles occur when traveling. Group dynamics and bonding also played a role in the weekly meetings. It was important that the participants felt comfortable with each other, as they would be spending lengthy amounts of time together. Bonds created in the meetings would eliminate the awkwardness at the beginning of some trips where people are thrust together. Rules, expectations, cultural differences were all discussed and examined from personal and collective perspectives. Everyone was shown respect and felt that their voice was heard. The meetings set the tone for the trip and this front-end loading paid dividends during the stay in Costa Rica.

ACI Costa Rica and Mount Baker Secondary School.

The agreement between ACI Costa Rica and Mount Baker Secondary School bridged the direction needed for the next phase of work once the group landed in Costa Rica. All the front end loading that had been initiated in Cranbrook needed to be focused and reiterated through identification of practical projects. Our guide, Mauricio Gabert and his assistant Enrique, were extremely organized in this regard. They provided us with new perspectives and criteria for our trip. Workshops given by Mauricio helped all of us acclimatize to our new surroundings and concentrate on the task at hand.

Principles of the Agreement.

1. To promote the fraternity among human beings.
2. To work for a sustainable human development.
3. To encourage substantial changes in the relationships between human beings and the environment, and to assure harmony among them.
4. As an organization, the previous principles should be reflected in all our relationships, politics and structures.

Objectives of the Agreement.

1. To offer programs of cultural exchange and international activities. These programs will be flexible so that the maximum number of young people of different social, economic and personal conditions can enjoy the experience.
2. To generate a process of intercultural learning that encourages the personal and social growth of the youths through the activities of the Association.
3. To promote voluntary work in our country.

4. To create spaces for the initiative, creativity and cooperation among the young people.
5. To develop continuous processes of formation and information about Environmental education for children and adolescents, so that they become aware of their important and interactive roles within the community.
6. To project the work of the Association towards the community.
7. To create a network with national and international organizations to facilitate the diversification of projects and programs, and in this way to reach the objectives of voluntary work, intercultural learning, cultural exchange and international activities, environmental education with youth.

Expectations of the Mount Baker Participants.

The following expectations were articulated and communicated by our partners in Costa Rica:

1. We want you to come as open-minded as possible. Leave your cultural baggage at home and come prepared to learn about Costa Rica. Be ready to become a “Tico” or “Tica” during the next weeks.
2. We want you to show initiative and adaptability during your exchange. We know from experience that initiative and adaptability are keys to become part of your family and your voluntary job placement.
3. You are expected to work 4 to 8 hours a day. It is through an intensive contact with the Ticos that you are going to learn. We would like you to try your best to learn Spanish. It’s also a key to understanding our culture.

4. While the learning process, we also want you to contribute to our society with your human capacity, and then the giving process will be reciprocal. The capacity of giving, the respect, the friendliness, understanding and care of other people will teach you a lot... You will be representing your country in front of our people.
5. As guests in Costa Rica, we expect tolerance and respect from you towards our traditions and way of life. We offer you our hospitality to come and share a cultural experience. Keep in mind that you are coming to LIVE in a different culture with different customs, food, weather, etc...
6. You have made the decision to come to Costa Rica and will have to accept the differences, live with this new situation and not to try to change the country.
7. We need to stress to all incoming volunteers how difficult it is to find host families and voluntary jobs. Therefore, we want you to respect their roles.
8. For all the activities like the orientation and evaluation camps, we want all your cooperation to participate with initiative in all the discussions that we will be doing during the process.
9. During your stay in our country ACI-CR will introduce you to the new situation, doing an orientation where you will receive general information about our organization, Costa Rica, the community work, the host situation and recommendations in general.

Schedule of Activities for Participants.

We organized with Mauricio Gabert a schedule of three weeks including cultural activities, life with a Costa Rican host family, voluntary service for the host community, and tours to different places.

Mauricio was the contact between participants and all the components of this program. ACI-CR supplies all the logistic (community, transportation, reservations, etc.) to do possible your experience in Costa Rica. Mauricio was in charge of doing any translation needed and was the students' mentor during their stay.

The Video Projects

The video projects were initially designed to give students the opportunity to interact with different governmental levels, social institutions, and individuals in Costa Rica. The aim was to provide meaningful media projects that would help the partner groups in achieving their respective goals. The projects were set up prior to our arrival to Costa Rica through negotiation throughout the year leading up to departure.

The original concept was to develop one minute long public service announcements, made for local television. In fact, the projects developed into fifteen minute documentaries with one forty minute movie completed. The size of the projects stretched the technology and the students, but both worked very well.

The following pages provide a brief description of the video projects.

1. Colegio Ambientalista de Pedregoso de Perez Zeledon.

This secondary school emphasizes Environmental Education. They have 285 students from 12 to 17 years old (four 11th grades, three 12th grades and one 13th grade). They do not have the normal five grades of the National System for high schools yet, because they have been only working for three years.

The projects related to the environment are:

- a. Creation of Three Nurseries:-to let the students to learn and practice how to help in matters of reforestation. Also this project will help the people

- from the community to see other economic options (creation of primary materials), they want to be a model in the national and international level.
- b. Organic Vegetable Gardens:-including medicinal plants. Here they learn how to create their own compost.
 - c. Creation of Trails:-located beside the school, this area has secondary forest and protects some small areas that still have some flora and fauna (30 species of birds have been identified). This land belongs to the school. The idea will be to build those trails and then to make the students give maintenance and to use it for future research. They are just beginning this project now. In the future the school will improve the information on the trails having signs all the way along.
 - d. Rescue Center for Birds:-here the students have the opportunity to work more on the field, creating gardens and reforestation around the school to increase bird habitat.

We used Colegio Ambientalista de Pedregoso de Perez Zeledon as a good resource to get information and participants involved in the creation of the videos. It was a nice place to show, on the videos, a good alternative for improvement of the environment in a harmonious way. All participants involved recognized the school as one possible option in the future of the environmental movement.

A young professor who was excited to be involved with our Canadian participants directed the school. He recognized that we had a will to help the school to improve their infrastructure through the production of the video. Using our budget, equipment, video production knowledge and technological understanding we were able to go there and help

them produce communication videos that would let the country know of their accomplishments.

