

**The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth:  
EVALUATION OF THE GIFTED ENTREPRENEURS  
PROGRAMME 2004/2005**

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## CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	3
2. The Evaluation.....	6
3. The Process of the Gifted Entrepreneurs Programme.....	8
4. Outcomes.....	38
5. Conclusions.....	50

## 1. Introduction

### ***The Gifted Entrepreneurs Programme – overview***

The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth's Gifted Entrepreneurs Programme 2004-5 ran from November 2004 – April 2005. The programme is based around a national competition for school-based members of NAGTY to develop their own business ideas. For the 2004-5 competition, 30 schools entered a team each, and 141 students took part. Each team comprised around three to six students, and was assisted by one or two teachers from the school. Competing teams were able to draw upon a variety of training support materials provided by the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship UK (NFTE uk), and upon mentors assigned to individual teams. The mentors were drawn from staff at Goldman Sachs, and from MBA students at the University of Warwick's Business School. The programme was part-funded by the Goldman Sachs Foundation. The GEP culminated in the national competition day, 23 April 2005, held at the University of Warwick, when teams met to present their business stories. After the initial heats, four teams went forward to the final that day, and a team from Dartmouth High School were declared the winners. Their prize included a trip to New York on 4 July, 2005.

### ***The aims of the programme***

The programme aims to have a number of outcomes for the participating students. These have been identified as:

- 'The acquisition of entrepreneurship skills
- Increased confidence in communications, teamwork and leadership skills
- A constructive outlet for the streetwise skills displayed by many able children from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Interaction with gifted students from similar backgrounds
- Mentoring and support both from people studying business, and high-level business professionals'.

('National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, Gifted Entrepreneurs Programme 2004-5, Gifted Entrepreneurs Scheme, terms and conditions', <http://www.nagty.ac.uk> p.1)

There was a particular focus on students from non-privileged backgrounds. The aim was to draw in NAGTY members who lacked economic or intellectual capital in their backgrounds. In consequence, entry requirements for participants included eligibility for free school meals, residence, or attendance at a school in, an Excellence in Cities, Excellence Cluster, or Education Action Zone, or not being in the care of parents or guardians who are graduates. This focus is also reflected in the remit of the main training body for the programme, NFTE, which is particularly concerned with enabling young people to start their own small businesses:

‘The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship is an international non-profit organisation that introduces young people from local communities to the world of business and entrepreneurship by teaching them how to develop and operate their own legitimate small business.

“NFTE gives young people who might otherwise have never dreamed of running their own business the confidence to turn their hobbies into a profit making enterprise”.

(NFTE uk, ‘Turning Learning into Business’, <http://www.nfte.co.uk> )

## ***Evaluation***

The evaluation of the programme was carried out by the Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research (CEDAR) at the University of Warwick. The evaluation processes involved a number of elements:

- Questionnaires to all competing students, participating teachers, parents and carers of the students.
- Face to face interviews with participating students from five of the competing schools.
- Face to face interviews with participating teachers at the same five schools.
- Observations at two NFTE Regional Training Days.
- Telephone interviews with four GEP mentors.
- A telephone interview with Mr Steve Alcock, CEO of NFTE uk.

- A face to face interview with Mr Terry Mann, of John Kelly Girls' Technology College, and organiser of the NFTE-GEP regional training days in London.
- Observation of the Competition Day at the University of Warwick.
- Document analysis.

The quantitative and qualitative material generated from these sources forms the evidential basis of this interim report.

### ***Outline results of the evaluation***

The overall conclusion of the evaluation is that the NAGTY Gifted Entrepreneurs Programme 2004-5 was a highly successful exercise. The general response of all those involved in the programme was very positive. In particular, the participating students displayed a high level of engagement and satisfaction with the programme. In addition, they indicated that their participation in the GEP had led to a wide variety of benefits in educational, social, and personal terms. This view was supported by the teachers and parents/carers of the young people. Other, supporting, participants also expressed high levels of satisfaction concerning the processes and outcomes of the GEP.

Issues relating to problems, and areas where participants felt that changes could usefully be made, largely referred to details in the running of the competition, or technical questions, such as that concerning the online forum. None of these areas present substantial difficulties.

## **1. The Evaluation**

### ***Observations***

The evaluating team was unable to observe the Launch Day, held at the University of Warwick. This was unfortunate, as the Launch Day set the scene for the participants, provided essential information for both students and their teachers, and introduced the young people to some basic ideas concerning entrepreneurship. The Launch Day was presented by both NAGTY and NFTE, and was seen to be important by participants. Specific questions were asked in the student and teacher questionnaires concerning Launch Day, in order to ascertain the value of the event for the GEP teams.

Observations were, however, carried out at two of NFTE's Regional Training Days. These were the training days held for the West Midlands Region at Woodway Park School, Coventry, on Saturday, 12 March, 2005, and the training day for the North-East Region, held at All Saints College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2005. The observations were designed to act as a shared experience between the evaluating team interviewer and case study schools held at later dates. The case study interviews addressed, among other topics, issues of training and support, including the experience of the NFTE regional training days.

### ***Case Studies***

Five teams were chosen as case studies. Each case study school was visited, and the students and staff members were interviewed separately. The interviews were recorded, and were conducted on the basis of semi-structured interview schedules (included here as an appendix). The case studies were:

- Norbury Manor Business and Enterprise College for Girls. GEP team, 'Shae'. Interviewed, 9 May, 2005.
- All Saints College. GEP team, 'Eclipse'. Interviewed, 12 May, 2005.
- Coundon Court School and Community College. GEP team, 'Perfect Pics'. Interviewed, 16 May, 2005.
- Seven Kings High School. GEP team, 'Clavis'. Interviewed, 8 June, 2005.
- Sinfin Community School. GEP team, 'Affinity'. Interviewed, 10 June, 2005.

The teams were chosen on the basis of gaining as wide a geographical and school type as possible. As a result, the case studies represented schools from the North-East, West Midlands, North, South East, and London regions. There was a range of schools represented, with mixed and single-sex schools, community colleges, 11-18, and 13-18 schools in the case study sample. The five schools represented 17% of the teams that went forward to the Competition Day.

### ***Interviews***

All interviews were conducted on the basis of semi-structured interview schedules. Students and teachers were interviewed on a face-to-face basis, while other interviews, with the CEO of NFTE, and with team mentors, were conducted by telephone. All interviews were recorded.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain qualitative information concerning the participants' perspectives on the GEP. For example, the student interview schedule was based around five key areas: initial student involvement with GEP; student decision-making and organisation of the businesses; student perceptions of the advice and help that was available to them; the processes involved in running their businesses; and the impact on and of their 'normal' school lives on their involvement in the programme. Within this outline, students were encouraged to explore issues that they felt were of particular importance, or had been particularly memorable. A similar approach was taken with all other interviews.

### ***Questionnaires***

Questionnaires were sent to all students, their teachers, and the parents/carers of the students. Completed questionnaires enabled basic quantitative data to be produced, which are produced in this interim report in the format of frequencies, statistics, and bar charts. The format of each questionnaire differed slightly, but the basic approach was of a four-option response, based on the 'strongly agree/disagree/agree/strongly agree' style framework, to closed questions. The responses to the questionnaires provide the quantitative underpinning to this interim report. The tables in the report are presented without missing responses shown. However, where more than one response is missing, this indicated in the table.

## 2. The Process of the Gifted Entrepreneurs Programme

### *Participants' perceptions of the process – students, teachers, mentors*

#### *(i) Students*

##### ***A National Competition***

The student-related data generated by the questionnaires focused on six areas concerned with the process of the competition: being part of a national competition; the significance of the prize; the launch day, the competition training folder, the regional training day, and the role of the mentor. All these areas were also addressed in the case study interviews, which additionally covered three other areas related to the process of the GEP: getting involved in the competition; running a business, and working with the teacher in charge.

