

2018-2019

City Hall School

Report to Partners



Danielle Zadunayski shows Grade 4-5 students the “good bugs” that will be introduced into the Devonian Gardens to fight the “bad bugs.” Zadunayski, who was head gardener at Devonian Gardens at the time of this photo, is now Parks foreman for Olympic Plaza.

In partnership with:



19-00488-460



Post plebiscite, Grade 3 students watch a worker remove Olympic graphics from a Stephen Avenue window.

Students explore their city

This year at City Hall School, students have looked at sky-high buildings, wide-open vistas from the St. Patrick's Island hilltop, and tiny nooks and crannies. They've counted the people walking through the highly visible "Promenade" by Julian Opie and puzzled over the easily missed "Millennium Beetle" by James Galts. They've observed council meetings, wandered through a back alley in Chinatown and spied camouflaged Great Horned Owls supervising their owlets.

Although each class focuses on whatever's on their minds, some topics stand out each year. Two years ago, urban planning was a common interest, and City Hall School leaned heavily on city planners to help build student understanding. Last year many classes pinned their week on public art, and so Calgary's municipal art experts spent hours in this classroom. During 2018-2019 several groups turned their attention to sustainability and the natural world.

It's been a newsy year. The Olympic plebiscite prompted lots of chatter as we immersed ourselves in a noisy rally outside the Council Chamber, debated the pros and cons in the classroom and then examined the vote results. The Olympic flag is often pointed out in the Chamber, and we keep a handful of the 1988 banners in our classroom artifact collection.

Our New Central Library is a huge hit, and it's right across the street. Students love the puzzles, games, books and projects in the children's area -- and the rolling chairs. We often walk up the ramp to the top, to admire the art and architecture, inspect special areas such as the teen zone and watch the C-train pass below. The west windows offer an excellent perspective of the Municipal Building's green roof.

One day we watched workers dismantle the Telus Sky crane, piece by piece. Add to this an early-October snowstorm, a frosty February, huge capital projects, a provincial election and students protesting climate change outside the front door, and you have the recipe for an exciting year.

"It was so much fun because we were all over the place."

~ Grade 6 student

"So many students have talked about visiting downtown with their families following our week. They also have a much deeper understanding of downtown as more than just a place with tall buildings."

~ Grade 4 teacher



A Grade 3 student sketches East Village from inside the library.



From inside the new public library, Grade 3 students draw East Village with Rod Zillman, one of their mentors from Calgary Urban Sketchers.

“My students really understood what it meant to be a part of a larger community.”
~ Grade 3 teacher



Rod Zillman sketched the sketchers.

How does City Hall School work?

City Hall School is a five-day field study, jointly run by The City of Calgary's Calgary Neighbourhoods business unit and Campus Calgary/Open Minds. Teachers apply the previous spring, and in their application they propose a focus or "big question" that will drive their entire school year. They consider the weeks and months leading up to City Hall School, the rich week downtown, and the weeks and months afterward.

Some big questions from 2018-2019:

- How does local government build fairness and equity?
- What will the future bring?
- How can we protect the world we share?
- How can a student be an agent of change?

Each week is customized, depending on the class's focus, the weather and goings-on in the Municipal Building and throughout downtown. Mayor Nenshi makes time to meet with each class, and students also meet their councillor and attend a meeting in the Council Chamber. Students meet with City of Calgary experts and community experts, and learn from nature and the human-made cityscape. We look for playgrounds, too.

The City Hall School classroom is located in the Municipal Building, across the atrium from the Council Chamber. Our classroom is home to beautiful public art, and there is lots to see throughout the building, such as the pillar sculpture in honour of Chief David Crowchild.

Any Calgary school is welcome -- public, Catholic, independent, charter -- and between Grades 3 and 12. (We did have one Grade 1 class this year.) Calgary Transit transports each class to and from downtown by bus, and we usually hop on a C-train at least once during the week, to move around the free fare zone.

City Hall School gives everyone a window into their very own municipal government, its people, its public meetings, its public spaces and the multi-faceted downtown experience.

"City Hall School would definitely inspire the younger generation to become engaged citizens and tomorrow's leaders."

~ Grade 4 teacher



Grade 1 students visited Fire Station #1.

"Many had not been downtown beyond going to the Stampede."

~ Grade 3 teacher

"Learning downtown was an excellent way to learn. It felt good to go outside, have people come in and sketch downtown."