2. Casa de la Juventud (House of the Youth).

The Casa de la Juventud is an NGO (non governmental organization), which works with the youth of Perez Zeledon. It was created from young people of San Isidro 12 years ago. Casa de la Juventud works as an alternative educational center for youth who wish to get training in different areas. The youth who are trained return the favor by giving service to other activities at the Casa de la Juventud.

Young volunteers from the community built Casa de Juventud. The land was given by the city of San Isidro for free and the INA (National Institute of Learning of CR) gave scholarships to 40 youth who helped to build and design the house. The whole process was achieved by donations and input from many youth.

Work Camps in National Parks, take groups of youth to work in the National Parks. The participants receive everything except the transportation (only thing to be paid by the youth because they will have a private micro bus). They work in projects involving infra structure like building trails or park maintenance from 7:30am to 1:00pm/6 days a week. They also receive training in different topics about the environment and first aid.

Courses that are offered at la Casa de la Juventud: Creation of groups; Group Dynamics; Self-Esteem; Leadership; Gender; Creation of projects; Working plans; Board of Members; and Communal organization.

Mount Baker participants documented how the organization offered free courses to a variety of communities. The resulting video illustrated that training to the youth of

the area resulted in personal advancement in the areas of individual growth and self-esteem, financial gain, and societal productivity.

As an offering to our group, la Casa de la Juventud provided information and historical perspective of the area, classrooms for our Spanish Workshops, and connections to organizers of other associations in the area. It represented an organization that was planned for youth and run by youth in all facets.

3. Colegio del Valle.

Colegio del Valle and its professor of theatre Gerardo Selva Godoy, has a video club and they wanted to create a film about the problems of drugs among the young people of Perez Zeledon. All actors, costumes, scripts and interesting ideas for making this film originated at the college. Before we arrived they already had a plan of places, stages, and different components to be involved. Professor Don Gerardo was a person who was passionate about producing a video to help all the young people of the area. He constantly pushed for more time and resources to create the anti-drug video.

Participants were transported to the variety of sites in the community including nightclubs, back streets, central park, and other sites frequented by members of the drug culture. While on location, scripted scenes were recorded for editing later. As a video, this was the most challenging, as it was a fictitious story that presented youth with a very serious message. The challenge was to communicate the message in a believable manner so that youth would consider the implications of drug use.

4. Centro Biologico de Quebradas (FUDEBIOL).

The Biological Center of “Las Quebradas” is managed by FUDEBIOL (Fundacion para el Desarrollo del Centro Biologico Las Quebradas), which is a non profit

private community organization, whose mission is to stop the destruction of the Quebrada River basin which is the source of drinking water in San Isidro del General (the main town in the area of Perez Zeledon). The project site is located 3 km uphill from “Las Quebradas”, between 1000 and 2500 meters above sea level. The main reasons for starting the project on May 13th of 1989 was protection of the Quebrada River which gives water to the whole county of Perez Zeledon and trying to save the pre-mountain rain forest. The Center was also built as an educational center for the community.

Today the main goals still are:

- Conservation of River Quebradas
- Development of environmental education for children and the community
- Establishment of different sustainable systems to guarantee conservation of flora, fauna and water resources in the area
- To become financially independent through tourism.

The project is especially proud of the diversity of birds and butterflies that live in their forest. They already have constructed a butterfly farm in order to present all the different types of butterflies to the tourists. They wanted to enhance bird watching in the area, which may include up to 200 different species. The Biological Center wants to observe the habits of the birds and create some leaflets about what birds can be found in the area and at what time of the year.

Our job was to make a documentary about the importance of maintaining this place. We interviewed people from AyA the national company supplying water in Costa Rica to see the good side of having Fudebiol. The video also examined other projects that Fudebiol are running as a benefit to the region of Perez Zeledon.

Evaluation of the Project

Rotary International, Canada World Youth, Canadian Commission For UNESCO, the RCMP, school accreditation and Colleges have research to support the objectives of this project. Measurements of feelings of empowerment of the youth, of leadership abilities, and of the internal changes in the youth were completed quantitatively and qualitatively. Youth will be tracked for one year following the project for supplemental data.

Journal.

Students will be required to maintain a journal. In some cases, supervisors will provide journal topics but there will be opportunity for 'free writing' thoughts about various associated activities. Analysis of the journals formed a database of reoccurring phrases to attempt to analyze changing attitude.

Interviews.

A series of questions focusing on critical elements of the project were posed to participants. These interviews took place before, during, and after travel.

Videotape.

The videotape served as the third qualitative tool providing a dialogue of planning, activities, and emotional flavor of the various entities involved in the project. The footage taken separate from the projects served as one piece of evidence that documented individual and collective change among the group. It outlined the project from conception to the return to Canada

Chapter Four

Project Impact: Reflections And Observations

A reflection by nature is a perspective from an individual. I will start with a journal entry from a chaperone.

The last day in our host community and it is time to be reflective and somewhat sad. The trip has been one of time that has taken different paces. The first week was one where excitement and anticipation surrounded everything most people did. New sights, smells, etc formed the basis for discovery and awe. But this adventure started and developed in North America basically in a culture that was severely similar to ours. The stretch was minute for most people. Possibly surprise about the variety and volume of humanity in places like Houston but really, being surrounded by McDonald's and other corporate identities dear to our hearts does not take you away from home, it simply reinforces home and comforts the weary traveler.

The second week illustrated the impact of a realization that we were shorthanded in our ability to communicate with most others around the world. Homesickness hit a few while others were riding the adrenalin wave. There still needed to be a connection to home. Phone calls, Internet Café for email and MSN still circulated in most of our minds. The culture here was friendly, inviting, and possibly even romantic. The time slowed down as we started to focus on one of the reasons for coming to Costa Rica-video projects. It was probably a good thing as the electricity of a new environment had become somewhat worn. Even the dogs on our block no longer treated us as strangers choosing to simply lie on the step instead of getting up to bark and chase us to our door. The trek from door to micro-bus, which we took six times daily, was automatic and could be done with our brain on autopilot. We were part of the community on one level. Our families looked forward to seeing us as we did them. Our routine had been changed, as did their routine. Two cultures blending to create a hybrid environment where wonder still existed but we were moving toward synchronicity.