All 141 students involved in the Gifted Entrepreneurs Programme received the evaluation questionnaire, of these, 63 returned completed questionnaires, being a 45% response rate.

**Table 1. It was important to me that the project was part of a national competition**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	2
Disagree	15	24
Agree	28	45
Strongly agree	15	24
Don't know	3	5
N =	62	

A high percentage of respondents (69%) indicated that it was important that the competition had a national reach suggesting that this was a key factor in attracting competitors. This interpretation was reinforced by some of the comments of



participating students from the case study schools, all of whom acknowledge that the status of the competition was important to them.

### ***The Prize***

All the competing case study teams demonstrated that an even greater incentive than participation in a national-profile competition was the prize being offered by NAGTY and Goldman Sachs - a trip to New York. Three of the case study teams noted that the prize was advertised prominently by the teachers in charge of GEP in their schools. On being asked how they found out about the programme, and what, in particular, attracted them to applying to take part, students responded in a similar fashion, for example:

"Because it [the poster advertising the GEP] said the prize, in big, bold print !"

"You see it [New York] all the time on TV [...] and it's a big culture place, and it's where really posh and famous people go on holiday, and you think, 'what's so good about it? I want to go and find out!'"

"We were in music, and he [the teacher in charge] pulled us out, and said, 'would you like a trip to New York?' And we were, like, 'A trip to New York?! Ding! Ding! Ding! Yeah! We'll do it!'"

Some of the students were also impressed by the involvement of Goldman Sachs, which they had heard of as being a noteworthy international company:

"I think one of the main things was the money. And also, a business experience. And working with Goldman Sachs would be quite good, a big company, which is quite good".

Student responses to the questionnaire statement, 'The prize was a strong incentive to my taking part in the competition', also bear out the central importance of the New York prize trip to students being willing to take part in GEP:

**Table 2. The prize was a strong incentive to my taking part in the competition**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	2
Disagree	12	19
Agree	22	36
Strongly agree	27	44
N =	62	

The combined total of 79% of respondents who indicated that they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the prize was a 'strong incentive' indicates, as does the qualitative evidence gathered from the case study schools, that the trip to New York is an important factor in encouraging students to compete (Table 2).

### ***The Launch Day***

The evidence drawn from the interviews with the case study teams seems to suggest that many of the students had only a vague idea about what was demanded of them when they agreed to participate in the programme. As a result, the GEP Launch Day appears to have been of importance for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was the forum where students (and, often, teachers) obtained a clearer idea of the requirements of the programme, secondly, it introduced them to a more detailed idea of the meaning of entrepreneurship than many of them previously possessed, and, finally, it enabled students from different schools and regions to meet one another in structured and less structured events - something that many of them felt was important.

The quantitative data generated by the questionnaires indicates that a significant majority (some 88.9% of respondents) felt that the launch day was helpful in explaining the task they faced (Table 3).

**Table 3. The competition Launch Day was helpful in explaining what my team had to do**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	3
	Agree	26	41
	Strongly agree	30	48
	Don't know	5	8
	N =	63	

The case study interviews added depth to these figures, indicating that the Launch Day was useful for a variety of reasons. The day appeared to have fulfilled one of its main purposes, that of informing the teams and their teachers about the detail of the competition. A number of the students who were interviewed commented on this aspect of the Launch Day:

"It was a very good introduction to the entire competition. The winning team from last year was there, and they did a presentation about their trip, which was a real incentive. And we did activities, like how to trade and negotiate, which was very good".

"We went there having a small idea of what we were going to do, and we came back knowing quite a lot about it".

Another team member noted that before the Launch Day:

"We didn't really have a good idea of what it was about. We knew bits and bobs, but we didn't really know".

In consequence, it is fairly clear that the Launch Day played a vital role in briefing the teams about the expectations of the competition. However, the day was valued for other reasons as well.

One of the Launch Day presentations centred on the story of one entrepreneur's attempts to develop a new medical product - a needle-less syringe. This story of an,

ultimately unsuccessful, product stuck in the minds of many of the students who were interviewed. It was seen to be an interesting story in its own right, and it also introduced the students to the business idea of selling a product by telling its story. Further, the ultimate failure of the product was also seen by many of the case study students as being important, in that they took a message from the story that said that failure, and continued perseverance, were aspects of entrepreneurship. One female student noted that the experience of trying out an idea was important:

"The experience, that mattered more than anything else - that was quite important. I mean, he [the entrepreneur] spoke about it as being quite a positive thing, about all of the good things that he extracted from it, so that kind of enforced into our minds that it was about what you would get out of it, not necessarily, 'we must succeed, we must succeed'".

The students also felt that it was useful meeting up with other competitors, for a variety of reasons. One team, who travelled to the competition with a school from a rival district in their region, noted how they had been mutual suspicions between them at first, but that, as they day wore on they all became friendly - somewhat to their surprise! The trading game activity, and conversations at lunchtime, also helped students meet each other, stimulated the sense of competition, and helped competitors assess their rivals:

"It kind of got us really kind of competitive. Because we were sitting there in the dining room, sitting there listening to other people's ideas, going, 'we can do better than that, we can do better than that'".

"It definitely got the competitive spirit up in all of us".

[The trading game] "helped you get to know people in other groups, [...] and it helped you know the kind of people you're dealing with".

"It was good to size up the competition".

Nonetheless, despite the dominant sense of the Launch Day being useful in a variety of ways, there were some dissenting voices. One of the younger students felt that:

"It seemed to go on for ages [...] I didn't enjoy it".

On being asked to explain what he felt was the problem, he said that the presentations were too long. A few of the other students questioned the usefulness of the trading game in particular:

"[It] was really boring, because we sat in a room, and we swapped things [...] and I thought that was a bit pointless".

"It [the trading game] didn't really teach us to negotiate, it was more a case of just try it yourself, and see if you can do it".

Typically, these students felt that more teaching of negotiating skills should have occurred before the trading game took place.

### ***The Competition Training Folder***

Each team received a NFTE competition training folder. This folder outlined the demands of the competition, and gave a wide range of advice on how to run a business. Topics covered including the roles of differing members of a board of directors, research and marketing, accounts, and making presentations. The questionnaire responses indicated that about three quarters (74%) thought that it was a useful tool (Table 4).

**Table 4. The competition training folder was helpful**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	5
Disagree	10	16
Agree	33	52
Strongly agree	14	22
Don't know	3	5
N =	63	

The interviews with competitors at the case study schools indicated that the training folder was used in particular ways, and at particular stages in the progress of the programme. The folder appears to have been particularly utilised at the start of the competition process and as part of competitors' preparation for the Competition Day. In terms of the content, students seem to have found it most useful for information on keeping and presenting accounts, and preparing for their competition presentation.

The case study students appear to have found the folder useful at the beginning of the competition process, as, like the Launch Day, it clarified the demands of the GEP for them. In a similar fashion, the folder helped the students to prepare their presentations, which were a key element in the entire competition:

"We all looked over it at the beginning, when we were really excited about the business, looking for ideas and things, and then I think we just got on with whatever we were doing during the actual business, and then when it came to preparing the presentation, then we really looked at the folder".

"That [the folder] really helped in structuring the final presentation, so we went through each section, and made sure that we had something to say about each thing".

"We used that [the folder] for the presentation, the layout of that".

"It was helpful, but not all the way through [the running of the business], because you had more pressing things to do".

"We used it [the folder] when we were making the presentation - the guidelines - to help us".

Other areas where the training folder appears to have been helpful was in helping the competitors to decide on which roles they would take within the management and running of their businesses, and in preparing their accounts.