~ Grade 6 student



At the south end of the Peace Bridge, the Delta Garden combines art, plants, flood mitigation and benches. Here a Grade 6 student takes a rubbing of brass survey monuments that feature messages from Calgarians. The messages answer two questions: Where are you going? Where do you want to be?

Stories of citizens and change

Why do we value active citizenship? And how can stories effect change? As Langevin School Grade 6 students zeroed in on the persuasive power of writing, they found beehives of mighty story-making within a few steps of the City Hall School classroom.

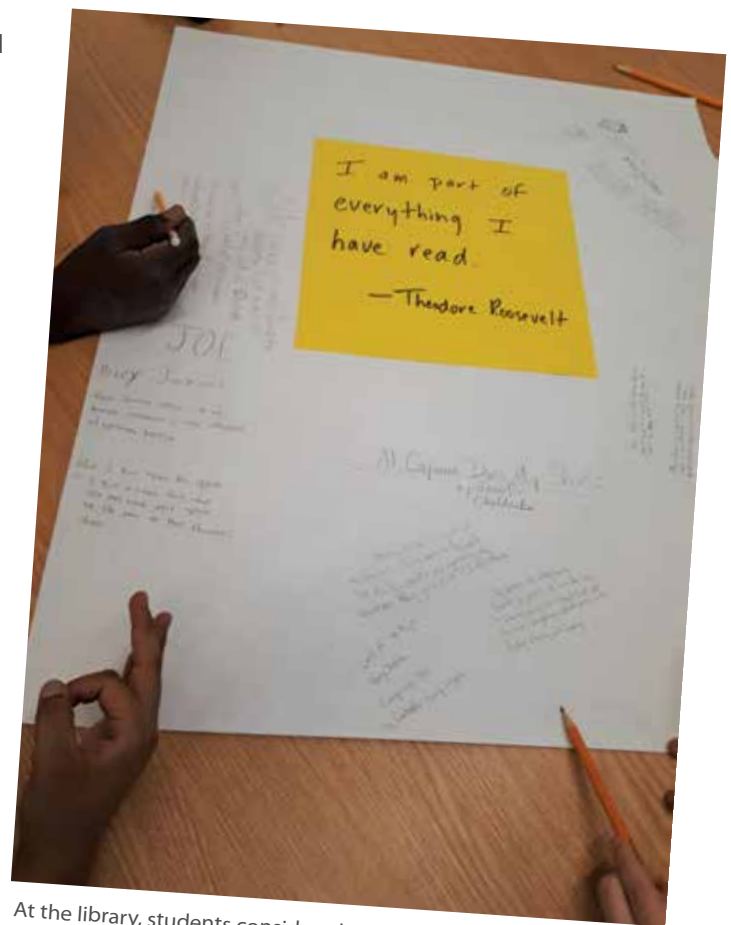
Students met Anna Dunne-Hussey, Library School coordinator, who encouraged them to remember books that have opened their eyes and their minds. We also visited Loft 112, a collaborative and supportive space for writers, readers, artists and storytellers. Lisa Murphy-Lamb, who facilitates creative happenings there, introduced students to the way poetry can spark change.

At the (weekly! free!) ProArts concert, students discovered singer-songwriters -- another community expressing their opinions. Little Miss Higgins and Bessie Wapp told stories with their songs, including one about women's frustration with traditional roles.

Back in the City Hall School classroom, students met Sam Hester. Sam is a keen observer of the world at her doorstep, and you might have seen her work around town -- maybe during a meeting about the Green Line, in the online Sprawl or in the Ramsay community newsletter. Students learned that Sam used to think Calgary was boring, while communities in other countries were interesting. "When you think things are special or important, you pay attention to them in a different way," she said. Then she turned her attention to the extraordinary hiding in the ordinary, right in her own neighbourhood and city. Sometimes Sam takes notes to capture others' opinions, and sometimes she uses cartoons and words to voice her own ideas.

Throughout the week, the students considered ways to contribute to a community, such as by serving in public office or on a public committee, community association or jury. Downtown exploration helped the Grade 6 class to notice problems, needs and opportunities. Finally, the Calgary Foundation's Julie Black shared inspiring examples of community building and engagement by Calgarians of all ages (including classmates from their very own Langevin School).

An energizing week of conversations about civic action, including the power of one person and the power of words.



At the library, students considered quotations about the power of books, and wrote titles of powerful books they'd read.