“Now we are in our last week and the wind up and down is not only written on the schedule but also very apparent on faces. We have been affected by a routine that is somewhat engrained. We like to party by dancing with the Ticos and we look forward to being part of their lively approach to life. This is not to say that there are not problems involved in communication and other daily events. Everyone has handled it well. Different styles have emerged ranging from throw out a word to see what happens to carefully dissecting the language and painfully using the dictionary to eek out a word or phrase only to get a two minute response that begs understanding.

What does this all look like when seeing our group?

We are somewhat sheltered as the bus is always a haven. Our guides, Mauricio and Enrique, are incredible in knowing what to provide for the group. Their English is very good and they can feel the intention and underlying emotions attached to the words. Plus they have experience in handling groups like ours in regards to safety, rhythm of activity, and possible problems that may arise. They bridge the two cultures.

Although the haven exists there have been tremendous changes. Mature conversations that seek to reason why social, individual, collective, economic, etc. impact exhibits itself in a particular manner. The impressive thing is the ability to connect on a higher level of thinking to our own culture. The similarities and differences become clearer when the students are here as they can sense the situation. Listening to Spanish on tape is very different than having non-English speaking individual sitting in front of you pleading for an answer so they can satisfy you. Sitting in a classroom talking about pollution and making a video about it brings about incredibly dissimilar results. Our system of schooling gives lip service to experiential education. We talk but there is no follow through. (Journal Entry, August 14)

Perspectives are interesting compositions because of the variety of sources. No one can really fully comprehend another person unless they have an identical experience with identical genetics. One might argue that it is impossible, even when standing beside someone in a synchronous fashion, to ever fully understand another individual's interpretation of an event. This is the case with our trip. Most participants found that the trip was a phenomenon in a wonderful way. Everyone learned about his or her personal strengths, weaknesses, likes, and dislikes.

I was feeling a little homesick after talking with my friends on the Internet but I am having so much fun here and I am learning a lot. I don't think I will ever regret this trip. It's a once in a lifetime experience (Journal Entry, July 29)

One participant, Susan was battling her phobia of crawling, flying, or simply live insects and faced her fear in a large way (literally). Matt became comfortable with his blossoming individualism, so often scorned in Canada. Chris and Dan clung onto their youthful attitude, realizing that their culture capped inside the warmth of a Big Mac,

fries, and coke was not universal in the world. Jasmine, Amanda, and Leah used their youthfulness as steppingstones to view the world in a very mature way. They embraced the culture and contemplated their place in the scheme of the world. The originators of the project, Kyle and Jordan, examined the trip and participants with businesslike, professional scrutiny. They commented on the great quality of the videos, commitment to task of the group, and reflected on the issues that plagued both Costa Rica and Canada. Out of all the participants, they realized the initial intent of the trip. Others in the group were amazed at the depth of the problems and surprised at the similarities between our two countries but they did not have the background knowledge and passion that was displayed by Kyle and Jordan. This is not a case of intelligence but an instance of perspectives reflecting different views due to the idiosyncratic processing of the brain.

Participant Journal Entries: Themes and Issues

The following comments illustrate two strong themes in the participants' journals: an awareness of empowerment as change agents, and an awareness of cultural differences and similarities.

Empowerment as Change.

- I am not so scared to go to a university where I don't know anybody anymore.
- I really don't want to go back home. I love my family here. They're so much fun.
My life at home is going to be incredibly boring after this. I love it here.
- Tomorrow is our last day with our family. I'm so sad. I'm going to miss them so much. I'm not looking forward to my old way of life. I love it here. The food is good, the people are nice (and short hee hee) and it's so beautiful.

- Well, the last day in Costa Rica. Very sad feeling. I keep on thinking about my family in Pedegroso and how much I'm going to miss them.
- I kind of want to go home now we're in San Jose but if we were still in Pedegroso I would want to stay longer. I like that nice little place. I'm gonna miss that way of life.
- We did a bunch of talking about Costa Rica and what to expect from our host families. I am really glad that we did though because now I am not as worried.
- In the morning we walked around trying to speak Spanish and at times it was really frustrating.
- I'm really looking forward to staying with a Spanish host family-it should help me learn really quickly.
- Last week I had a dream that I was in Costa Rica and I spoke a bit of Spanish. I also remember that there were lots of bugs. I'm not really scared of bugs; I just don't really like them.
- I'm a little worried about getting homesick while we are away.
- I missed Spanish lessons today because I met a girl from France that was leaving the next day. It was really cool to talk to her and learn about their culture. I can't wait to meet new people in Costa Rica.
- I am really excited to meet my host family. I think staying with them will help me to become a better host sister for Kelly when I get home.
- Anyways, it was a good bonding experience between Graciella and I. Whenever we don't understand each other we just smile and laugh.

- We went for a tour of the city (San Jose) and saw some poor areas of town. It was really sad- it looked like the roofs were going to cave in. I can't believe people lived there.
- At breakfast today one of the women in the kitchen asked if I had a bandana with Canadian on it. I did, and I gave it to her. She gave me one of her own bandanas in return. The pattern is of cowboys and is available at Walmart in Canada but it seems much more valuable as a gift from her.
- Although I have traveled before, I have not spent 3 weeks in the same place; therefore I haven't really made any connections with people. I want to make a difference in the world and I think this is a great opportunity. I hope we meet lots of interesting people while we are there and keep in touch.
- It is the final day of our journey, flying back to Calgary. I don't think that I can put it all into perspective at this point, but I know this trip has been valuable for me and for most people on this trip in some manner.
- I also felt like there was a fair amount of weight to be carried by myself in creating at tone to the project that kept me from really integrating and connecting with everyone in the group.
- Trying to learn and speak a different language I'm sure has served as a revelation to some that people who we may meet in life who don't speak our own language are not always "dumb." We tend to think that just because someone can't express himself or herself properly, they must have nothing intelligent in their heads. Some of the students on this trip probably experienced the opposite side of the

coin trying to communicate in Spanish and know what it's like to have thoughts that they can't find the words for.

- I have seen many reactions in the students: some who have gained confidence in themselves and how they relate to other people, some who have had the opportunity to create something they are proud of, some who have found themselves outside of their comfort zone and have had to define what it is that is really important to them and what makes them happy. I'm sure many will only discover the significance of this experience some time in the future.
- As for me personally, I think this has helped to reaffirm something I have been feeling in recent months (years?) – that it is important in life to periodically step back and look at how you are living . . . are you going the direction you want to be? Do you find satisfaction in what you are doing? Is it harmonious with your society and environment?

