

2017-2018

# City Hall School

Report to Partners



For these Grade 4 students, the Plus 15 Skywalk offers a unique perspective of CTrains rumbling back and forth at the City Hall Station.



Grade 5-6 student artwork.

# What is City Hall School?

What makes a good neighbourhood?

How can a student speak up and make a difference?

What's going on downtown?

At City Hall School, students ask many questions. They want to know what Mayor Naheed Nenshi does in his spare time. They wonder why people suffer from homelessness. They ask, "What will happen to the old library building?"

They get the opportunity to think deeply and ask questions by spending a whole week downtown. During this intensive field study, students learn from community experts, our mayor, councillors and municipal experts. They explore thought-provoking art, buildings, playgrounds and the hustle bustle of our inner city. Students discover that they are full citizens who belong at City Hall.

This unique learning setting is a joint venture of The City of Calgary's Calgary Neighbourhoods business unit and Campus Calgary/Open Minds. Every class comes to City Hall School with a personalized question that drives the week — and the rest of the school year. This year, for example, three classes focused on, "What does it mean to be a caring and proactive citizen?"

City Hall School students come from any school in Calgary — public, Catholic, independent. They hop onto a city bus each day and make their way to the classroom in the Municipal Building (directly across the atrium from the Council Chamber). There's lots to see and discuss right in the building. We can also head out the door to explore history, office towers, the Bow River, art, maybe a little music, the public library (the new one opens in November), construction, nature, a community garden, islands, playgrounds and more.

City Hall School students build a strong, comfortable connection to their municipal government and the whole downtown. They learn how all Calgarians matter.

"Examining our big question is going to be great for these students and not just talking, but taking action and doing. They truly appreciate and recognize the opportunity they had. They valued it and realize it was an honour. We will explore our question all year and tie it into ALL subject areas. Thank you! It was a highlight of my career."

~ Grade 6 teacher



From the north bank of the Bow River, this Grade 5-6 student discovers a new perspective of downtown Calgary.

# Why do we need public art?

Public art was top-of-mind for several City Hall School classes this year. We pondered the costs, the benefits and the content, and we debated whether architecture, artifacts and design are art.

Our journey started right here, in the City Hall School classroom, with art displayed from our civic collection. We examined Bee Kingdom glass sculptures of wastewater microbes in Mayor Nenshi's office, as well as the Friendship Quilt and the Chief David Crowchild memorial sculpture in the Municipal Building atrium.

We launched out into the world, discovering the Galleria Trees on Stephen Avenue, Mario Armengol's Family of Man at the old Calgary Board of Education building and Julian Opie's Promenade in East Village. Heading into office buildings, we touched Micah Lexier's The Forest and the Trees in Brookfield Place and sketched Dale Chihuly's elaborate chandeliers in Jamieson Place. We wondered if the Suncor Energy Centre's bush plane is a work of art. One Grade 6 student, looking at Wonderland (the giant white head), imagined the character's feet sticking out on the opposite side of the globe.

Experts from Calgary's Art and Culture office helped students to think about art in new ways and to consider the value of public art — for artists, tourists and Calgarians. Who chooses it? Why is it so expensive? What if people don't like it or understand it?

Artists Caitlind Brown and Wayne Garrett told the story behind their enormous Delta Garden at the south end of the Peace Bridge. Students learned about the rigorous testing of materials, the massive and varied team bringing the artists' vision to life and the artwork's double purpose as riverbank stabilization. Muralist Michelle Hoogveld paused while painting the 4th Street S.E. underpass to discuss her work.

Graffiti, controversy, beauty, social issues, placemaking, work environments, community, personal taste, sound art, Bowfort Towers, Travelling Light — we welcomed all topics, viewpoints and questions, and our conversations were rich.

"If we didn't have public art, our city would look bland."

~ Grade 5-6 student



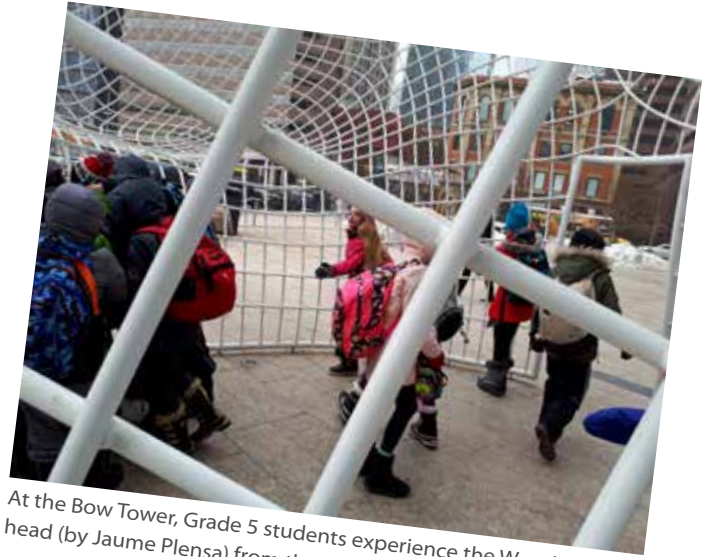
A Grade 5-6 student sketches Centennial of Incorporation Birthday Cake by Imre Emery De Gara. This ceramic sculpture (hollow, with a lid like a cookie jar) was given to Mayor Jack Leslie in 1967.