Graphic recorder Sam Hester illustrated the transformation of her thinking, from Calgary as a boring city, to Calgary as a fascinating city. We left her graphics on the board overnight, to see if Grade 6 students could recall the meaning of each graphic the next day. They absolutely did!

How does Calgary distribute wealth, justice and power?

Two Grade 9 classes from Queen Elizabeth High School put Calgary on myriad scales to weigh fairness and effectiveness.

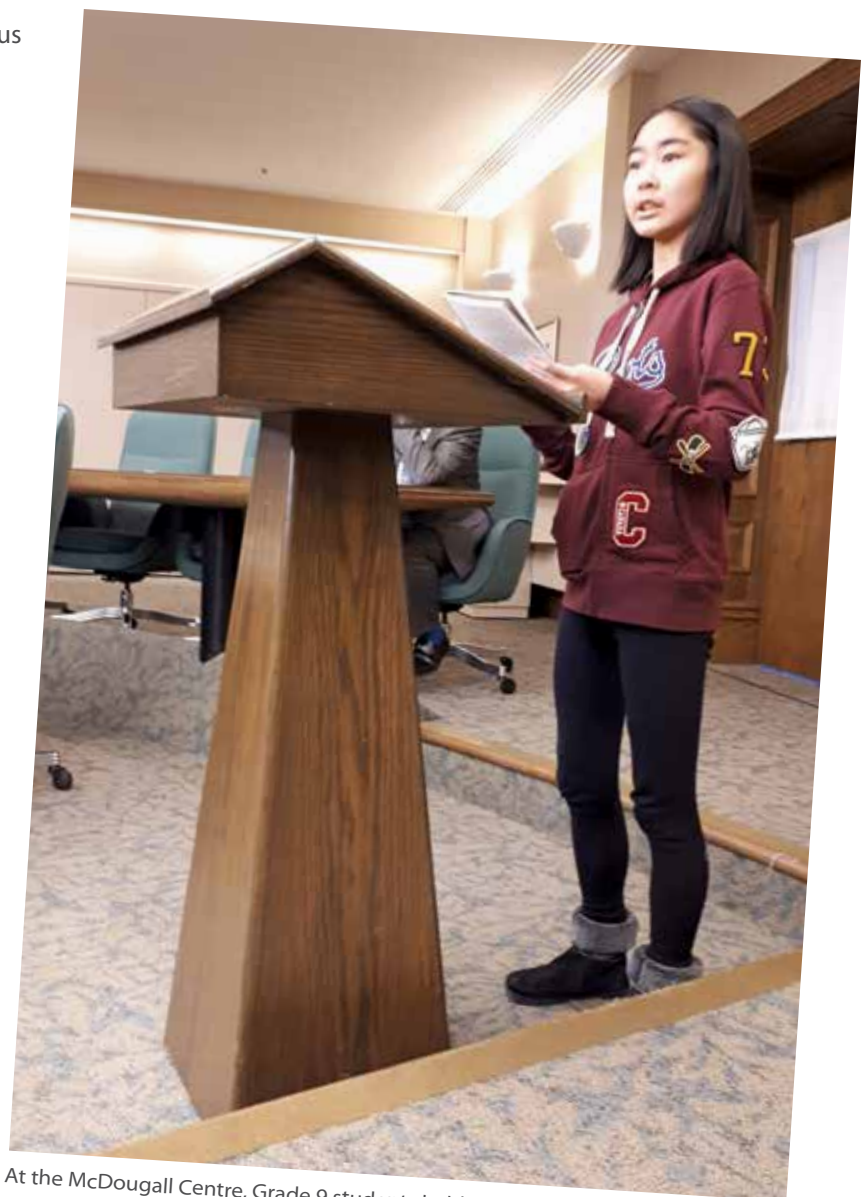
During each week at City Hall School, the students toured Inn from the Cold, where families seek emergency shelter and live in cubicles with minimal space and privacy. While the students' learning was profound, it also felt uncomfortable. Had we shown disrespect by observing vulnerable families in their temporary home? Should we bear witness? Would we have experienced the same impact and understanding if we hadn't seen this living arrangement? Students had to be cut off in the middle of their impassioned discussions, simply to get on the bus and go home.

These teens considered public places where all are welcome, such as the Municipal Building (including Council Chamber meetings and the Fair Entry office) and the Calgary Public Library. At the Calgary Courts Centre, where anyone is free to observe a trial, students sat in on proceedings. One class heard a judge give a convict one last chance to complete drug treatment; the other class listened to police testimony in a DUI trial. Students stacked each man's right to privacy against the value of an open, transparent, accessible court.