Cultural Differences and Similarities.

- All the guys here have a staring problem or something
- Meeting all the people here makes me want to meet more people from other countries.
- The city (San Jose) is a lot more developed than I thought it would be. There are many restaurants that are the same as Canada. One of the first things I saw was a Burger King.
- It doesn't feel like we are in Costa Rica though. There are no bugs, noone speaks Spanish and there is hot water. I can't believe this is how most tourists spend their time here.

- There are a lot of car dealerships, which surprises me.
- This was the best beach I've ever been to in my life. No words (at least none in my dictionary) could describe how breath taking it was down there.
- Some of the people we have met during our short stay here have certainly been inspiring, and many of our own students have been equally inspiring in what they have done. This kind of inspiration is what keeps us always reaching a little bit higher and further beyond.
- I liked the organization, the safety, the projects, the people, our family, the students, our chaperones, and the culture. I felt that there was less of a communication hurdle than I anticipated; people will always find a way to share ideas, especially when confined to a dinner table together every day. I had some immediate prejudices of San Isidro when we first arrived; I thought that the iron grates, the odd zoning, the traffic, and the peeling paint went below the surface to a seedy core of poverty and crime. The knots in my stomach kept me from sleeping in that host family bed for the first night in Pedregoso for fear of what I had put us into. Never have I been more pleasantly surprised though, with warmth of a community and open support.

The Comforts of Home.

We are a Club Med society. We raise our children to consume products and indirectly the resources of the earth. We promote poverty, an 'us and them' world, forest destruction, and war. Of course, we don't see our effects because our consumption is a 'natural' way of life from birth. We don't see the destruction caused by our society because we are not driving the machinery that destroys the forests and we are not holding

the weapons of war. We simply live 'day by day' purchasing our way through life. Our productivity and purchasing power has never been greater yet our illnesses (physical and mental), dependency, and social networks (e.g.: family structure) have never been so prevalent.

We speak of curing the ills off the world but few of us are willing to work hard and give up what we possess.

A lot has happened over the past days. Between monkeys, two more earthquakes, a scorpion and water rash, one thing has been getting stronger and stronger. I WANT TO GO HOME. I am getting sick of the food, sick of Spanish and sick of Pedegroso. Rod is also getting on the nerves of everyone. He has stressed the hell out of everyone RE: videos and he has treated us like children. Most of us are 18 and should be treated like it. We are not allowed to have our passport for long and we have not to go anywhere. This is Pedegroso. Anyways, I'm getting sick of this trip and I want it to be over so I can go back home. (Journal Entry, August 9)

The washrooms were disgusting. There was no toilet paper or toilet seats. I went anyways because I really had to go. (Journal Entry, July 25)

I'm not ready for Costa Rica. I have unsolved problems and unsolved mysteries about myself that I need to accomplish. (Journal Entry, June 23)

Our institutions look to help society and in some cases they are effective, in other situations they are the catalyst for creating and perpetuating dependency. Our school system claims to produce lifelong learners who will challenge the world to be a better place.

There is certainly some creed in the idea that the world belongs to the next generation. There is still a question to which world we refer. Once again we are faced with a perspective producing like-minded generations that believe they are doing the world justice by continuing to behave as their forefathers. Actions that serve to increase the wealth of the present generation at the cost of subordinate countries are still the status quo. It would seem that the only real change has been the rhetoric or, at minimum, an awareness of the global situation.

Transformative Learning: Consuming Materialism.

This project has illustrated that change can happen at a deep level for individuals and groups. Even though Canadian youth have been raised in a consumer environment they are intelligent, empathetic, active people. The difficulty lies in a society that creates untruths for children and teaches an attitude of mistrust between their fellow humans.

I'll never forget the things I saw and did today. (Journal Entry, August 8)

I feel that I have changed in so much and my perceptions have been expanded.

(Journal Entry, August 2)

I think the video project is going really well. I am excited to see the results and the way it will impact people. I am hoping it will help people think globally and about the world outside of their town instead of just locally. (Journal Entry, August 7)

It is true that today's world requires caution and planning but this is another characteristic of a consumer crazy world. The Costa Ricans longed for the objects that we possessed. When we were willing to part with one, they were extremely appreciative. It reminded one of what it would have been like for the Europeans to trade with the Natives. The role of the European was to serve as a benefactor in improving the way of

life for the unfortunates. However, gifts presented in Costa Rica were more of an event than what appeared at face value. If the mind and heart of the Canadian could have been scripted, a sincere change could have been documented. Paradoxically objects both lost their value yet appeared to have increased in significance.

This trip was very valuable to me. The experience was really good and what I valued the most was the relationship I had with my host community and the rest of the group. I got really close to lots of people and made many new friends. I developed a special relationship with everybody I worked with and met. (Journal Entry, August 13)

My family is awesome. They are the most kind and welcoming people I have ever met. The kids are really cute and they always invite me to do things with them. At first it was kind of hard to communicate, but we are getting used to acting things out and using body language. (Journal Entry, August 4)

It was evident that the participants felt that their items were not of any real concern and that the joy of giving was the component worth keeping. Just like the bandana from Walmart, objects fade away while the exhilarating feeling of giving sits in your throat like a lump eventually residing in your soul. Henry David Thoreau once said, "The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat one another or ourselves thus tenderly. The example of the bandana supports Thoreau's thought, if you give of yourself, your soul, and for the future there is more to be gained than just purchasing an item for your own selfish desire.

The chance to witness the civic, regional, federal, and global effects on another country is dynamic in nature. It is not possible to be unaffected by the hunger of a child

to learn about your country and their willingness to share the customs of their country. The warmth of greetings that embrace you as if you were family is hard to ignore. A host family whose disposition is to ensure your happiness when they must continue their daily routines goes above the definition of hospitality. A culture that has regular, multiage activities on the soccer pitch, dance floor, community hall, or festival begs a person to question preschools, elderly homes, and 3000 square foot homes for two people. This community where people have few possessions but continually deliver a genuine smile served as an instrument for personal contemplation, revelation, and transformation.