### ***Regional Training Days***

The provision and experience of the Regional Training Days varied across the country. Outside of London, Mr Steve Alcock, the CEO of NFTE, ran one day training

sessions for competitors. Two of these, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Coventry, were observed by the evaluators. Steve Alcock had initially intended that a teacher, or teachers, from each region would run a series of training days. This model was followed in the London Region, where Mr Terry Mann, of John Kelly Girls' Technology College, and a NFTE trained teacher, ran three training days for London schools.

The training days run by Mr Steve Alcock followed the same format in each case. For example, the West Midlands training day, held at Woodway Park School, Coventry, on Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2005, lasted from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m.. Teams from seven of the competing schools attended, with their teachers. The training was introduced by Steve Alcock, who reminded the audience of the incentive to win - the trip to New York. He then focused on the importance of the teams' having good presentations available for the Competition Day, which was only five weeks ahead. This was followed by each of the seven teams giving their draft presentations to the other competitors. The aim was to give the teams practice at making presentations, enable them to benefit from feedback, and to benefit from watching other teams in action. Following the practice presentations, there were questions and feedback, particularly from Steve Alcock, and the Goldman Sachs' mentor, Mr. Colin Davies. This was followed by a session led by Steve Alcock on presentation skills. The teams then had 45 minutes in which to think about the next steps in their campaign. They then explained what those steps would be before the training session was concluded.

The training available in London was different, in that there were three separate sessions, each organised and led by Mr Terry Mann, a NFTE trained teacher. Each training session was themed around a different aspect of entrepreneurship - 'What is an entrepreneur?'; 'Market research and advertising'; and 'Finance and accounts'. Each session opened with a presentation by a guest speaker, then all the GEP teams in attendance made a three minute presentation, a cash prize being awarded to the winning presentation. Eight teams were involved in 2005. This was followed by a business teaching session, and the training day was finished with a brief session on business ideas and presentation hints.

Of the 63 questionnaire respondents, 87% (54 students) had attended a regional training day, and a large majority of them found the experience useful (Table 5).

**Table 5. The training day was helpful**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	6	11
Agee	27	50
Strongly agree	20	37
Don't know	1	2
N =	54	

- The nine missing responses represent those respondents who did not attend a training day and so are excluded from this analysis.

The case study interviews also suggested that students found the training days of use. The main benefit that the teams appear to have taken from participating in the training days (whether in London, or in other regions) was related to preparing and giving their presentations. The students were very aware that this aspect of the competition was crucial, and welcomed the chance to give draft presentations, receive feedback on their efforts, see other teams giving presentations, and to get pointers about how to improve presentations:

"With the PowerPoint presentations, we learnt that everything has to be really concise. Even the little things really helped in the presentation".

"Steve Alcock gave useful advice [which] definitely improved our presentation".

"It was a good opportunity to compare ourselves with other GEP teams".

### ***The Mentors***

The mentoring provided by Goldman Sachs' employees, and by Warwick University Business School MBA students was an important aspect of the programme. Each team was supposed to have one face-to-face meeting with their mentor, who was also supposed to be available online, via a dedicated NAGTY bulletin board, to assist the students throughout the programme. However, there were problems with this



system, which seems to have restricted the role of mentors to certain teams. Nonetheless, where the system did work effectively, mentor input was valued by the students, as shown in Table 6.

The majority of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they had met their mentor (56 out of the 63 respondents, 89%). Of these, a majority found that contact useful.

**Table 6. The mentor was helpful**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	4	7
Disagree	9	16
Agree	23	41
Strongly agree	19	34
Don't know	1	2
N =	56	

\* The seven missing responses represent those respondents who did not meet their mentor and so are not included in this analysis.

There was some variation in the case study teams' experience of working with their mentors. One of the teams did not have a face-to-face meeting with their mentor; they did not, in fact, know that they were meant to have such a meeting. In addition, this team, like three of the other four case study teams, had problems with the online contact. The problems all focused on delays in receiving replies from mentors, or failures to receive replies at all. In addition, the firewall software of some school IT systems identified the NAGTY bulletin board as a chat room and prevented the students from gaining access to it. Delays in receiving responses from mentors seem to have been due to the fact that there was no direct link between the students and the mentors, rather all contact was vetted by NAGTY. As a result, some students noted that they were unable to receive help about problems when they needed them. Typical comments included:

"We got two messages back from him, and that was it".

"The filtering was a problem".

"He came up, and he was helpful, and then he sent us a message on the online forum. We sent one back, and he never replied, and we sent another two, and he still didn't reply. So we tried to get in touch with him, but he never replied. I even tried ringing him, but no-one picked up, he never answered".

"It [the bulletin board] did work at the beginning, but near the end, when we had a *really important* e-mail, it didn't work".

Despite the problems, those teams that did have contact with their mentors found it very helpful. Some 48% of respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement that, 'it was useful to have access to the mentor online' (Table 7).

**Table 7. It was useful to have access to the mentor online**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	5	8
Disagree	7	12
Agree	29	48
Strongly agree	19	31
Don't know	1	2
N =	61	

The 20% of respondents who 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' with the statement, probably reflected the difficulties associated with the bulletin board that were identified by the case study students. This group of students also highlighted the benefits of contact with the mentors, both face-to-face, and via the bulletin board. They said that mentors were able to give them ideas, respond to problems that arose, help them with specific aspects of the competition, such as finances or the presentation, and encouraged them when they felt that things were not going as well as they would have liked. One team went on a trip to London to see their mentor at the Goldman Sachs offices. This team used internet connections from home (their school firewall prevented access to the bulletin board from school terminals), and felt

that as well as giving them good advice, their mentor boosted their morale just when they needed it:

"We were doing so much work, and yet we didn't have a business up and running, and he said that we were doing ok".

In a similar fashion, their trip to Goldman Sachs boosted morale, it,

"Made us feel very special".

"Inspired us".

"[made us] realise how successful you can be".

"Showed us how much money you can make".

While not being able to go to Goldman Sachs to see their mentors, other teams also benefited from contact with mentors:

"On the day he came down to speak to us, we weren't too sure about how we would present, because we knew we hadn't made much money, but he reinforced the idea that it is a story that we were telling, not to worry about the money".

"We got quite a lot of help out of him [...] business ideas, advice".

### ***Getting involved***

In addition to the processes of the competition that were examined via the questionnaire and through the case study interviews, three additional areas were discussed in the interviews - getting involved in the competition; the day-to-day experience of running a business; and working with the teacher in charge.

Students from the case study schools became involved in the GEP in two ways. One school operated a 'first-come-first served' scheme for their NAGTY pupils. Students on this team were very quick to put their names down for the scheme, with one boy telephoning his mother to ask her to come into school to sign the necessary

permission, while another student ran home that lunchtime to get the necessary signature, and a girl from the same team took an early bus into school the next day in order to be included. All this was in response to a poster put up by the gifted and talented co-ordinator one morning; a poster that prominently advertised the trip to New York.

The other case study schools all operated a more restricted, or more focused, approach to selecting a GEP team. In each of these schools, the gifted and talented co-ordinator, and/or the teacher-in-charge identified students that they thought would be suitable for the team. Not all the students approached were interested in taking part, but the essential point was that membership of the programme was not thrown open to all NAGTY members in the school. The students did not have any particular views about this process, nor did they have any ideas about the criteria used to choose them. In the interviews, they simply explained how they had been asked to take part:

"We just got a note in our register that said, 'go and see Mr X', and he told us about it".

"I was walking through the door, and he [the teacher in charge] grabbed me, 'There's this thingy going on down at Warwick University, would you like to come?' 'Oh, yes, yes'".

"We had to fill in a form, and, originally, there were eight of us, but three people didn't fill in their forms".

### ***Running a business***

All the case study students told similar tales of how their teams worked together, how they decided what to do, the difficulties that they had, and the experience of running a business over a relatively extended period.