Another public space is the main floor of the McDougall Centre, Calgary's home to our provincial government. In the caucus chamber, one class formally debated these topics:

- Incentives should be provided for women and minority candidates to run in a municipal election.
- Public tax money should finance a new arena.

Justice, wealth and power ended up sparking big chats about public access to processes, programs and spaces, balanced with the right to privacy. No easy answers.



At the McDougall Centre, Grade 9 students held spirited, formal debates.

From the shortest lawn to the tallest tree

Many classes are abuzz with talk of nature and sustainability. For example, Highwood Grade 4s examined the balance between nature and humans. (Why aren't humans part of nature?) Each of the three classes met with Kerry Ross, who designed the Municipal Building green roof. Students considered the plants' ability to cool that area, as well as its visual balm for employees on the other side of the windows.

All City Hall School students find nature downtown, even in winter. In private office towers and at the Municipal Building, we considered the effects of indoor plants on our general health and happiness. At Devonian Gardens, head gardener Danielle Zadunayski (now the foreman at Olympic Plaza) pointed out leaves that smell like cloves, look like fish tails or change their colour according to their diet of sunlight. She also showed how to use good bugs to control pests.

At least two schools have grown vegetables indoors, and they learned about urban farming from Kristi Peters Snider, sustainability expert with the City's Growth Strategies office, and from Dennis Scanland, an urban farmer with YYC Growers.

When spring arrived, City Hall School students really put their green thumbs to work -- and honoured the spirit of reconciliation. We wanted to grow plants with a long Indigenous history, as medicine and for ceremony: sweetgrass, sage and tobacco. In raised beds above the parkade, students cleared mulch from five raised beds, mixed compost into the soil and planted seeds and seedlings. Many thanks to Highwood School Grade 4, Altadore School Grade 3, Calgary French and International School Grade 3, and Ron Southern School Grade 6.

Thank you, also, to Mayor Nenshi, and to Harold Horsefall and Wendy Sliworsky from Calgary Neighbourhoods. They all helped with the garden. We hope that these local plants will love their new downtown home.



Grade 3 students loosen the soil before planting sweetgrass, sage and tobacco.

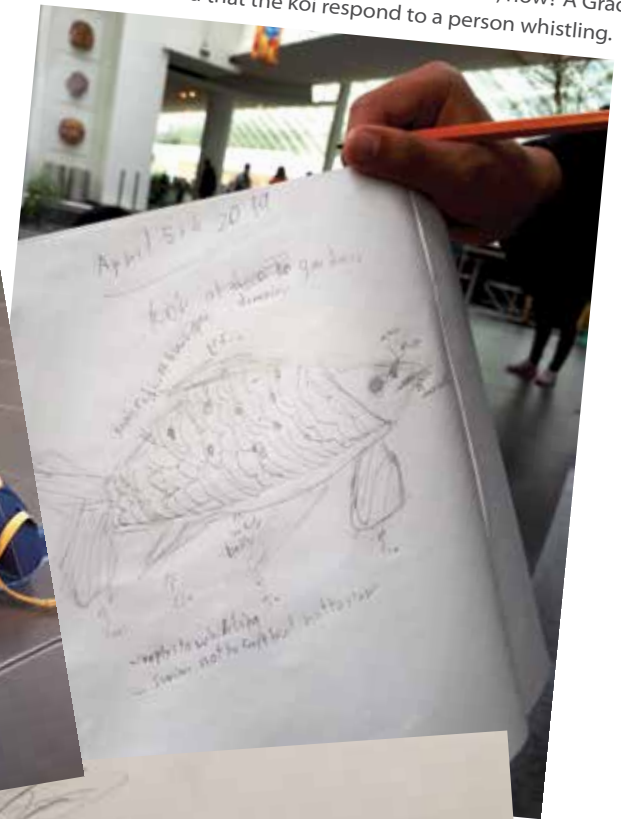
"I felt that being where it all happens is better instead of being in the northwest with only pictures and words. I also think it was fun."

~ Grade 6 student

Grade 3 students wondered: What are the fish thinking as they swim around their pond?