Some participants are still communicating with their host families, we have had a visit from five members of Pedregoso, a desire to speak Spanish better still exists, and other external effects are still evident. The most salient feature about our trip is best observed through the eyes of the participants. It is evident when participants watch the videos or show others their pictures. Even though our debriefing discussed the aspect that friends and family in Cranbrook would not understand our experience, this aspect has not dampened the warmth that we absorbed in Costa Rica. It is a radiance that exists because it made us better people in a way that is evident but unexplainable in tangible terms.

At 5pm we all met together to talk about the trip. It was really interesting to hear how the others felt. I don't want to go home anymore. I have become so close to all the people here, and I have learned so much. I know nothing at home will have changed and everyone will expect me to be the same. I like being around the people in our group because we all care about life in general. When we finished the meeting Barb and I started crying. I am sad to be going home and being separated from the group,

but I am also sad because I wish my friends and family in Canada could have had the opportunity (Journal Entry, August 12)

It may be something that will fade as time progresses but a perceptive individual can feel the rekindling when two participants meet. The warm smile returns and feelings of kinship flow into an understanding hug. The people of Costa Rica gave all of us something that years of schooling could only suggest. They taught us to understand.

Where To Now?

Initial action only breeds a desire to improve. Having experienced a project that impacted many ages, economic levels, agencies, countries, and generations only spurs one to continue. Passion is communicable and like this project, there still remains a core group that would like to inspire other young people.

It is known that some of the participants have continued their contribution to society by spreading the idea, through example, that youth can make a difference. They are also attempting to convince organizations and corporations that they need to be responsible in their business and give to the development of a sustainable society. It is believed that other participants will eventually realize the impact of this project and will, with maturity, use the skills acquired in their lives. We will see and feel the ramifications of these individuals. The results will show in communities and ripple to others, in regions where people will speak of the quality of programs that these people will subscribe, and possibly on the global scene where the possibilities are unlimited.

The work of this project is incomplete. The participants will develop and transform as they encounter other opportunities. The initiator and chaperones of the project recognize the window of opportunity in Costa Rica. It is a strong environment

within which to develop young Canadians to think globally. Of course, in mentioning Costa Rica we must speak of Canada World Youth and their representatives in Costa Rica. We could not have achieved any of our goals without these groups and our other partners in this project. An integral part of our experience was forging partnerships with other organizations. Networking is a critical factor in any successful venture.

We feel it is important to share our knowledge and understanding of how to design and conduct experiential projects with other professionals. Therefore our first step is to use the following template in a training/sharing operation with educational professionals, environmentalists, government organizations, and youth groups. The template will form the process and our videos will serve as the example. Together, we believe the impact of our experience will be effectively shared and motivate others to spearhead cooperative agreements of their own.

Sample Template for Youth Awareness and Education of Local Issues

Concept.

This Template will use the example of a focus on a local environmental issue, but it can be adapted to any local issue: social, cultural, or economic.

The local issue can be linked to a variety of curricula, depending on the issue.

Philosophy.

The underlying premises include the following:

1. The relevancy of a local issue in a local context;
2. The empowerment of students by giving them leadership roles within the context of a local issue;
3. The partnering of scientists, teachers and students in exploring the issue;

4. The effectiveness of experiential education in creating meaningful learning;
5. The inter-relatedness of curricular strands; E.g. Importance of learning the inter-relatedness of curricular strands/subjects;
6. Through youth mentoring other youth, mastery learning takes place in the mentors;
7. The importance of developing critical thinking skills in discerning rhetoric from scientific fact;
8. Community awareness is heightened through students mentoring youth after researching with local experts;
9. Added benefit of potential funding opportunities for education enrichment through partner support;
10. Promotion and encouragement of inter-departmental networking in schools.

Methodology.

- Identify a local concern or issue that is significant locally e.g. air quality, water supply, recycling, bullying, racism, drug abuse, etc.
- Approach local experts to see if they are interested in sharing their expertise with students.
- Identify how the issues and dealing with the issues relate to as many learning outcomes from as many courses as possible. For example: study of air quality could be integrated with meteorology, chemistry, sociology, English, geology, ecology, history, art, technology and drama learning outcomes.
- Identify a mechanism for the interaction of the local experts with the students, e.g. Set up meeting schedules, seminars, symposiums

- Provide feedback to local experts regarding student learning plans
- Create experiential opportunities for exploring the issue. e.g. Go to a site, meet out of school, develop field trips
- Arrange mentoring sessions with grade 11 or 12 students with the experts, preferably at a site outside the school
- Teacher works with students in de-briefing mentoring day, brainstorm methodology of delivering material in an appropriate way to younger students.
- Grade 11 and 12's role-play, attempt practice teaching using the methodology with feedback from the teacher, and each other.
- Look for common curricular content with younger grade level
- Liaise with a teacher who has a younger grade level and arrange a field day.
- During the field day, the student mentors run the activities
- Teachers observe, trouble shoot and facilitate the event
- Where possible arrange media coverage to further heighten awareness about the issue
- Measurement of success determined by whether the 11's and 12's can deliver the content and program. The younger class's success is measured through recall activities, and level of observed engagement. (the recall activity should reflect the spirit of a real experience, E.g. Treasure hunt, group processes, cooperative games.

Example.

A specific example of this would be the local project centering on the rehabilitation, protection, and appreciation of Joseph Creek in Cranbrook. This example of local action would illustrate the associations and partnerships that can be arranged through organization, willingness, and energy all supplied by able bodied students.

Planning documentation would resemble the following:

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Focus Issue | Urban impact on a wild stream |
| Purpose | To increase community awareness of the impact of local creek so that sound ecological decisions can be made regarding urban development around the creek based on credible scientific information |
| Stakeholders | Mount Baker Environmental Awareness Program students; Biology, Drama/Video production, and computer technology teachers; Ministry of Environment -Fisheries Renewal BC; Private consultants; Shaw Cable; and Grade 4-5 elementary school teachers and students. |
| Process | Create steering committee with grade 11 teachers and experts; Curricular links identified with concerns around Joseph Creek. E.g. Interaction of abiotic and biotic, food chains, diversity, pollution impacts; |

Date set for experts/consultants to teach the grade 11 students about proper functioning conditions of the stream;

Terminology defined by the experts for the students and the scope of the study outlined;

Watershed visited by students with the experts, to a non-urban part of the stream to see the attributes of a properly functioning stream;

After looking at the attributes of a wild stream, an urban section is visited and environmental concerns identified. E.g. compare sediment deposition, indicator species, compares diversity, compare erosion, deposition rates, flood plain, and existence of root wads, route meander;

Human urban developments related to their effects on the stream;

Teachers with students brainstorm and develop activities that illustrate some of the attributes for grade 4-5 target audiences;

Pedagogy discussed with the grade 11 students regarding appropriate and interesting activities;

Contact and invite two grade 4/5 classes to a spring field day;

Invite media, civic officials, school trustees and video crew;

Carry out trial run of activities with feedback given to the grade 11 students by the teachers, modifications made in the presentation prior to the field day.