All the students from the case study teams described very co-operative ways of working, explaining that decisions had been made on a group basis. In addition, they explained that despite the adoption of business management terms, including titles

like CEO, they had, in fact, operated in a fashion that was characterised by equality between the team members:

"I really think we actually wanted to go for the position [that they each took]. We weren't pushed into it".

"We all got on fine".

"They [the titles] were really just names, we all did things".

"We just all sat down, and thought who's good at what, and what would we like to be doing?"

The evaluator did not come across any sense that any of the teams were dominated by a single personality. Rather, there was a strong sense of the joint ownership of the GEP businesses among the students involved.

For four of the case study teams, the Launch Day proved to be a strong stimulus to deciding what type of business they were going to run. Typically, the students talked about possible businesses both at the Launch Day, and on the journey home:

"It was kind of the same day [the Launch Day], we came up with a big list of ideas. We decided which were the best ones to do, what would be more original, what people wouldn't think of".

"On the way back from the Launch Day we were in the car, and decided to rent a camcorder out so that people could make their own films, but we decided not to do that because it was expensive for the camera".

By contrast, one of the teams met for a more formal brainstorming session, at which they came up with a number of ideas which then formed the basis of questionnaire-led market research among other pupils to see which idea was the most popular in their market.

The week by week process of running their businesses presented the students with a variety of problems, which, nevertheless, they all felt that they had met, to one degree or another. Running the business proved time-consuming, and demanded

perseverance to keep it going over a long period. Further, the students often had difficulty finding time, given other school and personal commitments, to meet up to manage the business. As the Competition Day drew closer, they also had to find time to plan, develop, and practice their presentations. The students appear to have been enthusiastic, and keen to advertise and promote their businesses. They were aware of the necessity of publicity, financial and quality control, and were generally successful in negotiating with their schools, teachers, and school fellows. Typical accounts of the day-to-day running of their businesses were:

"The main thing was running the stationary shop. In the morning, we had a rota of who would be running the shop. And then it was just going round teachers, stocking up on pens and pencils, collecting money. And have meetings with teachers about arranging [business matters]".

"The first session we had, 200 people turned up. We didn't expect that many to turn up".

"Posters, flyers, newsletters. We went to form rooms in the morning to say when the studio was going to be open again. And after the first session we started making appointments, going round the form rooms making appointments".

"We did a few assemblies as well. We went up and told them exactly what we said in the classrooms, that it was a professional business, we had all been trained, that it was cheaper than going outside. We had examples that we showed".

"For our business, things were a bit on and off. For a couple of weeks, you'd just be planning things, and then, for the actual week that you'd be holding the event, it would be really quite stressful actually, because we'd have to get there at the beginning of lunchtime, and things like that".

"We think that we might have planned a bit more for some things. I think that we needed to talk more. E discussed things, and we got on well, but I think we needed to talk a lot more about the ideas, having it completely sussed out before we actually went into starting it. Our marketing was good, we had good customer contact, but I think we needed a bit more".

It was apparent that the students put a good deal of effort, time, and enthusiasm into their participation in GEP.

### ***Working with teachers***

Evidence concerning the students' experience of working with their teachers came from the interviews with the case study teams. With the exception of one school, all the responsible teachers left the CEDAR researcher alone with the students for the entirety of the interview, or, at the least, for the part concerning their relationship with the GEP teacher. In fact, the students were universally positive about the role of the responsible teachers, and their relationship with them. One team enthused about their GEP teacher, who was clearly very committed to the causes of his team, affectionately calling him 'the old man', and mentioning, in passing, that they 'had sacked him five times'. More seriously, the students from all the case study teams were aware of the time and effort that their teachers had put into the project, and frequently felt that in this extra-curricular activity, their teachers had become something more than they normally could be in the more formal setting of the classroom. Representative comments included:

'He is on our own level, so you could put ideas forward'.

'It's never been him saying, "you must do this and this". It's mainly been us telling him what to do!'

'We've had no problem telling him, "no, we're not going to do that".'

'She has put in a lot of effort'.

'She has been really helpful'.

'She was the best we could have had'.

'She sort of knew what we had to do, and helped us understand it'.

The CEDAR fieldworker also recognised that there was a close, relaxed, and successful working partnership between the GEP teachers and the teams. The teachers had to contribute a good deal of additional time to the project (for which none of them received direct reward), and the students were appreciative.

### ***ii) Teachers' perceptions***

The data generated by both the teachers' questionnaires, and the interviews with responsible teachers at the case study schools shows a high degree of uniformity in terms of both the process of the GEP competition, and the outcomes. Overall, teachers were enthusiastic about the programme, and were generally positive about the running of GEP, and the support available from NAGTY and NFTE. There were, nonetheless, some issues identified in connection with access to mentors, and the increased workload faced by teachers who were responsible for managing GEP teams.

### ***Getting involved in GEP***

Teachers responsible for GEP teams were asked, in the case study school interviews, how they had come to be involved with the competition. All the responsible teachers already had a gifted and talented, or entrepreneurial education role in the school prior to the GEP starting. They were typically approached by senior management, or in two cases by outside bodies (a LEA, and NFTE) about the programme, and decided, on being given details, that it was a competition that they felt would be useful for able children and their schools:

"It sounded good fun, a good idea. I wanted to get involved in a national project rather than something within the school or local community, so that was the reason".

"To raise the profile of the school in a national field. That was my main concern".

"My involvement is with NFTE. I am the NFTE co-ordinator for the college. I am the NFTE co-ordinator, and we got involved with the NAGTY programme, heard about it first through Steve Alcock at NFTE, and then we were



contacted directly from NAGTY, and asked whether we'd like to join through the Goldman Sachs foundation. It sorted of landed in my lap".

### ***Launch Day and Training support***

Overall, the teachers' view of both the competition Launch Day, and the NFTE training days was very positive. There was a high level of satisfaction exhibited in the questionnaire responses, and in the case study interviews, with these aspects of the GEP. The questionnaire generated data showed that the overwhelming majority of teachers felt that the Launch Day was useful (Table 8) (NB no percentages are given for tables with small frequencies).

**Table 8. The Competition Launch Day was useful to me.**

	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	0
Agree	3
Strongly Agree	14
N =	17

The data gathered in the interviews suggest that the Launch Day was useful to the teachers because it clarified the aims, scope, and demands of the competition for both the teachers and the students. In addition, the interviewed teachers indicated that the Launch Day acted galvanised the enthusiasm of the students, something that chimes neatly with the views of the students themselves. This point was made very clearly by one of the responsible teachers:

"Launch Day was great; the girls were absolutely blown away. You know, we get up there [Warwick University], they've got name badges, they've got a big buffet lunch, they had these activities they were getting involved in, they got to meet a real entrepreneur, and he talked about his needle less injection system. Last year's winners did a presentation, and they got very, very excited about it. They genuinely felt special, and I thought the hospitality up there was great. You know, they were arriving as delegates, and not as

students [...] we [teachers] were just there as the minders. They were the focus. We were just, like, 'go away, do whatever you want to do', and the focus of attention was firmly on them".

Similarly, the teachers were enthusiastic about the training days provided by NFTE. In both the questionnaire responses and in the interviews the overwhelming majority of the teachers expressed satisfaction with NFTE's training support. The data provided by the questionnaires indicated that all except one of the respondents were satisfied with the support from NFTE (Table 9), and all except one of the respondents who attended a NFTE training event felt that it was useful (Table 10).

**Table 9. I had enough support from NFTE to help my students**

	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	1
Agree	11
Strongly Agree	6
N =	18

**Table 10. I found the training day useful**

	Frequency
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	0
Agree	5
Strongly Agree	7
N =	13

- The five missing responses represent those respondents who did not attend a training day.