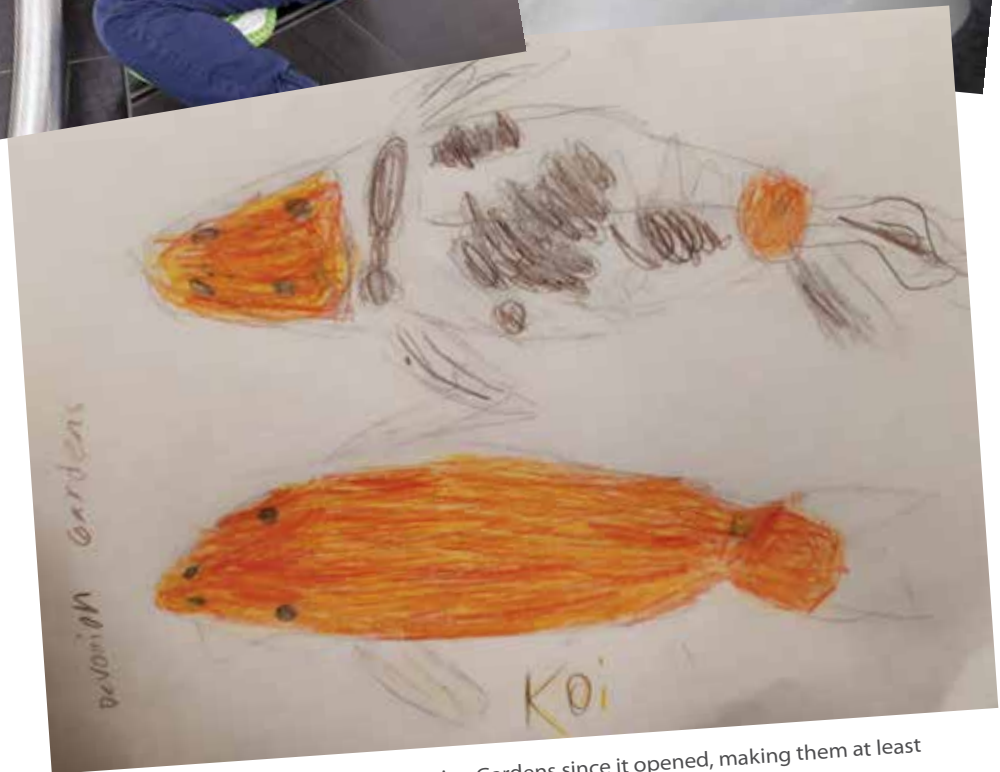


Do the koi communicate with each other? If so, how? A Grade 4 student noted that the koi respond to a person whistling.



"I'm not very good at sketching, but it was still fun to sit down and draw what I saw."

~ Grade 6 student



Some of the koi fish have lived at Devonian Gardens since it opened, making them at least 40 years old. A Grade 3 student sketched these koi.