Evaluation

Teachers observe engagement of elementary students in activities;

Teachers observe the student mentors' understanding of the concepts and their ability to deliver them to the grade 4/5 classes; Elementary students complete recall activities, E.g.: Black Out Bingo treasure hunt.

Follow Up

In years 2 and 3 of the field day, develop more activities while perfecting current events to reflect relevancy of present knowledge.

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Appendix A
Project Implementation Schedule

| DATE | TASK |
|--------------------|---|
| | Columbia Basin Symposium / Presentation to Dept. of Fisheries |
| February 16, 2002 | Community development Workshop participation |
| February 21, 2002 | Presentation to CCUNESCO AGM, Canada World Youth, and Vancouver Foundation |
| March 23-24 2002 | Community healing and intervention workshop |
| March 25, 2002 | Young mothers workshop participation |
| April 13, 2002 | Storyboarding of possible videos made in Costa Rica, and consultation with Pacific Cinematheque |
| April 30, 2002 | Storyboarding of youth empowerment video |
| April 30, 2002 | Shaw Cable Training complete |
| May 5, 2002 | Website regarding social responsibility updated/completed |
| | |
| June 20, 2002 | Partnerships finalized in Costa Rica with community agencies and youth in Costa Rica |
| June 28, 2002 | Departure from Calgary |
| July 22, 2002 | Meetings with agencies in Costa Rica and issues with messages defined |
| July 30, 2002 | 15 Public service announcements completed in Spanish and English |
| August 7, 2002 | Videos broadcast in Costa Rica and/or shown in public venues |
| August 10, 2002 | Return to Canada |
| August 11, 2002 | Post production for youth empowerment video completed |
| August 30, 2002 | Youth empowerment video distributed to partners and school board resource centers. |
| September 15, 2002 | Speaking tour/presentation complete in local community (Cranbrook, BC) |
| September 30, 2002 | Speaking tour complete in eastern Canada (Ottawa, ON) |
| October 30, 2002 | Speaking tour complete in prairies (Winnipeg, Regina, SK) |
| November 30, 2002 | Speaking tour complete in East Kootenays (Fernie, BC) |
| | |
| January 30, 2003 | Speaking tour complete in West Kootenays (Nelson, BC) |
| February 30, 2003 | Speaking tour complete in Western BC (Victoria, BC) |
| March 30, 2003 | Speaking tour for partners complete (Vancouver Foundation, UNESCO, Canada World Youth, etc.) |
| April 30, 2003 | Banff/ Canmore Tour complete |
| May 30, 2003 | Qualitative/Quantitative analysis complete and Curriculum template sent to learning centers. |
| June 2003 | National Film Board training |

Appendix B

SAMPLE PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT LETTER

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am conducting a study of the effects of Experiential Education. The purpose of this study is to determine what is the impact on learners when exposed to a curriculum dominated by experiential-based teaching?

I anticipate that your child and others will benefit from participation in this study by considering the following elements of their growth:

1. The relevancy of a local issue in a local context;
2. The empowerment of students by giving them leadership roles within the context of a local issue;
3. The partnering of scientists, teachers and students in exploring the issue;
4. The effectiveness of experiential education in creating meaningful learning;
5. The inter-relatedness of curricular strands; E.g. Importance of learning the inter-relatedness of curricular strands/subjects;
6. Through youth mentoring other youth, mastery learning takes place in the mentors;
7. The importance of developing critical thinking skills in discerning rhetoric from scientific fact;
8. Community awareness is heightened through students mentoring youth after researching with local experts;

9. Added benefit of potential funding opportunities for education enrichment through partner support; and

10. Promotion and encouragement of inter-departmental networking in schools.

I would like your permission for your child to participate in this study.

As part of this research your child will be asked to be involved in all activities leading involved with the Mount Baker High School Costa Rica Project. Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary form only. Further, all names, locations and any other identifying information will *not* be included in any discussion of the results. You also have the right to withdraw your child from the study without prejudice at any time.

If you choose to do so, please indicate your willingness to allow your child to participate by signing this letter in the space provided below, and return the letter to the school with your child.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at (426-5241, mike.phelan@sd5.bc.ca). Also feel free to contact the supervisor of my study (Dr. Richard Butt, Richard.butt@uleth.ca).

Sincerely,

Mike Phelan

University of Lethbridge

SAMPLE PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Name of Research Project: Excellence through Action: An Experiential Learning Project

Name of Investigator: Mike Phelan

I agree to allow my son/daughter, _____, to participate in this study.

Name of Parent/Guardian _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of son/daughter: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Bloom et al.'s Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain

| LEVEL | DEFINITION | SAMPLE VERBS | SAMPLE BEHAVIORS |
|---------------|--|--|--|
| KNOWLEDGE | Student recalls or recognizes information, ideas, and principles in the approximate form in which they were learned. | Write List Label Name State Define | The student will define the 6 levels of Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain. |
| COMPREHENSION | Student translates, comprehends, or interprets information based on prior learning. | Explain Summarize Paraphrase Describe Illustrate | The student will explain the purpose of Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain. |
| APPLICATION | Student selects, transfers, and uses data and principles to complete a problem or task with a minimum of direction. | Use Compute Solve Demonstrate Apply Construct | The student will write an instructional objective for each level of Bloom's taxonomy. |
| ANALYSIS | Student distinguishes, classifies, and relates the assumptions, hypotheses, evidence, or structure of a statement or question. | Analyze Categorize Compare Contrast Separate | The student will compare and contrast the cognitive and affective domains. |
| SYNTHESIS | Student originates, integrates, and combines ideas into a product, plan or proposal that is new to him or her. | Create Design Hypothesize Invent Develop | The student will design a classification scheme for writing educational objectives that combines the |

| | | | |
|------------|--|--|--|
| | | | cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. |
| EVALUATION | Student appraises, assesses, or critiques on a basis of specific standards and criteria. | Use Judge Recommend Critique Justify | The student will judge the effectiveness of writing objectives using Bloom's taxonomy. |