The regional training days were regarded as providing a good forum for the students to practice their, draft, presentations before an unfamiliar audience, as well as being a forum in which they could watch other teams, and receive additional advice on the way in which to conduct presentations. The London NFTE training days were very well received, albeit, on the part of one participating teacher with a reservation concerning time constraints, and some related issues, faced by his students:

"The regional training was very interesting, because at the regional training [in London] they have to do three presentations, which are excellent, and the teaching in the regional training is excellent as well, and it has been for the last two years, and it's great, because it gives them an idea how they've got to present business, and they are given a chance to present in front of other people, and to work to a timescale. But the problem was that they weren't using that time on the business, and they were spending a lot of time getting their presentation correct [...] It would have been nice if in the period up to Christmas, if there was more time incorporating, this is how you, this is what you need to do to set up a business, it takes a lot more time than you generally think it will do. I know that has got to come from us as well, but it would be nice in that period of time. And, also, they don't get their start-up money until quite late [...] we might have got it in the second or third regional training day, it was quite late, it wasn't the first regional training day".

A further aspect of NFTE's training support was the Competition Folder, a copy of which was provided for each GEP team. The teachers felt that this was a useful tool, providing basic information about the competition, along with essential material about key aspects of GEP, such as managerial structures, accounting, finances, and the way in which a business presentation should be structured. Overall, almost all teachers responding to the questionnaire felt that it was a valuable tool (Table 11)

**Table 11. The competition training folder was helpful**

	Frequency
Strongly disagree	0
Disagree	1
Agree	7
Strongly Agree	9
N =	17

The folder was regarded as a useful reference for all the essential issues that the teams would have to face in developing their businesses, and making their presentation:

"It was certainly useful in respect of them trying to focus in on the nuts and bolts of their business plan, i.e., what they deeded to do, what they need to have in place before they actually start their business, and how to look ahead [...] And the girls worked through that. And the bits at the back of that, how to put together a business plan, a presentation, are quite good".

Teachers used the Competition Folder in different ways, some sharing it with their students, while others handed it directly to their students, allowing the team to use it as they saw fit. But it was generally regarded as being valuable:

"They all went through it [the folder]. That was something I got them all involved in before we set up the [first] business".

"They said it was useful. I never really used it, because it was their folder. Anything that I get for it, because it is their competition after all, they get, they look after, and they are in charge of out throughout".

### ***The Mentors***

Although the majority of teachers who responded to the questionnaire were satisfied with their team's contact with the GEP mentors, a notable minority indicated that they were not satisfied with the online aspect of the GEP competition. Of the 16 out of 18 teams who met their mentor face-to-face, the overwhelming majority of responsible teachers felt that the meetings were useful (Table 12).

**Table 12. I found the meeting useful.**

	Frequency
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	1
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	10
N =	16

A different picture emerged with the response to the question concerning online contact, where nearly a third expressed a negative view (Table 13).

**Table 13. Online access to the mentor was useful for the team**

	Frequency
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	4
Agree	7
Strongly Agree	5
N =	17

Teachers who were interviewed confirmed that the problems experienced with mentor contact was, as identified by the students, and the teacher questionnaire, associated with the unreliability of the online system. In some cases, school IT systems, registering the bulletin board as a chat room, would not allow students access. In other cases, there were long delays and apparently missing communications in the electronic contact between students and mentors:

"It was a long-winded process, and the firewall kicked in, so, in fact, they [the students] ended up doing it from my office, because I have got an administration network".

By contrast, there was almost universal satisfaction with the face-to-face contact between mentors and students. Teachers felt that the mentors had, generally, the right approach to the students, that they were very helpful and with advice and in boosting the confidence of teams. There was, as a result, a feeling among the teachers that, if possible, they would like to see an increase in the contact time between mentors and teams.

"He was very good with the kids [...] extremely good with the kids".

"He just sat them down, went through what they had done, finances [...] gave them good ideas on how to handle their stock".

"He was great when he came [...] when he came to visit us it was really, really informative".

"I thought that the contact with the mentor this year was better than last year, because he came into the school, which made a big difference, putting a face to the name, and he was superb when it came to the final presentation, the amount of help he gave them. He did really, really well, aimed at the right level. I thought that was very good, I was very impressed with it. It would have been nice, and I know that he couldn't do it, but it would have been nice had he [been able] to come in at an earlier stage, rather than two weeks before the final presentation [...] It was far better to have a mentor come in and speak to the kids, than just have someone who was on the end of an e-mail".

### ***Running GEP in school***

Although all the teachers who were interviewed had a gifted and talented or entrepreneurial education role in their schools, none of the teachers were obliged by those roles to act as the teacher responsible for overseeing the GEP. All the teachers were giving freely of their own time, during breaks, lunchtime, and at the weekends, to enable students from their schools to participate in GEP. There appeared to be no formal recognition by schools that this a considerable commitment that was being made by the teachers. There was, for example, no extra non-contact teaching time allowed for the responsible teachers.

"It's done during lunch, it's done after school, it's done during registration, and they have the regional training on Saturday mornings".

"Before the final competition, we did have [the mentor] in from Goldman Sachs, and we did take them [the students] off timetable for that, and it was in my free periods, so I gave up my free periods as well".

"It's been hard, obviously, it is a lot of Saturdays, it's a lot of after school club [times]. And I only got them for two periods, I was only able to get them off two periods to practise their business presentation [...] and the rest we have done in our own time. So, I've found it particularly hard, as there have been times when they have had some minor crisis, and they wanted my time and

attention, and it just so happened that it was on a bad day, and I couldn't manage it. It only happened twice, but I felt on those occasions that I was letting them down a bit".

The CEDAR fieldworker felt that perhaps there was a lack of understanding by senior management in some of the schools about the degree of commitment needed from staff, and teams, for their students to take part this national competition. In one school, at least, the responsible teacher was a retired member of staff, with a part-time appointment, specifically focused on able pupils in the school. Because of his particular situation, he felt that he was able to give much more to the GEP competition than any other member of staff would, unless they were given time to help the students.

### ***iii) Mentors' perceptions.***

Four GEP mentors, all from Goldman Sachs, were interviewed by telephone, using a semi-structured interview schedule.

### ***Getting involved***

The Goldman Sachs' mentors were recruited to GEP via an informal network within the company. One of the mentors had acted in the same role for GEP in 2003-2004, and was asked by NAGTY to act as a recruiter and co-ordinator of mentors from Goldman Sachs. For essentially practical purposes, he decided that Warwick University graduates at Goldman Sachs would be a useful pool of potential mentors which he could draw upon. Beyond that, he did not have any other base criteria, and the mentors were eventually drawn from many different levels and posts within the firm. The co-ordinating mentor found no difficulty in recruiting sufficient mentors for the GEP:

"People are pretty keen [to act as mentors]. The hardest thing is [...] to find a reasonable set of people that you can ask without asking everyone in the firm, so that you get a reasonable amount of replies. So we just stuck to Warwick alumni, and that seemed to get us pretty good numbers, just from that group".

The managers at Goldman Sachs were supportive, and generally saw the GEP initiative as a good thing. The mentors all felt that being involved in the project would be an interesting experience. In addition, younger mentors felt that there were more tangible benefits to be gained from being involved with the GEP teams. One recent Warwick graduate, and Goldman Sachs employee, explained:

“I had been looking to get involved in some kind of mentoring, and it just seemed to be the perfect opportunity, really. It was something I wanted to do, to broaden my experience. And I thought, that looks good, and it will be helping out, and it’s linked to Warwick, and the programme looked really good for the students involved”.