At Brookfield Place, a Grade 4-5 student feels the raised parts of Micah Lexier's *The Forest and the Trees*, which combines ideas of circuit boards, a bird's-eye view of landscape and cross-stitch patterns.

"The follow-up with the 'Delta' artists was excellent. Being able to meet the real-life artists and have them speak at our school was great. They went through the whole design process and were engaging."

~ Grade 5-6 teacher



At the Bow Tower, Grade 5 students experience the *Wonderland head* (by Jaume Plensa) from the inside-out. No climbing!

"Having good public art that people can engage with is an important part of where we live. Public art is essential."

~ Mayor Nenshi



Grade 4 students explore the cutout shapes in *Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Si Do*, Joe Fafard's horses in the Harley Hotchkiss Gardens.



On St. Patrick's Island, Grade 2-3 students are fascinated by the streetlight sculpture *Bloom*, designed by Michel de Broin. This is also a great place to observe the George C. King Bridge (fondly nicknamed 'The Skipping Stone Bridge') and our downtown skyline.

"There was artwork everywhere — even in City Hall. I notice public art more now."

~ Grade 6 student

# Civic election draws crowds of voters

How exciting to experience the election season — the campaign, election day and the first weeks for Calgary’s new council!

During our 2017 municipal election campaign, City Hall School classes discussed issues in the classroom and at home while keeping their eyes and ears glued to the news. They followed topics such as a new hockey arena, campaign costs, social media, property taxes, the economy, urban planning and pollsters’ predictions. Students exchanged views on the ideal qualifications and background for a mayor, councillor or school trustee.

Bill Myers, strategic legislative analyst with Elections and Census, explained that Canadian elections must be held regularly and according to the law — which is not the case in some parts of the world. He pointed out that if you’re old enough to vote, then you’re old enough to run for office. You just need signatures and \$500. We imagined an entire city council of 18 year olds!

We talked about our country’s history of voting rights, such as the 1916 ruling for Alberta women to vote. We looked at The City of Calgary’s efforts to increase voter turnout such as advance polls, drive-through voting at McMahon Stadium and consideration for people with specific physical needs or language needs. Students watched advance voting and election-day voting at the Municipal Building and toured the Vote Bus outside the Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre.

City Hall School witnessed the highest voter turnout in 40 years! In 2013, Calgary saw 22,000 advance votes. In 2017, 75,000 advance votes. On election day, so many people voted that there were lineups, ballot shortages and hand counts that ran into the night. On October 18, an exhausted but excited Bill Myers told us that out of about 666,000 eligible voters, we had a turnout of 387,000, which is 58 per cent. “People felt like their vote mattered,” he said.

Soon enough we witnessed the swearing-in of the new council, including four new councillors: Chahal, Davison, Farkas and Gondek.



At the Famous Five Monument, Grade 6 students discuss Alberta’s history of voters’ rights, as well as the Persons Case, which opened the Senate to women in 1929.

“Students have learned that they have a voice — no matter how young they are — and that adults in government respect their opinions. I think they have a better understanding of a democratic government and the importance of voting, especially since we spent our first day in the Council Chamber when it was nomination day. I hope this translates into a better understanding of the importance of compromising on a friendship level, as well as on a decision-making level. As Mayor Nenshi told us, he tries to make decisions that will make the majority happy, but he knows that it will never make everyone happy.”

~ Grade 2-3 teacher

Hello, Mayor Nenshi and others:

We are Grade 5 and 6 students at West Dalhousie School. We think that 18 is too old (for the minimum age) to vote in the municipal election. We think you can be younger to start voting, like 12 or 13, or at the most 16 years of age. Here are our reasons:

1. You can get your driver's licence at 16 but have to be 18 to vote, which we think is not reasonable.
2. Grade 5 and 6 students are learning about government and doing student elections. We are learning about things now and we're all so excited about voting, but it's not happening any time soon.
3. Young people (younger than 18) have adult responsibilities but are denied the same rights.
4. Young people are expected to follow the law but have no say in making it, since we can't vote.
5. If we lower the voting age, the number of voters will increase.
6. Young people bring a unique perspective to politics.
7. Young people would adopt a habit of voting so they want to do it every time there is an election.
8. If you lower the voting age, then you will expose more people to voting and expand the notion of democracy.
9. If they understand voting, they would want to vote and participate since we have an idea what it is about.
10. If young people vote, we can shape the future of our city.
11. Voting is an important right. Children have rights, and that should be one of them.
12. In Ecuador, Brazil and Argentina, you can vote at the age of sixteen, but it isn't compulsory.