Source: <http://www.valdosta.peachnet.edu/~whuitt/psy702/cogsys/bloom.html>

Krathwol et al.'s Taxonomy of the Affective Domain

| Affective Domain | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| Level | Definition | Example |
| Receiving | Being aware of or attending to something in the environment | Person would listen to a lecture or presentation about a structural model related to human behavior. |
| Responding | Showing some new behaviors as a result of experience | The individual would answer questions about the model or might rewrite lecture notes the next day. |
| Valuing | Showing some definite involvement or commitment | The individual might begin to think how education may be modified to take advantage of some of the concepts presented in the model and perhaps generate a set of lessons using some of the concepts presented. |
| Organization | Integrating a new value into one's general set of values, giving it some ranking among one's general priorities | This is the level at which a person would begin to make long-range commitments to arranging his or her instruction |

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| | | and assessment relative to the model. |
| Characterization by Value | Acting consistently with the new value | At this highest level, a person would be firmly committed to utilizing the model to develop, select, or arrange instruction and would become known for that action. |

Source: <http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/affsys/affdom.html>

Appendix D

Canada World Youth Partner

What do we do?

Canada World Youth is a national, non-governmental organization that provides young people from Canada and around the world with the opportunity to travel, live and work in different communities, to learn about local and international development, and to gain important job skills for the future.

When were we founded?

Canada World Youth was founded in 1971 by the Honourable Jacques Hébert, retired senator and well-known Canadian writer and publisher. Mr. Hébert has been nominated for the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize.

Who participates?

To date, more than 20,000 young people from Canada and abroad have participated in Canada World Youth; approximately 1,000 young people participate annually (of whom more than 600 are Canadians).

Where do we work?

Canada World Youth programs operate in Canada and countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central and Eastern Europe.

What programs do we offer?

Canada World Youth offers four different programs. The largest is the Youth Exchange Program, during which participants spend half the time in a Canadian community and the other half overseas.

How are we funded?

Canada World Youth is supported by the Canadian International Development

Agency, exchange country partners, and thousands of donors across Canada.

Appendix E

Canadian Commission for UNESCO

"Inspired by UNESCO's vision of a durable culture of peace built on the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind, the CCU actively advances the following principles: the promotion of culture and democracy through the sharing of ideas and knowledge; justice and equality for all; freedom of thought, expression and communication; the promotion of tolerance; access to education and information; the affirmation of specific cultures and identities as integral parts of the richness of humanity; a respect for indigenous cultures; and the preservation of the world's heritage and natural environment."

(From "Refreshing the Spirit: A New Vision For The Canadian Commission For UNESCO")

The Commission's Mission Statement

"In order to implement this vision, the CCU operates as an autonomous forum of consultation and reflection through which governments in Canada and individuals and organizations in Canadian society can share information on matters of education, science, culture, communication and information. We make recommendations on these issues, advise the government of Canada on its relations with UNESCO, foster partnerships in areas of mutual interest, and promote the implementation of UNESCO's programmes."

(From: "Refreshing the Spirit: A New Vision For The Canadian Commission For UNESCO".)

The Commission's Strategic Plan

Keeping pace with rapid global change over the past decade has not been easy, but it has been a necessity. This has been especially true where budgetary constraints have forced institutions such as the Commission to redefine themselves and to chart a future course which may be very different from the one charted in the past.

The Commission has looked particularly at what changes may be necessary to respond to an increasingly complex environment where traditional distinctions between disciplines, between foreign and domestic issues, and between societal questions and security, have dramatically faded.

A Strategic Plan was approved by the members of the Commission at their Annual General Meeting in March 1999.

The most important elements of this plan are:

1. Autonomy
2. Democratic Participation
3. Leadership
4. Interdisciplinarity
5. Advocacy

Appendix F

ACI Costa Rica

About ACI Costa Rica

As mentioned in the introduction, ACI-Costa Rica's main activity is the facilitation of exchange of young people from different countries, sharing ideologies, beliefs, and cultures as a means of appreciating and understanding each other. In simple terms we believe that living in another country, learning another language, and experiencing another culture can only help to build bridges and form bonds of friendship between nations. We send Costa Rican volunteers to Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Belgium, Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Poland, New Zealand, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Brazil and India. In exchange, we receive volunteers from these countries who live for one year or six months with host families; usually but not always families of Costa Ricans volunteering abroad.

How does this work?

To answer this question we have to, for one moment go back to the ICYE Federation. ICYE is basically an "umbrella" organization, in that it covers not only ACI-Costa Rica (which, in the language of ICYE is known as a National Committee), but also the sister organizations in the different countries mentioned above. Each organization sends and receives volunteers to/from each other (under the guidance of ICYE-International who are based in Berlin, Germany) to create a network of cross-cultural exchange. A Costa

Rican volunteer wishing to spend a year in the United Kingdom for example, would contact ACI-Costa Rica, who would in turn contact ICYE-UK (the British National Committee) who would take on the responsibility of the Costa Rican exchangee once he/she arrived in the U.K by finding a work placement and a British host family. In turn, ACI-Costa Rica takes this exact same responsibility on regarding foreign volunteers sent by the various other National Committees. To click onto your own countries' National Committee, contact the International Office see below:

www.icye.org

Once you have made contact with the ICYE Committee in your own country of residence, and decided that Costa Rica is where you want to spend your exchange year (or six months), things start to move fast. You'll have the opportunity to attend preparation workshops and camps where you'll meet fellow volunteers heading all over the world, PLUS you'll meet the Costa Rican (Tico) volunteers (now known as exchangees) living in your country. We really are a global community of friends!

How much does this cost?

The cost of coming to Costa Rica varies slightly, depending on where you are coming from. We recommend that you contact your own National Committee regarding this question, as they'll be more knowledgeable in providing the answer.