### ***Induction***

The NAGTY GEP project manager met with the Goldman Sachs mentors in London, and briefed them on the programme, and the role of the mentors within it. This was seen, by the mentors as a valuable exercise:

“We met with Dan Persaud [NAGTY project manager], and we had a couple of hours with him, and he explained what it was about and what would be needed from us”.

There was more contact between the project manger and the co-ordinating mentor, and this, too, was successful:

“[I] had quite a bit of contact with Dan Persaud, and, mainly, I suppose because I was trying to organise the mentors, and one of the things we had to do, obviously, was to get the Criminal Records Bureau check done for everyone, so Dan came into London two or three times to meet people. That was useful, as I was able to arrange meetings where all the mentors met, met Dan as well, and could ask questions, ask for information about the scheme, particularly encouraging people who had done the scheme last year to be there as well, because they could provide some valuable input”.

Although these meetings provided a valuable, and effective, induction to the programme, it was felt, by the co-ordinating mentor that some additional guidance



might be useful, especially in the form of a handbook for the mentors. This would act as a essential reference tool, once the meetings with the NAGTY project manager had been completed.

### ***Contact with the GEP teams***

The mentors had two forums available to provide support for the GEP teams – the bulletin board, and one face-to-face meeting with their assigned team. The mentors' accounts of their contacts with the teams reflected the comments of the students about contact with the mentors; that is, there were problems associated with the electronic contact, but general satisfaction with the face to face meetings.

The mentors experienced problems with the bulletin board associated with delays in the start-up of the system, and in the handling of messages, and, more generally, problems associated with the nature of the medium. One of the mentors expressed frustration at how long it took to get the bulletin board system running, and the impact that he felt this had on the advice that he was able to give the team:

“The fact that it wasn't available until so late, because, obviously, I would have liked to have contacted them earlier, to, maybe, give them a hand with the earlier stages of their work and preparation. I guess I felt that by the time the forum was up and running and I was able to have some input into it, they had done most of the stuff, and they were looking to me to say this is the right way of doing things [...] So I didn't really have that much opportunity to guide them. I know the teacher was there to do most of that, but when I signed up for it, I thought we were going to have more of a kind of discussion about it at the beginning, and we'd be bouncing a few ideas around [...] but by the time I'd got first contact with them, they'd done the tuck shop, they were up and running with their [main business] and I was just adding my praise for it, saying, 'what a great idea, you've done really well, keep it up.'”.

The other mentors also mentioned similar problems with the bulletin board. They felt that the system was just too slow for effective contact between mentors and the teams. GEP teams would encounter problems that they wanted quick advice about, but they often had to wait for too long for the bulletin board system to deal with the issue. But the mentors also felt that effective use of the bulletin board system was hampered by the teams' difficulties with handling the medium. For example, one of

the mentors noted that his team often failed to be specific enough when asking for advice, while another mentor contrasted the effective use of the bulletin board by one team with the less effective use of the system by another:

“I did find it difficult. I actually had two schools I was looking after, and one of them ended up being pretty good users of it [the bulletin board], but there was always quite a time delay. By the time you’ve put in an e-mail, and it gets checked, and then they receive it and reply, there is usually about three days delay, so it is quite a long period of time, and also I think it is quite difficult for some of the students as well. A lot of their questions on the e-mail were slightly vague. So, it was sometimes quite difficult to help them from an e-mail that said, ‘help, we’re having problems. Give us some ideas’. In saying that, one of the schools ended up making pretty good use of it, but the more important things were definitely face-to-face meetings. If you could have had more direct e-mail as well, I think that would have been a lot better, rather than the bulletin board”.

Nevertheless, despite the problems with the bulletin board system, it was used, and one of the mentors noted that the students’ use of it became more effective as time went by, and as the Competition Day drew near.

The face to face meetings between mentors and teams appear to have been very successful in the mentors’ view. The mentors enjoyed the contact with their teams, felt that they were able to help the students in a variety of ways, and came away from the meetings with a clearer sense of the young people that they were working with. The mentors were also impressed by the enthusiasm of the students for the entrepreneurial project. All of these experiences were mentioned by the mentors who were interviewed:

“It went really, really well actually. Obviously, it was my first contact with the kids, and it was just amazing to see how keen they were, and to see how much work they had already done. The thing was, I didn’t really know what stage they were going to be at when I met them, whether they were going to be asking me initial questions [...] or what. But when I arrived, they had done so much work already. They were able to put together a presentation, and they were all very, very keen, and it was really good to see. I had a good chat

to them about their ideas. And I came away thinking that was quite a rewarding experience”.

One of the mentors outlined the content of these sessions, which varied, depending on when the meetings took place, and on what stage the teams were at in the project:

“I left it [the session content] pretty open. One of the teams was fairly early on, one of the teams was later, so there was a focus change. So the second team went through their draft presentation. I had some comments and feedbacks on that, and we basically tried to work out a couple of other things that we could do in terms of the financial analysis side, and work through that, and tried to get them to understand things like break-even charts, and just work through that. And then, the former group, which was much more about talking about their ideas, and trying to get them to focus on one or two ideas, rather than all their ideas, and narrow them down. But also, just the fact that you’ve met them then helps in the contact over the bulletin board afterwards; you can relate to them”.

In general, the mentors felt that the face-to-face meetings were valuable exercises which contributed both to the development and support of the teams’ enterprises, and to the mentors’ feeling that they were a useful part of the programme. The bulletin board was seen to be more of a mixed tool in terms of effectiveness and support for the teams. Some of the mentors suggested that it might be a better option if more face-to-face meetings could be arranged, and/or the bulletin board system be upgraded in some way. One of the interviewed mentors had a very clear list of suggestions that he felt could improve the role of the mentor within the programme:

- Earlier contact with the team, especially in terms of functioning electronic communication.
- More than one visit to each team. A few visits should be staggered throughout the year, at different stages of the teams’ project development.

- Longer meetings He only had one lunch hour with his team. He felt that more informal time might be beneficial, to enable the students to ask more questions about his work and similar business.
- A general presentation on Goldman Sachs, to explain to the students what the company does, in order to give them a clearer idea of the background of the mentors

A similar set of proposals was made by another mentor:

“If you could have had more direct e-mails as well, I think that would have been a lot better, rather than the bulletin board. It is difficult in that most of the people in Goldmans are in London or the South-East area, but my schools were [in the North], but if they had been closer, I think it would have been feasible to have two or three visits during the year, if the travelling wasn't such an issue, because I think it was the face-to-face that I felt were really valuable with my schools. And throughout the year, you could just do a direct e-mail, but, unfortunately, that may be impossible, with the restrictions”.

### ***Mentors' views of the students***

The mentors described the students in very similar ways – frequently using the adjectives ‘keen’, ‘serious’, and ‘enthusiastic’. They were pleased with the commitment of the GEP students to their businesses. This enthusiasm was one of the main reasons why, for at least one mentor, why the whole project was valuable, and why he had enjoyed his involvement with it. All the mentors commented on the students' enthusiasm:

“I was expecting them to be a bit less interested [...] but they gave up their lunch hours, and after school, and were really keen to do it. I was a little bit surprised to see how much time and effort they were putting in, and really keen to do it, and seemed like they were really enjoying it as well”.

“They were very keen students, and it was good for me to see that they were so interested. You don't often see kids that are *that* interested, really knuckling down, and had got good things to show for it”.

“They were super. They did seem to be a bit shy, a bit over-awed, I think, at first [...] By the time they got to the presentation day they were much more relaxed, but I think that was also interesting to see how they progressed through that year, from a little bit unsure of themselves and what they were doing, to quite a bit of confidence towards the end – which was good. They generally seemed to be pretty enthusiastic, and they seemed to be enjoying themselves”.

The mentors also felt that they were appreciated by the students, and, as a result, felt that they were an important part of the programme; the co-coordinating mentor commented:

“We seem to get a lot of feedback, really positive feedback, last year, and again this year, so I’m hoping we are bring helpful”.