# All citizens and communities matter

City Hall School builds awareness that all Calgarians are full citizens — regardless of their age or when they moved to town. We can all ask questions and express our opinions. Every community matters.

But what makes a community? For some people, it means a geographic neighbourhood. All City Hall School classes met their councillor and their Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinator, and learned that each neighbourhood has a distinct character and needs that might differ significantly from others in the same ward.

We explored the transformation of one community, East Village, from a rundown area into a welcoming neighbourhood. We noticed broad sidewalks, construction, a mixture of historic and new multi-use buildings, and people out and about. Terry MacKenzie, an ambassador at the East Village Experience Centre, said, “We’re fixing it so people want to live here.”

Community also means pockets of people united by work, culture, issues or interests. At council meetings, committee meetings and community gatherings in the atrium, students heard about flood mitigation, snow removal, accessible taxis, infill houses, mental health, plastic straws, boulevard gardens and the Indigenous framework. We learned that all citizens are welcome in the Council Chamber and we learned how even children can effect change.

People experiencing homelessness are one community composed of individuals with unique stories, needs and strengths. At The Mustard Seed, students met one guest who described his history of foster care and addictions, while another described her financial mistakes: “I ended up homeless and I never thought I would. No one plans to be homeless, but it can happen.” We learned how the Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS) offers support ranging from early childhood intervention to adult tooth extractions and how Inn from the Cold supports families.

Some classes observed Calgary from halfway up Bankers Hall or even from the top of Bow Tower. This perspective helped us to put our location into context, recognize places we’d explored and appreciate the many individuals and groups who form the tapestry of this city.



Angela Catenacci, Age-Friendly Calgary administrator at Calgary Neighbourhoods, discusses with Grade 4-5 students ways to help our growing seniors population live in their own homes.

“It helped me know if there is a problem from the government services, I can call people who are working with the government. I felt excited because I know where I’m living and I feel comfortable in my city.”

Grade 4 student

“Students are inspired by City Hall School and want to use their creative skills to make a difference in the community. They are definitely more knowledgeable about the role of our government.”

~ Grade 5 teacher





The old Grace Hospital site in Hillhurst/Sunnyside is being redesigned. Adelle Palmer, public engagement consultant with Customer Service and Communications, and Neil MacDonald, senior planner with Planning and Development, engaged Grade 4-5 students in the design process. At their school, they positioned tiles (representing elements such as parking and green spaces) on a site map, taking into consideration the needs of the nearby hospice and the whole neighbourhood. In the City Hall School classroom, these same students used clickers to indicate their opinions on the importance of building height, noise and other factors.



A whole community of athletes and fans were swept up in the excitement of the 2018 Winter Olympics. Students signed their positive messages on a giant banner in East Village.



“Downtown is a very different community from our neighbourhoods.”

~ Grade 4-5 student

Experts at Two Wheel View explained how they build community from the seat of a bike, and also taught Grade 5 and 6 students how to fix a flat!

“Many of my students live in neighbourhoods all over the northwest. They do not go downtown often, although their parents mostly work there. Many students had never been in the Plus 15 or on the CTrain before. We had been learning a lot about the history of urban planning in downtown Calgary, and students were able to see the buildings and developments they learned about in real life. They made connections.

Students were provided with a large array of services provided in their communities that they may not have known existed before. They learned of ways they can be active in their communities, as well as insight as to how neighbourhoods run and grow. They got to meet so many different people who work in specific areas to help Calgarians — from food growers, to social workers, to their local councillor.”