And once in Costa Rica? What happens? What work is available?

On arrival in Costa Rica, you'll be taken straight to your host families to settle in for a day or two, before being taken to an orientation camp where you'll meet the other exchangees and receive a lot of useful information concerning your stay in our country.

After the orientation camp, you'll embark on a two-week "crash course" in Spanish with our own professional tutors. The Orientation Camp and Spanish Lessons are obligatory. Although of course, if you already speak Spanish, other arrangements will be made!

Once your Spanish course is complete, you will be put to work in any number of fields. The work placement that you receive depends a lot on your interests and what you told us about yourself in the initial stages of your involvement with ICYE. Other factors also come into play, including Spanish ability and availability.

In general, the voluntary work placements that we offer are of a social nature, E.g. working with children or animals, working with indigenous or human rights organizations, homeless centers for street children and drug abusers etc. There are many other opportunities too, and we try to match your particular skills or interests to your work placement.

Appendix G

City of Cranbrook

Breathtaking. It's the only word that describes the gorgeous scenery enveloping the city. Cranbrook, facing the Purcell Mountains to the west and the Rockies to the north and east, is surrounded by miles of lush forestry and over 100 crystal clear lakes. Cranbrook began in 1898 with the arrival of the railway. Today it has become the Key City for this area of the province with a population of over 18,000 people, serving an area of over 55,000.

Besides the railway, lumber and mining have been responsible for Cranbrook's central position. Today a regional hospital, college, professional offices, banks, wholesale/retail outlets and government offices offer a variety of services. It is also a strategic location of railway, highway and airways interchange.

Cranbrook is also a place to live as well as a place to make a living. There are incredible choices available to our residents. Beautiful, well-designed residential areas and parks, a host of recreational pursuits, educational opportunities for young and old, and a growing arts and heritage sector, provide Cranbrook with a "balance" seldom found in cities of this size. These choices should make just about anyone feel at home. The average age of our community is only 28, but there are also a wide range of facilities and services for seniors. Additionally, Cranbrook has more sunshine hours annually than any other place in the province.

With our continued accent on tourism visitors should find many services available with a variety of hotels, motels, restaurants, and stores (including 2 malls). Downtown revitalization was recently completed to make the center of our City more attractive and functional.

We also boast some excellent attractions within our city. The Canadian Museum of Rail Travel contains one of Canada's Heritage Railway treasures and is open all year. It is joined by the new Wildlife Museum (at the Chamber of Commerce building), and the Demonstration Forest (on the east side of town). A new performing arts center at the college will allow academic and community use with plenty of potential for many types of entertainment.

Combine these points-of-interest with the nearby attractions of the St. Eugene Mission, The Bavarian City of Kimberley and Fort Steele (a Provincially operated attraction), and you have a real "Destination Area" taking at least a couple of days to see.

And - Don't forget the surrounding lakes and campgrounds with our legendary scenery and views. Five Provincial Parks are within 30 minutes of the city. It's a favorite spot for animal watching, water sports, hunting and fishing during the summer. Within the City can be found 20 parks suitable for picnics and activities, tennis courts, a challenging 18 hole golf course, and we are very proud of our new Multi-purpose Recreation Complex which includes a 4250 seat NHL sized arena an 8 lane competitive pool and wave pool, a fully licensed restaurant overlooking the arena as well as retail space.

During the winter, skiing enthusiasts can enjoy the fabulous resorts that lie within a one-and-a-half hour radius of the City. There are also two arenas and curling leagues.

Appendix H

Mount Baker Secondary School

About MBSS

Mount Baker Secondary School is located in Cranbrook, British Columbia, Canada in an area of the province called the East Kootenays.

Mount Baker Secondary School hosts grades ten to twelve and is the only Senior Secondary School in Cranbrook. There are two Junior Secondary feeder schools for Mount Baker-Parkland and Laurie.

Baker is currently on a semester system with four classes per semester. The schedule has two classes per day which alternate daily over the semester.

We have a student population of approximately 860. There are 50 teachers and 3 administrators.

The school has strong fine arts, technology, physical education and business programs as well as very successful academic programs. There is a strong student services and counseling department to support all the education programs.

We field sports teams in soccer, volleyball, basketball, track, baseball, golf and both a boys' and a girls' rugby squad.

Appendix I

Costa Rica

Demonstrating an environmental sensitivity unparalleled elsewhere, Costa Ricans have set aside one quarter of their land as protected areas and national parks. Ecotourists are rewarded with botanical and animal marvels found nowhere else on Earth. Although Costa Rica is best known as an invaluable refuge for nature, this small nation is also a haven of peace.

Location, Geography, Climate

Costa Rica is the penultimate link in a chain of small nations that together comprise the isthmus of Central America. Along with the Caribbean and the Pacific, the country's borders are defined by Nicaragua to the North and Panama to the South. Located at the nexus of two continents and two oceans, this confluence of land and water makes the region one of Mother Nature's great bottlenecks. Here, geography constricts a breathtaking amount of plant and animal life within a modest 19,563 square miles (50,900 sq. km), an area comparable in size to Denmark or West Virginia. Within this diminutive nation is found an astonishing five percent of the world's biodiversity, including more than 800 species of ferns, 1,000 of orchids, 2,000 kinds of trees, and 200 species of mammals.

Both coastlines of Costa Rica have an abundance of beaches, though the Pacific strands are generally both less developed and less spacious. Between the coasts, the interior of the country is shaped by four cordilleras, or mountain ranges, which run from

North to South. The capital, San Jose, rests roughly in the nation's center, settled within a highland valley. Cascading down to the Caribbean from the central mountains are Costa Rica's many great rivers, including the Reventazon. The Pacific side is marked by two broad peninsulas that hook out into the Pacific, the Nicoya and the Osa. It is a geographic curiosity that their shapes are almost identical, the Osa being a smaller rendition of the Nicoya.

Costa Rica's climate is renowned as an atmospheric treat. Mild subtropical conditions prevail year-round, and discomforting temperature extremes and prolonged periods of gray are practically nonexistent. Temperature varies mainly according to elevation, the higher the cooler. The brunt of the rainy season lasts from May through November, while a brief dry spell pays a visit from February to April. Costa Rica's rain falls mainly on the Caribbean coast, giving the Pacific a much more arid climate.