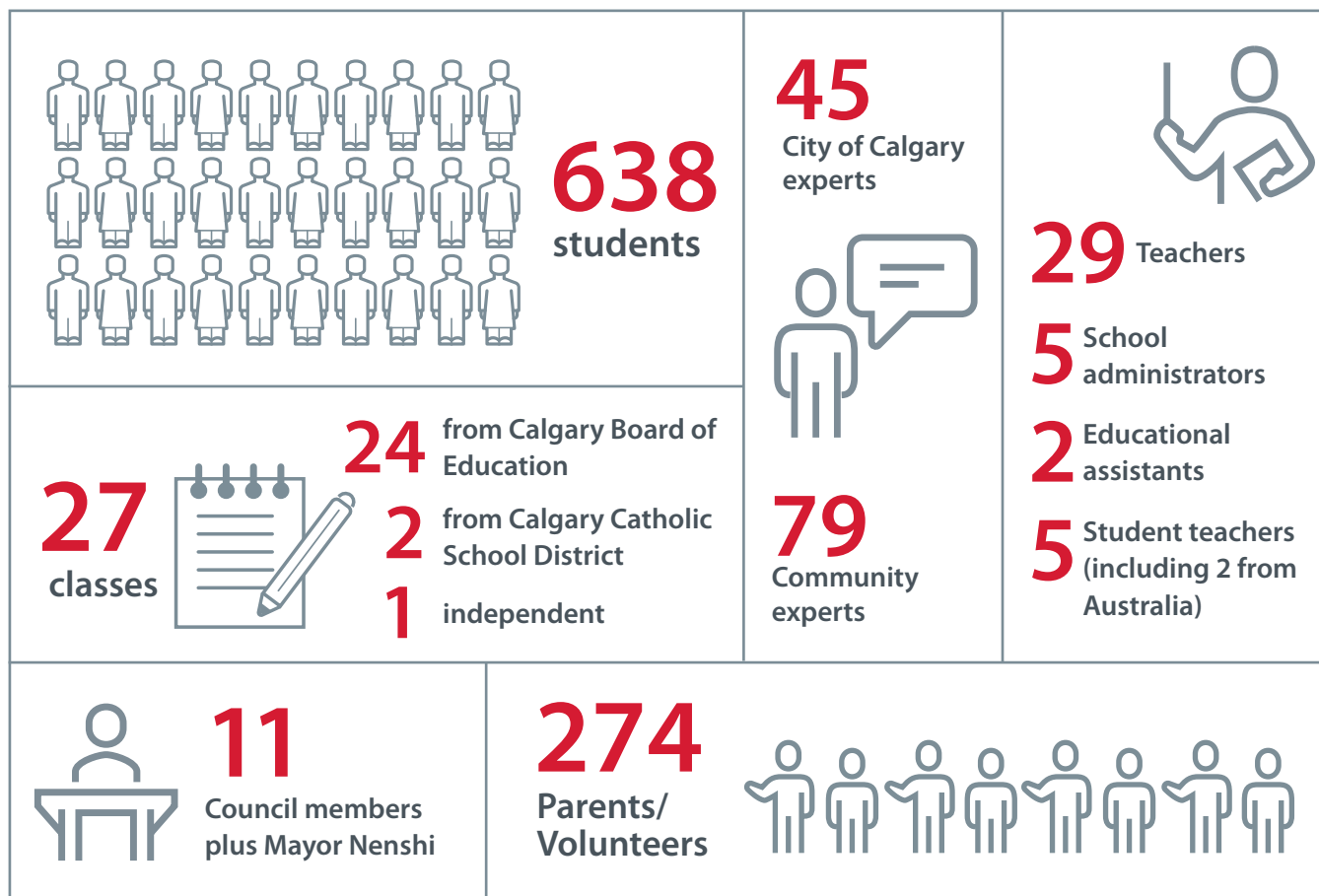
"The more details I put into my journal, the more I remember later."

~ Grade 6 student

City Hall School schedule 2018-2019

Week	School	Grade	Ward	Focus of study
Sept. 24-28	Alice Jamieson	6	9	How does local government build fairness and equity?
Oct. 1-5	Andrew Sibbald	4	14	How do we shape community?
Oct. 1 and 9-12	Andrew Sibbald	4	14	How do we shape community?
Oct. 15-19	Alice Jamieson	6	9	How does local government build fairness and equity?
Oct. 22-25 and Nov. 2	Arbour Lake	6	2	What is our place?
Oct. 29-Nov. 2	Arbour Lake	6	2	What is our place?
Nov. 5-9	Arbour Lake	6	2	What is our place?
Nov. 12-16	Evergreen	3	13	What will the future bring?
Nov. 26-30	Evergreen	3	13	What will the future bring?
Dec. 3-6 and 17	Ron Southern	4-5	13	Is change always positive?
Dec. 10-14	Stanley Jones	5-6	9	How does local government build fairness and equity?
Dec. 18-19 and March 18-20	Chinook Park	1	11	How can a student be an agent of change?
Jan. 7-11	Langevin	6	9	How can I become involved in my community?
Jan. 14-18	Queen Elizabeth	9	7	How does Calgary distribute wealth, power and justice?
Jan. 21-25	Queen Elizabeth	9	7	How does Calgary distribute wealth, power and justice?
Feb. 19-22 and March 1	St. Pius X	3	7	How can we protect the world we share?
Feb. 25-March 1	St. Pius X	3	7	How can we protect the world we share?
March 4-6	Chinook Park	5-6	11	How can a student be an agent of change?
March 11-15	Chinook Park	5-6	11	How can a student be an agent of change?
April 1-5	Highwood	4	4	How do we find balance in our world?
April 8-12	Highwood	4	4	How do we find balance in our world?
April 15-17 and 23-24	Highwood	4	4	How do we find balance in our world?
April 29-May 3	Calgary French and International	3	6	What makes a community?
May 6-10	Altadore	3	8	What makes a vibrant city?
May 14-16 and 21-22	Altadore	3	8	What makes a vibrant city?
May 27-31	Altadore	3	8	What makes a vibrant city?
June 3-7	Ron Southern	6	13	Is change always positive?