~ Grade 4-5 teacher

# City Hall School schedule 2017-2018

Week	School	Grade	Ward	Focus of study
Sept. 18-21 and Oct. 30	Hidden Valley	2-3	3	How has Canada changed during the past 150 years?
Sept. 25-29	Calgary Christian	6	6	How does art build and influence community?
Oct. 2-5 and Nov. 2	Mother Mary Greene	6	4	How can we develop empathy by understanding community needs?
Oct. 10-13 and Nov. 3	Mother Mary Greene	6	4	How can we develop empathy by understanding community needs?
Oct. 16-20	Father Doucet	4	13	How do history and environment affect our present and future?
Oct. 23-27	Father Doucet	4	13	How do history and environment affect our present and future?
Nov. 6-9 and Dec. 19	Louis Riel	6	11	How can we plan/design a space for the next seven generations?
Nov. 6, Nov. 13-15 and Dec. 19	Louis Riel	6	11	How can we plan/design a space for the next seven generations?
Nov. 20-24	West Dalhousie	5-6	4	How can we develop identity through public art and engagement?
Nov. 27-Dec. 1	West Dalhousie	5-6	4	How can we develop identity through public art and engagement?
Dec. 4-7 and Dec. 11	West Dalhousie	5-6	4	How can we develop identity through public art and engagement?
Dec. 12-15 and Dec. 18	West Dalhousie	5-6	4	How can we develop identity through public art and engagement?
Jan. 8-12	Westgate	5	6	How can our creativity make a difference?
Jan. 15-19	Westgate	5	6	How can our creativity make a difference?
Jan. 22-25 and Feb. 12	Westgate	4	6	How can our creativity make a difference?
Jan. 29-Feb. 2	Our Lady of the Assumption	7, 8, 9	1	How does the municipal government affect my life? How can I make a difference in this city?
Feb. 5-9	Hillhurst	4-5	7	What does it mean to be a caring and proactive citizen?
Feb. 20-23 and March 19	Hillhurst	4-5	7	What does it mean to be a caring and proactive citizen?
Feb. 26-March 2	Hillhurst	4-5	7	What does it mean to be a caring and proactive citizen?
March 5-9	St. Joseph	6	7	How do we make a difference? How can we effect change?
March 12-16	St. Joseph	5	7	How do we build community?
April 3-6 and May 23	Prince of Wales	3	14	What stories can we tell? What stories can we hear?
April 9-13	Prince of Wales	3	14	What stories can we tell? What stories can we hear?
April 17-20 and May 14	Calgary Academy	6	6	How can we open our eyes, minds, and hearts?
April 23-24, 26-27 and May 14	Calgary Academy	6	6	How can we open our eyes, minds, and hearts?
April 30-May 4	Marion Carson	4	1	What is Calgary's story? How has the story changed?
May 7-11	Marion Carson	4	1	What is Calgary's story? How has the story changed?
May 15-17, 24-25	Calgary Christian	6	6	What makes a community?
May 28-June 1	Calgary Christian	6	6	What makes a community?

"We were travelling AND learning and we learned stuff every single minute — even at lunch time!"

~ Grade 4-5 student



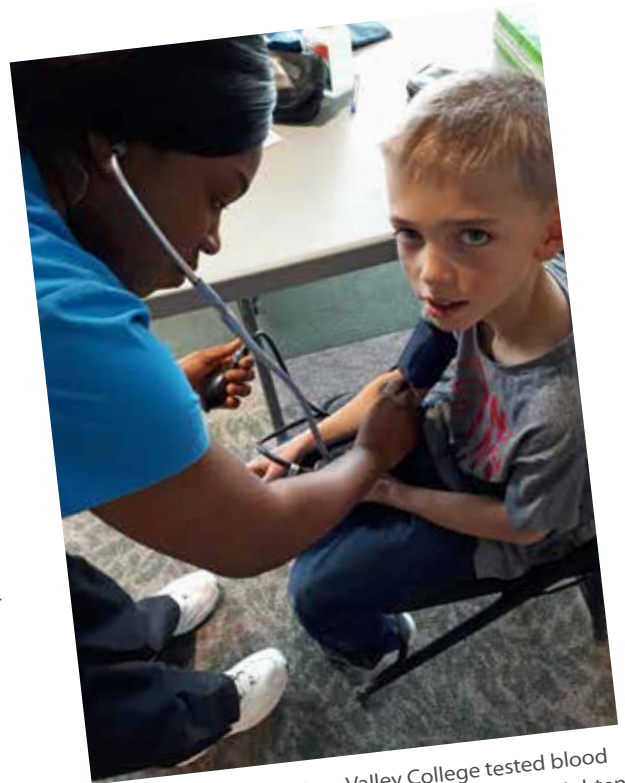
On a sunny spring day, students marveled at peculiar ice shards on the beach bridge on St. Patrick's Island.

"A big takeaway was seeing local government in action and becoming aware of the beauty and identity of our city. Many of my students want City Hall to be their permanent classroom. I also have many students who want to take their families on a tour of downtown."

-- Grade 5-6 teacher

"I liked when we went to the Bow River because I felt the wind in my hair."

~ Grade 4 student



Student nurses from Bow Valley College tested blood pressure in the Municipal Building. They had to tighten their cuffs to fit the arms of Grade 5 students.

"So many of us didn't know that St. Patrick's Island existed, and we want to bring our families back downtown to show them."

~ Grade 2-3 student



At the Calgary Public Library, Grade 4 students puzzle over what they call a "typing machine."

# 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.
- Calgary Neighbourhoods experts in Fair Entry, Community Hubs, Poverty Reduction and Age-Friendly Calgary coordinated their schedules from different offices to meet with three separate Grade 4-5 classes.
- Calgary Recreation coordinator Darlene Boyes lent (and delivered) a child-sized wheelchair for a Grade 4 student with weakening mobility.