### **3. Outcomes.**

The Gifted Entrepreneurs Programme produced a range of outcomes that have significance in terms of the aims of the project. A wide range of business enterprises were set up, both seed corn businesses and main businesses. Some of these have had a life that has extended beyond the Competition Day, and beyond the schools involved. In addition, students, and teachers felt that there had been a wide range of personal, social, and educational benefits accruing to students participating in GEP. This view was supported by the parents of GEP students. It was also felt that the benefits of GEP participation had extended beyond the team members to others in their schools. Finally, the teachers involved also felt that they benefited from being involved with the GEP teams.

#### ***Business outcomes***

Twenty-two teams presented their business stories at the GEP prize day, held at the University of Warwick, on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2005. Another five teams had completed the programme, but did not make their presentations at the day. The teams had run a wide variety of businesses, both start-up businesses designed to generate investment funds for the main business ideas. The teams made their presentations first in four separate heats, with one team from each heat going through to the final. Those teams were from St. Hilda's Roman Catholic Girls' High School, Seven Kings High School, Norbury Manor High School for Girls, and Dartmouth High School, which was the winning team. The winning team's business idea was the production of a transition book for Year 6 pupils preparing to transfer to secondary school. The other finalists had sold personalised pens and handcrafted candles, run a variety of in-school entertainment events, and designed and produced screen-printed clothes. All the teams who made presentations had run successful businesses, and made effective presentations before the judges and the audience of invited guests and other students. The general conclusion of all those in attendance was that the standard of the presentations was uniformly high.

#### ***Students' views of outcomes***

The student questionnaire asked students about outcomes in terms of improving or acquiring various business-related and transferable skills. In addition, students were

asked about the impact of taking part in the GEP on possible futures that they were planning for themselves. The interviews with the case study students also touched on these issues, with two questions devoted to these two main outcome areas. A fairly uniform picture emerged from the data in terms of the students' perception of their involvement in the programme. There was general agreement that they had improved in a number of key skills, such as communication, negotiating, and presentation skills, often to a large degree. However, the impact of participating in GEP on possible future educational and occupational pathways was less pronounced, although still notable. Both the quantitative and qualitative data reflected these findings.

### ***Improving skills***

The questionnaire asked students whether they felt a variety of skills had been improved, or not, through participation in GEP. The skills were: team working, time management, leadership, marketing, budgeting, verbal communication, written communication, presentation skills, and social skills, such as negotiating. In all these areas, a substantial majority of respondents indicated that taking part in GEP had improved their skills. Some of these skills could be seen to have a specific business orientation, such as budgeting and finance, but all of the skills obtained or improved were essentially transferable skills.

In all the case study interviews, the students were most keen to emphasize that the skill that they felt they had improved the most was presentation skills. The competition hinged, to a high degree, on the ability of the students to make good presentations on the Competition Day, telling the stories of their businesses as effectively as possible. The students were aware that in developing their presentational skills, they were also building communication skills, and self-confidence. In one interview, members of the team explained how one of their number had been extremely shy at the start of the project, but, as their business progressed, and as it grew stronger, and the students were involved in more negotiations, more contact with clients, providers, teachers, their mentor, so the shy team member lost that shyness. In the interview, one of the team explained how their confidence had grown, and then said:

"Especially [student's name]. At the start, she was silent, even when it was just us. But when we went round the form rooms, and went to assembly, she spoke up, she really did us proud!"

This analysis was mirrored in the other interviews, and in the responses to the questionnaire.

**Table 14. Being involved in GEP has improved my verbal communication skills**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	2
Disagree	2	3
Agree	29	46
Strongly agree	31	49
N =	63	

Some 95% of the respondents, therefore, agreed that participating in GEP had improved their verbal communication skills (Table 14). The figure was slightly less for those who felt that GEP participation had improved their written communication skills, but it was still 86%, a large majority of respondents (Table 15):

**Table 15. Being involved in the GEP has improved my written communication skills**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	2
Disagree	8	13
Agree	37	59
Strongly agree	17	27
N =	63	

Similar results were obtained from the questions relating to improvements in social skills (Table 16), and, mostly frequently mentioned by the case study students, presentation skills (Table 17):



**Table 16. Being involved in the GEP has improved my social skills, such as negotiating with other people**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	2
Disagree	2	3
Agree	28	44
Strongly agree	30	48
Don't know	2	3
N =	63	

**Table 17. Being involved in the GEP has improved my presentation skills, e.g. use of Power point, public speaking etc.**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	2
Disagree	2	3
Agree	17	27
Strongly agree	43	68
N =	63	

All skill improvement question responses to the questionnaire showed a very strong opinion that key skills had been improved. Responses to the relevant questions indicated that, in the area of team working, 92% of respondents either 'agreed', or 'strongly agreed' that involvement with GEP had improved their skills in this area. Similarly, 91% of respondents felt that their management skills had improved, while 89% felt that their leadership skills had improved, 98% felt that their marketing skills had improved, and 87% felt that their budgeting and financial skills had improved as a result of participating in GEP.

In addition to questions about skills acquisition, the students were asked about the degree to which participation in GEP had impacted upon their plans for the future, particularly in terms of business and university. The relationship between these variables was positive, although not as strongly so as in the case of skills acquisition. In interviews, a number of the case study students indicated that they did feel more

attracted to a business career after taking part in GEP, either as part of a large company, or by setting up their own business. Typical statements included:

"Visits to Goldman Sachs, getting in contact with the mentor, all that, I just think that it has really set my future out, because I really want to go into business".

"It has made business much more interesting, especially making your own business".

"I know that I want to be rich".

However, not all the participating students were attracted to business as a future. Other students explained:

"I've always wanted to be a lawyer".

"I've thought about going into teaching, being a lawyer, and being a psychiatrist".

This picture was reflected in responses to the questionnaire (Table 18).

**Table 18. Involvement in the GEP has increased my desire to have a business career in future**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	14	22
Agree	27	43
Strongly agree	14	22
Don't know	8	13
N =	63	

Involvement in GEP had a very strongly positive effect on the students' desire to go to university, which appears, in many cases, to have been stimulated by the visits to the University of Warwick for the Launch Day and the Competition Day. As one interviewed student put it, "I want to go to Warwick University. It is cool". The questionnaire responses indicated that 84% of the respondents agreed or strongly

agreed that taking part in GEP had increased their desire to attend university, while only 13% disagreed with the statement.

### ***Parents' views of outcomes***

All the parents of GEP participants were given the opportunity to respond to a parents' questionnaire regarding the GEP and their child. Of those who received the questionnaire, 62 returned completed questionnaires. The questionnaire largely focused on the perceived outcomes of the students' involvement in GEP, covering issues such as acquisition of skills, and students' future plans. The responses essentially matched those of the students on the same issues, and were overwhelmingly positive. It must, however, be noted that, to some extent, the parents of GEP participants were most distant from the competition. They were unable to attend either the Launch Day, or the Competition Day, and were unlikely to see the progress of the students' businesses on a day to day basis. The parents' perceptions of the impact of GEP on their children depended, to a large degree, on the reports they received from the students.

In terms of their children's involvement in NAGTY, and the entrepreneur competition, parent respondents were quite clear that the programme had a positive impact. The majority of parents stated that they felt that their children were more likely to become involved with other NAGTY programmes, and that their children had been motivated by the scale and the incentives offered by the GEP competition (Table 19)

**Table 19. Incentives for sons/daughters to take part in other NAGTY projects; importance of GEP as a nationwide competition; & the incentive of the prize**

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
More interested in other NAGTY projects	0	7%	52%	17%	13%
It was important that GEP was a national competition	0	13%	66%	19%	N/A
The Prize was a big incentive	0	19%	40%	39%	N/A

The majority of parents also indicated that they felt that taking part in GEP had some impact on their children's possible future plans. In response to the statement, 'as a result of taking part in the project, my son/daughter is more interested in having a business career', 39% of respondents agreed with the statement, and 26% strongly agreed. The response from parents about the impact of GEP participation on their children's desire to go to university was even more pronounced, with 92% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing (37%, and 61% respectively) that 'as a result of taking part in the project, my son/daughter is more interested in going to university after school'.