2018-2019 statistics



“Being able to go inside the Council Chamber and watch live the issues that were debated was a very interesting pillar for our understanding. We do thank you for this huge opportunity to see with our own eyes! ... I would come back 100% with another group of students and go through it again.”
~ Parent volunteer

“Sitting in council at a committee meeting made me realize how much time, effort and planning goes into a project to get it approved.”
~ Parent volunteer

“I feel re-invigorated about Calgary! I’ve learned so much!”
~ Parent volunteer

“City Hall School is an amazing opportunity and should be expanded wherever and however possible. I have grown up in Calgary, but knew so little about workings of the city, and thought processes behind community development. Learning through experience is so much better. Both my child’s teacher and myself will be able to reflect on this in the future. I have learned so much that it is impossible to write down... I would pay for this opportunity in the future.” ~ Parent volunteer

Thank you to The City of Calgary

Many thanks to The City of Calgary staff who shared their expertise with City Hall School, welcomed students into their workspaces, or supported the students in other ways. For example:

- Security staff in Visitor Management Services ensured that students were safe in the Municipal Building washrooms and gave us access to the Council Chamber.
- Jeny Mathews-Thusoo, of Resilience and Infrastructure, sparked huge discussions with an activity about bias and hasty judgments.
- Jacquelyn Oriold, of Transportation Planning, showed us different kinds of cycle tracks downtown.

9-1-1

Jenny Bergqvist
Doug Odney
Phil Schwieder

Art and Culture

Tomas Jonsson

Building Regulations

Marc Abdallah

Calgary Fire Department

Derek Arthurs
Todd Berry

Calgary Neighbourhoods

Kiara Bichel
Maerge Gebreegzabher
Arlas Gillies
Harold Horsefall
Lisa Johnston
Heather McKay
Jaspreet Sandhu
Wendy Sliworsky
Susan Yuen

Calgary Police Service

Jessica Wood

Calgary Roads

Dwain Babiak

Calgary Transit

Mandeep Dhese
Jaskaran Singh

Civic Innovation YYC

Erin Dumenko
Chad Oberg

Development Approval and Building Safety

Cody Pryor

Corporate Facility Planning & Management

Andrea Poti
Gyula Danka

Councillors and Staff

Councillor Gian-Carlo Carra
Councillor George Chahal
Councillor Sean Chu
Councillor Diane Colley-Urquhart
Councillor Jeff Davison
Councillor Peter Demong
Councillor Jeromy Farkas
Councillor Druh Farrell
Councillor Jyoti Gondek
Devon LeClair
Councillor Joe Magliocca
Councillor Evan Woolley

Office of the City Manager

Glenda Cole

Office of the Mayor

Franca Gualtieri
Mayor Naheed Nenshi

Parks

Danielle Zadunayski

Planning and Development

Neil MacDonald

Resilience and Infrastructure

Jeny Mathews-Thusoo

Visitor Management Services

Chris Wallis

Sustainability

Kristi Peters Snider

Transportation Planning

Jacquelyn Oriold

Water Resources

Roberta Waddell

"I want to be a mayor
one day!"

~ Grade 4 student

"Students now have a deeper understanding of how their community is connected to and supported by the rest of Calgary and City Hall. They have commented several times about the presentation by Heather McKay (Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator). One student even attended a local community association meeting after returning from City Hall School."

~ Grade 6 teacher

Thank you, Calgary

Thank you to these generous Calgarians who welcomed us into their spaces and visited our classroom, sometimes with lots of notice and sometimes at the drop of a hat:

Manar Al-Yasiri

Bow Tower: Camille Jensen, Katherine Jensen,
Rachelle Klukus

Brookfield Place: Tyler Friesen

Calgary Board of Education: Sheila McLeod,
Ronna Mosher, Olena Olafson, Sanimar Sarpal,
David Stevenson, Christopher Usih

Calgary Catholic School District: Andrea Holowka,
Frank McClernon, Gary Strother

Calgary Chinese Community Service Association:
Peter Wong

Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre: Kate Li, Tony Wong,
Maggie Woo

Calgary Courts Centre: Griswold Carter, Tim Davies,
Derk Doornbos, Reg Dunham, Dodi Hodgson, Bob Howie,
Neil Lindquist, Dilprit Sidhu

Calgary Foundation: Julie Black

Calgary Housing Company: Claire Noble

Calgary Prosecutions: Jacqueline Abbott, Robert Bassett,
Svetlana Odedra, Janice Walsh