## Art and Culture

Jacilyn Blackwood  
Barbara Doyle-Frisch  
Mark Murias  
Randy Niessen  
Tomas Jonsson

## Calgary Fire Department

Todd Berry

## Calgary Neighbourhoods

Brenda Annala  
Kiima Bailey  
Tamara Baldwin  
Angela Catenacci  
Virginia Clark  
Megan Duffy  
Alina Dulaney  
Joan Farkas  
Heather Gibbons  
Cathi Groves  
Christine Lee  
Keith Magill  
Jenna Pothier  
Sylvia Ross  
James Runge  
Jaspreet Sandhu  
Wendy Sliworsky  
Lindsay Sproule  
Amber Stewart  
Cathy Stones  
Aaron Taylor  
Katie Thorpe  
Carolynn Tooth  
Amanda Turvey  
Angela Williams

## Calgary Police Service

Bradley Andrews  
Gary Borrows  
Laszlo Horvath  
Nick Moore  
James Partridge  
Eric Plummer  
Jessica Wood

## Calgary Recreation

Darlene Boyes

## Calgary Roads

Dwain Babiak

## Calgary Transit

Mandeep Dhese  
Jaskaran Singh

## Civic Innovation YYC

Heather Chapple  
Erin Dumenko  
Kris Kelly-Frere  
Chad Oberg

## Corporate Facility Planning & Management

Gyula Danka  
William Rathwell

## Councillors and Staff

Councillor Sean Chu  
Councillor Jeff Davison  
Councillor Peter Demong  
Councillor Jeromy Farkas  
Councillor Druh Farrell  
Tomi Neilson  
Councillor Richard Pootmans  
Councillor Ward Sutherland

## Customer Service and Communications

Adelle Palmer

## Elections and Census

Bill Myers

## Office of the Mayor

Franca Gualtieri  
Mayor Naheed Nenshi

## One Calgary

Dejana Knih

## Planning and Development

Neil MacDonald

## Resilience and Infrastructure

Marcia Dupuis  
Jeny Mathews-Thusoo  
Afsheen Mohamed

## Security

Chris Hutchinson

## Visitor Management Services

Chris Wallis

## Sustainability

Kristi Peters Snider

## Transportation Planning

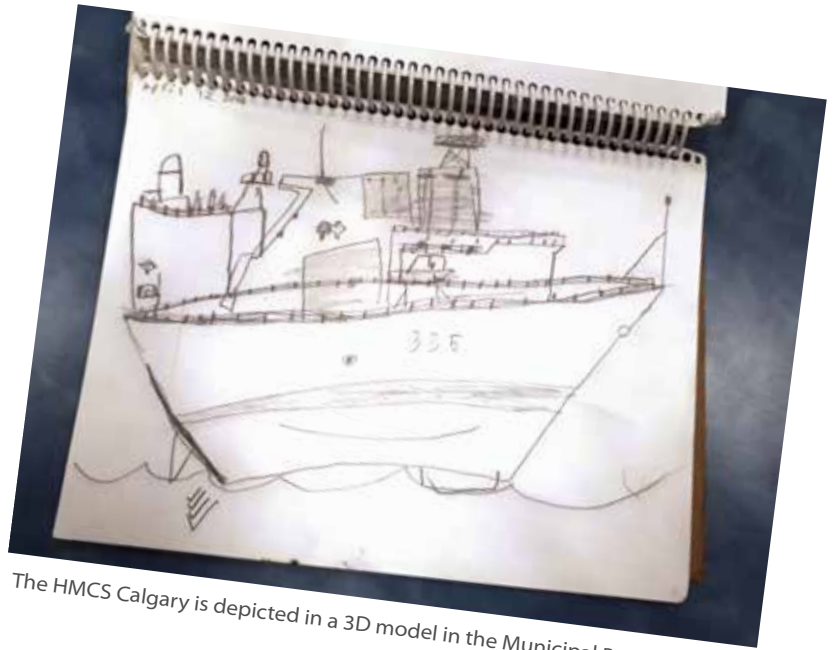
Jennifer Black



Grade 6 students look at modern or futuristic ideas from different angles in the Civic Innovation YYC Lab.

"We learned how City Council meetings work. We learned about other people's jobs and what they do for the city. We learned what Mayor Nenshi's day might look like and all about public art."