The parents' views concerning the impact on their children's acquisition of key, transferable skills was also very positive, completing a picture where parents overwhelmingly endorsed the positive effects on their children of participating in GEP (Table 20).

**Table 20. Improvements in son/daughter’s skills since being involved with GEP**

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don’t Know
Improvement in my child’s speaking skills	0	7%	61%	29%	2%
Improvement in my child’s reading skills	0	23%	57%	15%	5%
Improvement in my child’s social skills	0	3%	47%	50%	N/A

***Teachers’ views of outcomes***

Responsible GEP teachers reported very positive outcomes in all respects, both in their responses to the questionnaires and in the interviews with the case study teams. In the interviews, the responsible teachers were asked an open-ended question relating to outcomes - 'Could you tell me about the range of outcomes for you, and your team?' Interestingly, the teachers focused on a small range of benefits, largely accruing to the students. The questionnaire, however, attempted to elicit information about a wide range of benefits. In both cases, benefits were seen to be marked.

In the interviews, responsible teachers focused on the impact of GEP on the confidence, public speaking and presentation skills of the students, and on the increased profile of NAGTY and the GEP in the school. The teachers were very positive in terms of the confidence building benefits to students of taking part in GEP. Representative comments included:

"They were the two, quiet as a mouse when we started off in September, and by the time we got to Christmas, just after Christmas, they were the ones who were going out, and who were, you know, I wouldn't call it aggressive marketing, but, you know, they were being very forceful, and they were not afraid to say their piece".

"The kids have learnt a lot. Their presentations have improved a hundredfold. I mean [student's name] is very quiet, yet when he got up, you would not associate him with the same person, yet that came from doing presentation after presentation. Similarly with [student's name], who is another quieter member of the group, he was able to present clearly. And the rest of the team learnt that just because you're a very bubbly character, you still have to put in a lot of work to make things happen, it won't just happen".

"I think, most of all, it is personal skills, and social skills, that they have developed. It has been a great experience. Normally, you wouldn't get an opportunity to do something like this within their age group, especially within the school surroundings".

This analysis was also confirmed by responses to the questionnaire, in that the respondents reported improvements in participating students' social and presentation skills (Table 21).

**Table 21. GEP, and students' social and presentational skills, e.g., negotiating, and use of Power point, and public speaking**

Question	All of them	Some of them
Improvements in social skills	78%	22%
Improvements in presentational skills	83%	17%

Having a GEP team participating in the competition appears, in a large majority of cases, to have increased the profile of NAGTY in the participating schools. Teachers reported, in both interviews and in response to the questionnaire, that schools were, on the whole, supportive of the GEP students, and that both NAGTY and GEP had a high profile within the school as a result of students taking part in the competition. One responsible teacher talked about the impact on his own awareness of NAGTY,

"I was aware of NAGTY, and I was aware of gifted and talented before that, because every so often I had to write a bit on who I thought were the talented students. But in terms of having a *really* major impact, it [GEP] did it for me. I was massively impressed. I really was".

Another teacher explained how the business focus of the competition had impacted on students who were not involved:

"This project was really their [the team's] project. And it was established round the school. And I had other students saying to me, 'How come I didn't do it, Miss?'"

Enthusiasm for GEP spread beyond the team members, and responses to the teachers' questionnaire indicated that great majority of teachers felt that other NAGTY members were interested in participating in GEP in future years (Table 22).

**Table 22. I think that other NAGTY members in the school would be interested in taking part in the competition in future years**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	6
Disagree	0	0
Agree	8	44
Strongly agree	9	50
N =	18	

In some cases, the GEP teams drew heavily upon their peers in school to help them with their businesses, which meant that GEP was indirectly involving a good deal more students (and not just 'gifted and talented' students) than those who were members of the GEP teams.

The wider impact of GEP participation was usually enhanced by positive attitudes towards the project from school management and teachers, although two of the case study teams reported some negative attitudes towards GEP from individual teachers. The questionnaire responses indicated that this was also the picture more generally (Tables 23 and 24).

**Table 23. My team's participation in the GEP competition received recognition in the rest of the school**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	6
Disagree	0	0
Agree	13	72
Strongly agree	4	22
N =	18	

**Table 24. The school's senior management was supportive of the project**

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	6
Disagree	1	6
Agree	7	39
Strongly agree	9	50
N =	18	

The case study responsible teachers all felt that involvement with their GEP students had been worthwhile, and had, for most of them, also been learning experiences, both in terms of working with students in a non-classroom situation, and in being involved with a national competition:

"It was a learning experience [for me]. Actually knowing what is involved in running such a big project, and time, and what I expected from it, learning how to make it better. Great to meet other teachers and raise the profile [of the school] that way as well. And I've got stronger links with NAGTY now, which is good".

"I would say that it has been every bit as valuable for me as it has for the [team]. I've learnt a lot more about teaching and learning with that five than I have in the classroom, because they've all got their individual skills and talents, and, if I get them working on something that is a strength for them [...] I know that 90% of it is down to them, but that the extra 10% has been down



to me to get the like of [student's name] to come out of their shells [...] I just enjoyed it. Absolutely enjoyed it".

These sentiments have to be placed within the context that these teachers were fully aware of the high level of commitment in terms of time, within and without school hours that being the GEP responsible teacher entailed.

Information about teachers' views of the impact of student participation in GEP on their desire to go university, have a business career, and the students' verbal and written communication skills, largely came from responses to the questionnaire (Table 25). Once again, there was, across this range of issues, a high positive relationship between students' participating in GEP and positive outcomes.

**Table 25. Participation in GEP and increased desire among students to go to university, have a business career, improve verbal and written communication skills**

Question	All of them	Some of them	One of them	None of them
Increased desire to go to university	72%	28%	N/A	N/A
Increased desire to have a business career	11%	72%	6%	6%
Improved verbal communication skills	56%	44%	N/A	N/A
Improved written communication skills	39%	56%	N/A	5.6%

Similarly, teachers reported that the impact of GEP participation on the students was to bring positive benefits in other key areas, with questionnaire respondents noting that some or all of their students improved their time management, team working, and marketing skills.

## **5. Conclusions.**

The evaluation of the NAGTY Gifted Entrepreneurs Programme, 2004-2005, indicates that the programme has, in almost all respects, been a notable success. Students, teachers, mentors, and parents have all reported that significant benefits have accrued to participating students and schools in a variety of areas. Key transferable skills - such as communication, presentation, entrepreneurial, and social skills - have been improved among participating students. In addition, enthusiasm for entrepreneurial activity among the participating students, and their wider peer group, has been generated. NAGTY, through the GEP, has benefited from a higher profile among students, teachers, and schools. Participating adults, be they teachers or mentors, have reported being enthusiastically engaged by the programme and the NAGTY students. Both the processes of the competition and the outcomes are overwhelmingly viewed as positive. The main area that needs attention is the use of mentors. There are difficulties in managing the contact between mentors and GEP teams, particularly in terms of electronic communication via the NAGTY GEP bulletin board. These issues need to be addressed if the full benefit of the involvement of business mentors is to be felt by the GEP students.

The overall conclusion, from all sources, and using all the data collected, is that the NAGTY Gifted Entrepreneurs Programme is a highly successful, and much welcomed, initiative.