Calgary Public Library: Gerry Burger-Martindale,
Anna Dunne-Hussey

Calgary Urban Sketchers: Peter Norman, Rod Zillman

Campus Calgary/Open Minds: Selina Kruchten,
Natasha McKay, Jennifer Meredith

Cenovus: Katherine Elliott

City of Winnipeg: Mayor Brian Bowman

East Village Experience Centre: Daniel Benner,
Amanda Eveson, Terry MacKenzie, Hugh Mosher,
Kathie Ramsay Magill, Kate Reeves, Annette Resler

Eighth Avenue Place and Hines: Robb Bossley, Eddy Butin,
Jamily Fyith, Patricia Mah

Enbridge: Diana Audino

Enerplus: Alyson Bilinski, Joanne McBain

Faithful Companions of Jesus: Terry Smith

Feed the Hungry: Charles Cheun

Green T Designs: Kerry Ross

Inn from the Cold: Elizabeth Gray, Hilary Jenkins,
Meg Kominek, Renee Lozada

Jamieson Place

Leftovers YYC: Lourdes Juan

Loft 112: Lisa Murphy-Lamb

Marc Boutin Architectural Collaborative: Tony Leong

McDougall Centre: JT Clode

Mount Royal Kantorei: John Morgan

Mustard Seed: Kelsey Brown

Rachel Notley

ProArts Music Society: Damon Johnston

St. Mary's Cathedral: Allison Charleton

Suncor Energy Centre: Alicia Wong

The CORE Shopping Centre

The Sprawl: Sam Hester, Jeremy Klaszus

Inouk Touzin

Vecova: Marnie Quan

YYC Growers: Dennis Scanland

Zedcor Energy Services: Todd Ziniuk

"The biggest takeaway for my students is that they feel empowered to contribute/build community ... City Hall School has been incredibly inspiring, and it was a reminder to bring as much of the real world into our classroom as possible."

~ Grade 4 teacher

Conclusion

City Hall School continues to surprise and delight hundreds of students each year -- as well as the many adults they bring with them. Participants learn that the Municipal Building belongs to all citizens of Calgary, including children and families who moved to town only yesterday. They also learn that all are welcome to attend meetings in the Council Chamber. They discover that they have free access to libraries and other public spaces, such as the Courts Centre and the legal proceedings happening within. They find out that the Devonian Gardens, in the CORE Shopping Centre, is actually a municipal park!

Classes learn that they can even explore private buildings, ranging from the architecture and museum of the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre, to the living wall and Dale Chihuly chandeliers in the Jamieson Place Winter Garden. Try sitting very quietly in the plaza outside Brookfield Place, and soon you will hear the melting and cracking Bow Glacier, as well as traffic along Stoney Trail. That's an art piece called Herald/Harbinger by Ben Rubin and Jer Thorp. As students wandered sidewalks and the +15 Skywalk, they discovered a world of food vendors, magnificent plants, spectacular art and a vibe unique to each office tower.

At City Hall School, students and adults build a sense of comfort and pride in their downtown. Teachers and parent volunteers -- including adults who work downtown -- express wonder at the hidden gems all around.

At the same time, City Hall School helps to spark the understanding that the City of Calgary is active and interested in each child's home and school community. How was the neighbourhood planned? Who lives there and how is that changing? Who represents their ward? What projects are underway? Students look at their architecture, intersections, public services and public art with fresh eyes. What does their community contribute to the city as a whole?

By the end of their five-day field study, City Hall School participants gain a whole new appreciation for the people who work hard to make Calgary a vibrant city, filled with interesting people and places and endless possibilities.

Mayor Nenshi makes time to meet with each City Hall School class for a half-hour. A Grade 4-5 class asked about the mayor's areas of concern and Mayor Nenshi emphasized the importance of mental health. One student raised his hand to say that he lives with extreme anxiety. Despite the student's social discomfort, despite being surrounded by peers and unfamiliar adults, this child felt safe enough in the mayor's office to discuss his needs and his ways of coping. With ease, the entire class discussed a topic that can feel out of bounds in other settings.

One group of Grade 3 students from St. Pius X School met two mayors: Mayor Nenshi and also Brian Bowman, mayor of Winnipeg. After witnessing Mayor Bowman's White Hat ceremony, students were invited to ask questions.

One student asked Mayor Nenshi what he's doing to provide job training for students. After Mayor Nenshi explained various City of Calgary initiatives, he asked the student what job he had in mind.

"I want to be a magician."