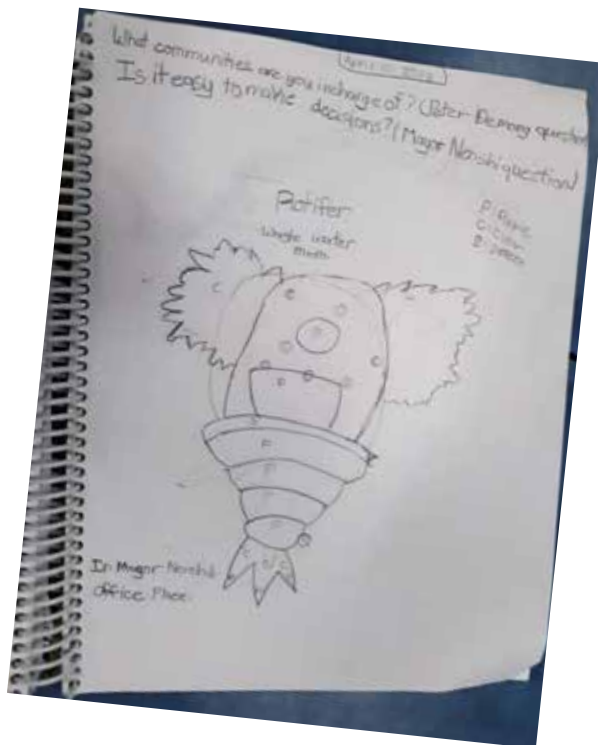
~ Grade 5-6 student



The HMCS Calgary is depicted in a 3D model in the Municipal Building atrium.

"Very valuable. Students have an increased appreciation for their city and have pride in it."

~ Grade 5-6 teacher



"People were kind and people were helpful."

~ Grade 4 student

In Mayor Nenshi's office area, students often sketch the Bee Kingdom sculptures of wastewater microbes.

"Thoroughly enjoyed everything — public art tour, Mayor Nenshi visit, council meetings, making cards for homeless persons, bus rides, walking around East Village, everything! Wish I could have volunteered every day."

~ Parent volunteer

# Thank you Calgary

Thank you to these generous Calgarians who supported us in many ways. They welcomed us into their spaces and visited our classroom (sometimes with lots of notice and sometimes at the drop of a hat):

Alberta Council for Environmental Education: Laura Hughes

Alberta Ombudsman: Allison Barton, Monica Hui

Artists: Caitlind Brown, Wayne Garrett, Michelle Hoogveld

Bank and Baron Pub: Chad McCormick

Bow Tower

Bow Valley College: Theresa Nwajei, Doreen Stewart

Brookfield Place: Tyler Friesen

Calgary Alternative Support Services: Hayley Richards

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

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

Calgary Chinese Community Service Association:  
Robson Yuen

Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre

Calgary Courts Centre: Griswald Carter, Dodi Hodgson,  
Casey Huot, Rohit Tinani

Calgary Public Library: Gerry Burger-Martindale

Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS): Jessica Klassen,  
Dean Schroeder

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

Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion: Zakeana Reid

Canadian Natural Resources: Gordon Au

Cenovus: Stephanie Benay, Jeremy Waddell,  
Drew Zieglgansberger

Roya Chalaki

Dalhousie Community Association: Sean French

Decidedly Jazz Danceworks: Joanne Baker

Dreamery bubble tea

East Village Experience Centre: Daniel Benner,  
Pamela Darragh, Peter Dormaar, Amanda Eveson,  
Rylan Graham, Terry MacKenzie, Hugh Mosher,  
Lindy Pruitt, Kathie Ramsay Magill, Kate Reeves,  
Annette Resler



City Hall School students often head to the free, noon-hour ProArts concert on Wednesdays. We can eat lunch there, enjoy the concert and admire the historic venue.

Eating Disorders Awareness Week: Angela Grace

Edgemont Community Association: Jane Coates

Famous Five Foundation: Eileen Bell

Iiniitsi Treaty Arts Society: Rio Mitchell

Inn from the Cold: Hilary Jenkins, Karen Murray

Jamieson Place

Kurry Up food truck

McDougall Centre: J.T. Clode

Pembina Institute: Natasha Pye

Perogy Boyz food truck

ProArts Music Society: Damon Johnston

Rescue Food/Leftovers: Tanya Bello, Portia Juan,  
Sandra Reyes

St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church

SunCor Energy Centre: Alicia Wong

Studio Bell: Jess Knights

The CORE Shopping Centre

The Mustard Seed: Barb, Kelsey Brown, Les

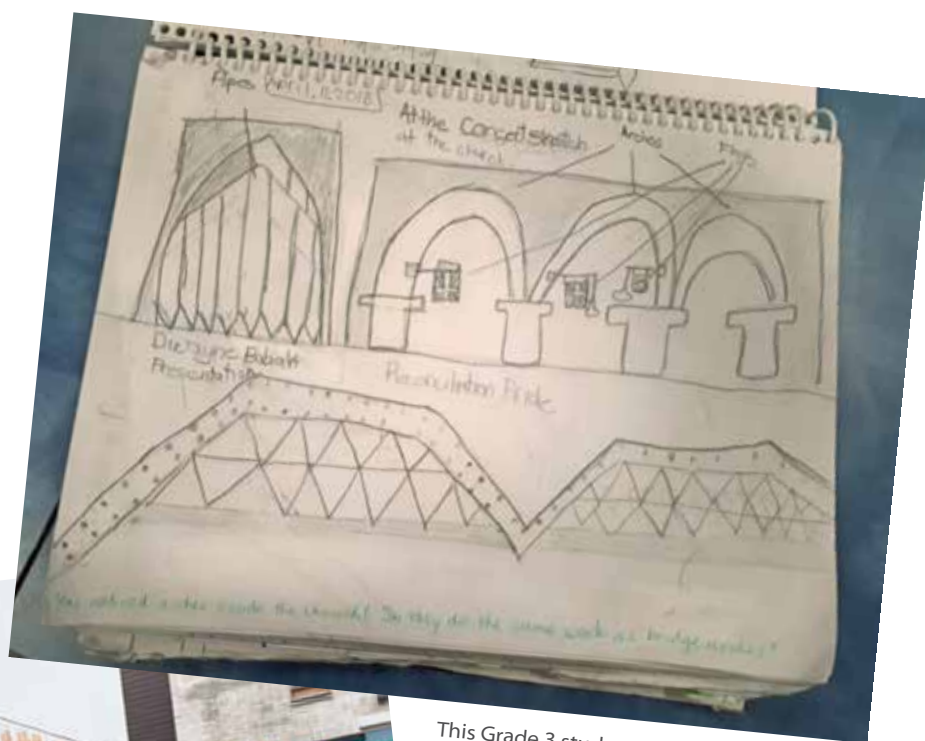
Two Wheel View: Robyn Cabunoc-Boettcher, Laura Istead

United States Consulate: Casey Bohn, Lance Lauchengco

YWCA: Jan Damery

"We got to learn out of the school and it was fun to explore."

~ Grade 5 student



This Grade 3 student sketched the frame holding the truss-work on the Reconciliation Bridge, then noticed arches inside Cathedral Church of the Redeemer.



Robson Yuen, community resource coordinator with the Calgary Chinese Community Service Association, opened Grade 4 students' eyes to murals that beautify a back alley in Chinatown. This scene was created with soy sauce, noodles, fortune cookies, and chopsticks!

"We could see everything by our own eyes."

~ Grade 5-6 student

"We got to go to places that we didn't even know were in downtown."

~ Grade 5-6 student

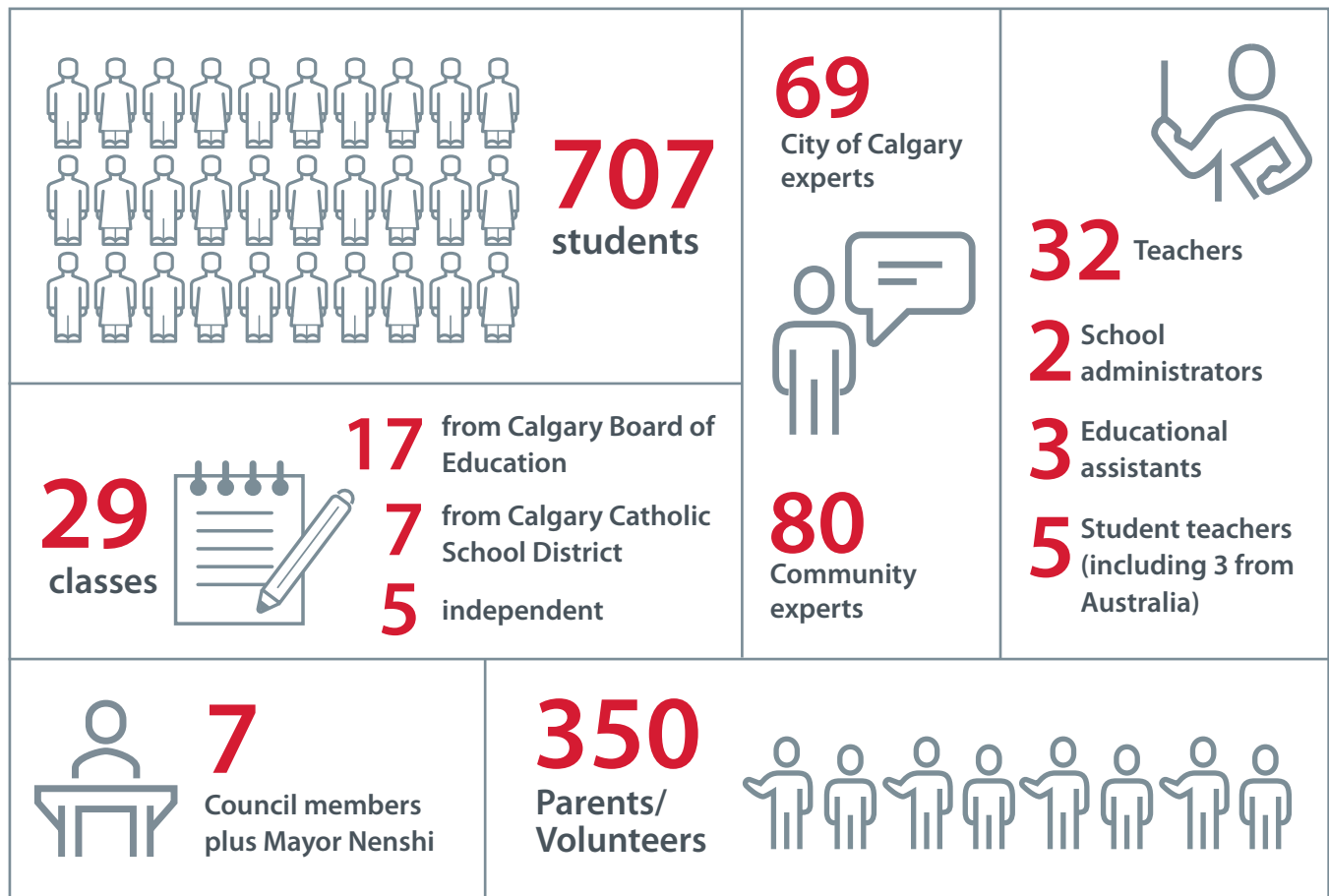
"The songs give me a tingling feeling in my head, but keep my body calm."

~ Grade 6 student at the ProArts concert

"Everyone is welcome and kids can have meetings, too."

~ Grade 5 student

# 2017-2018 statistics



More than 1000 people — both children and adults — have walked through the door at City Hall School this year.

Speaking of walking, we put a lot of kilometres on our sneakers! We hoofed it all over East Village and St. Patrick’s Island. We strolled along the riverbank and through the Plus 15 Skywalk system. We examined bridges and we inspected office buildings inside and out. A parent’s or teacher’s phone would often go “DING!” to alert them that they’d reached their steps goal for the day. We also took advantage of the CTrain’s free-fare zone!

For one ice-cold week in January, we hosted Australian student teachers during their University of Calgary field study. Twice after school, we hosted new Canadian children who were getting their first taste of a regular classroom.

“Community works when we look after one another.”

~ Mayor Nenshi

“They are feeling like they can make a difference in the world and understand they have a voice outside of their classroom.”

~ Grade 6 teacher



# Conclusion

A lively election, a new application system for secondary suites, the Amazon bid, hockey arena chatter — just another news-filled year at City Hall School.

During the 2017-2018 school year, 29 classes came downtown to experience life in the core. Children between Grades 2 and 9, from all parts of the city, arrived on day one not knowing where to find the washroom. By day five, they were old pros. They'd quizzed their mayor and attended a meeting of adults who (even when they disagreed or felt upset) waited for their turn to speak. They found out that the general public can open the door to a professional building, walk inside and ask to check out the architecture and art.

We watched the migration of office workers swarming the Plus 15 Skywalk at lunchtime. A few youngsters studied the "down" escalator at the Suncor Energy Centre, counted the riders and tallied how many people were carrying disposable fast-food containers.

Some of those workers hustled over to the Cathedral Church of the Redeemer to catch the ProArts concert. We did too. We listened to music ranging from opera to flamenco (depending on the week), nibbled our lunches and noted observations in our journals. So much to hear and see! Wouldn't that heritage building's makers be astonished to know that children would be busing from in-the-future suburban schools to hear Syrian oud music as a CTrain whizzed past the front door?

Every custom-designed week was different and we took advantage of every opportunity. A worker explained the space for tree roots as he created a new sidewalk on the east side of the Municipal Building. Police officers let us pop our heads into the Mobile Command Vehicle. We sketched bridges, sipped samples of bubble tea in Chinatown and marveled at the Comic Expo Parade of Wonders. We poked around the Municipal Building and other fascinating indoor spots. Even uncomfortable weather — bitter in January, icy in April, boiling in May — couldn't coop us up.

Throughout their week-long experiences, students and adults gained a feeling of ownership. They owned the downtown, the river, the Council Chamber. It belonged to them and they belonged there.

Each City Hall School class spends a half-hour with Mayor Nenshi in his office. One student asked if being the mayor is a hard job. Mayor Nenshi asked the student what he thought. The student replied, "You have to know a lot of stuff, and if you don't know, it's kind of the end of the world."

Student: "What do you actually do as mayor?"

Mayor's answer: "The city does stuff that keeps people alive and safe and happy every day. My job is basically to look after the whole city."

Student (after meeting Mayor Nenshi): "He was even more nice than I thought he would be!"

In partnership with:

