While the COVID-19 pandemic created some unique challenges for the 2021/22 school year, City Hall School endured. With the various provincial restrictions and the direction from the School Boards, field trip experiences were not permitted or were limited. As a result, City Hall School shifted its regular program delivery for the majority of the school year, from bringing the students to City Hall to bringing the program to the students.

Through weekly virtual or school yard visits, students were still able to have an immersive experience and develop an understanding of the role of a citizen in municipal government, gain a rich knowledge of City services and explore a complexity of issues that affect Edmonton. When field trips resumed in March, City Hall School was able to host classes once again, providing classes with two full in-person days equipped with a wealth of background knowledge, connections and excitement.

’Sohi Saurus’ was a key component to the City Hall School program this year. This was enjoyed by the teachers and the students.

“We are truly grateful. Half my class was online learning last year so this has been a year of learning how to socialize, being good listeners and how to be curious again. City Hall School and all the experiences you have offered us has been such an important thread helping to weave us back together.”

— Teacher
City Hall School is one of Edmonton’s Inquiring Minds Site Schools, an innovative approach to learning, and part of the Beyond the Classroom Network. This program is supported by both the Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic School Boards.

Site schools offer teachers an opportunity to move their class to a community location for a customized week of immersive, applied learning. Numerous required curriculum expectations are developed through meaningful connections to real events within the community, as well as incorporating students’ personal experiences. The dedicated week at a site school is the catalyst for learning activities for the entire school year. From problem solving to critical thinking, and with the use of journaling, students are able to make sense of their world. By recording, reflecting, wondering and sketching events, thoughts become more meaningful and allow opportunities for further exploration.

“Being a part of City Hall School has fostered curiosity and allowed my kids to be inquisitive. It has taught them the skill of how to ask strong questions. This program has given us the opportunities to be true explorers and learn through investigation.”

- Teacher
City Hall School was initiated in 2006 to provide a more interactive opportunity for students to learn about municipal government beyond the walls of their classroom. A partnership between the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Public Schools was established by seconding an Edmonton Public School teacher to develop the program. City Hall School offers curriculum related programming in an engaging, year long experience, which is adapted for each class of Grades 1–12 students from both the Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic School Boards.
WHO WE CONNECTED WITH IN 2021/22
Each City Hall School class received their own dedicated days, while their experiences and connections span the entire school year.

In late August, teachers gathered in grade groups to plan for the possibilities of a unique City Hall School experience in a pandemic year. Inspired by a book called Spiders in Space, where spiders sent up by NASA into space eventually found new ways to spin webs and sustain themselves without gravity, we decided to venture forth with rich City Hall School connections and planned to adapt throughout the year as necessary.

At the beginning of the school year, each class was presented with a set of personal journals for the students, a Key to the City, as well as an opportunity to meet Mrs. Hut and Sohi Saurus outside on the school grounds. Teachers received City Hall School’s weekly eNewsletter, City Beat, which shared many opportunities for connections to civic issues, events and activities for students and teachers throughout the school year. Frequent mail deliveries to schools kept students connected and motivated as they received stickers, pencils, pamphlets and other related materials.

Each week from September to March, classes had the opportunity to participate in virtual or schoolyard sessions. Pre and post activities were incorporated, as teachers took the lead from their students and continued inquiry. Students recorded notes and reflections in their journals for each session.

When classes came for their in-person days, the connections with their city, curriculum and career pathways were immediate and enriched.

Normally, the year finishes up with an annual in-person Citizenship Fair, which would bring all the schools who participated in City Hall School together at City Hall to showcase their work inspired by their City Hall school experiences. This year, students had the unique opportunity to virtually share and showcase their experiences or celebrate the year outside with Mrs. Hut and Sohi Saurus. Additionally, Mayor Sohi created a ‘graduation’ video message specially for City Hall School students.
The virtual connections throughout the year really made a huge impact on students to see that City Hall School is more than a week of learning. It’s a year long engagement. This meant that students had more time to process each session, develop an understanding from it, and further develop the links created between sessions.

“My students look forward to our Monday morning discussion of City Beat. They wondered what session or sessions we’d have each week. The kids feel connected to you because we see you weekly, and had such a great time being in-person with you. It was great to see so many students make personal connections to the sessions or the highlighted topics of the weekly City Beat.”

- Teacher
The diversity of our city is reflected in the students who attend City Hall School. Some students are newcomers to Canada and some students are enrolled in bilingual or immersion programs. Being able to use the City of Edmonton as a classroom provides real life learning, allowing students to feel and see the many connections around them. This authentic learning creates an intrinsic motivation for even the most reluctant writer to share their reflections and make connections.

Whether the connections were virtual or in-person, students learned to appreciate and value their city in a deeper way, particularly when they met people who work hard to ensure a great quality of life for us all. After learning about the new Valley Line LRT virtually and being able to ride the Capital Line LRT in person or travelling to City Hall School on a chartered ETS bus, the students were excited to utilize the public transportation system the City has created for Edmontonians.

The students learned about the history of our city, its growth, and the plan our leaders have for the future. They realize that the future the City is building is for them, creating a strong connection and eagerness to be ambassadors for Edmonton.

“Many students in my class are newcomers and through City Hall School they made so many meaningful connections to Edmonton — their new home. They proudly shared the information with their families. Some even took their family on tours!”

— Teacher
"The kids felt like Mrs. Hut was part of our class all year with the culmination being our two in-person days. Many of the children remembered the names of the various presenters throughout the year and learned about so many different roles people play in making Edmonton function. They loved all the behind the scenes presentations."

— Teacher
For the first seven months of the school year, field trip restrictions meant students couldn’t travel to City Hall, however this gave us the opportunity to focus more on their school community and local neighbourhoods. Students took community walks to investigate and write about local public art, garden suites or a nearby urban forest. They connected with experts who have worked specifically in their neighbourhood learning about development over time. Other classes visited local senior centres and investigated namesakes of local parks. Distributing kindness cards to mailboxes, drawing and writing sidewalk messages of hope, and shovelling snow for seniors were other engaging activities. These simple community connections were the highlights to many community members, particularly those who were experiencing isolation during the pandemic.

We found and built community in many ways. Some classes created artwork and messages of encouragement for the hard-working hospital workers. Other classes found community and connection by virtually meeting with other students in our Sister City of Nashville. When the war in Ukraine began, classes took action to show their support to a community in another part of the world.

“These kids truly feel like they are connected with our community and our city and have had so many opportunities to use their actions and voices to contribute to making our community and city a better place. You have fostered a sense of pride and empowered them to make a difference.”

- Teacher

"Always remember, you matter."
I will go forward continuing to explore our city and community outside of Inquiry School. I will come up with service projects and activities. This is so important to our students’ mental health and to our city and community that we have active, involved and caring citizens. 

— Teacher
Connecting with people who share their expertise and passion is a special part of City Hall School. The Mayor and Councillors teach, model, and inspire students to appreciate the structure and practice of democracy.

With an added focus on community this year, Councillors were able to make a meaningful connection with the students, highlighting the work they do to support the community.

Students also become aware of the various ways engaged, informed citizens can make an impact. They learned ways they can not only advocate for themselves, but also contribute to helping others in their neighbourhood, as well as the larger city.

Each student’s journal has a Sir Winston Churchill sticker on it which reads, “You make a living by what you get, you make a life by what you give.” Students were inspired by meeting many volunteers who enrich our city by sharing their time and talents. They also learned that volunteering is a way to use your voice, gain confidence, meet people and learn new skills – it’s empathy in action.
I donate and volunteer.

I use my voice to make change.

I'm polite and follow rules.

“I was worried that my little grade 3’s were not ready for the leadership challenge of being City Hall School kids. I was wrong. They really have excelled as leaders and independent thinkers. They rose to the challenge. In the future I will expect more of 8 year olds in my class! They can do it!”

— Teacher

“I am so impressed with this program and the many issues it has addressed. Our family has had many discussions based on what my son has learned and we’ve all made steps towards being more involved and concerned citizens.”

— Parent
The city is our classroom! Our guests helped curricular topics come to life and inspired students to consider next steps on career pathways of their own. They learned how adults use creative thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication skills, and design thinking to be successful working independently or on a team. Students heard how others find balance and deal with stress (especially during the pandemic) through mindfulness and self care.

Having students connect with so many guests exposed them to a variety of career paths, and helped them identify their strengths and interests. Students heard many different personal journeys, from City employees, agency staff, and other community members, some whom took unexpected turns and detours, and many who were inspired by teacher or mentors. Students had the opportunity to conduct interviews with some of these guests, giving them experience in research, question formulation, as well as testing their listening skills. Guests were able to share their roles, challenges, and successes for the students to record.
I see the benefit of getting speakers from outside the school inside the classroom. It seemed that no matter what the session was on, the students would be interested because they were learning from a new person. This change of scenery seemed great for the students and something I will continue to utilize in my career.

— Teacher
At the beginning of the year, each teacher proposed a big idea or inquiry question that provides the focus of the City Hall School experiences. Through virtual presentations, interviews and interactions with presenters, students were able to make rich connections to their curriculum based around this theme. For each session, slide decks were prepared with images and key words to compliment the presentation, increasing engagement and interaction for students. Sessions were not pre-recorded, but presented live, and were tailored to meet the learning needs of each class. Many sessions were set up with pre and post activities for the class to explore. This allowed the classroom teacher to set the tone and go deeper with a topic, and eliminate the need to be online for extended periods. The in-person opportunities built on all the rich connections that had been made throughout the year. For example, riding the funicular and seeing the pulley in action after meeting the architect who helped design it, and having a schoolyard visit with an arborist after studying trees and forests.

At City Hall School, we connect inquiry to curricular outcomes and competencies whenever possible. Students saw examples of how inquiry happens in everyday life, and learned how problem solving, collaboration and communication are integrated. Connecting curricular outcome and competencies helps students see the connection between what they are learning in the classroom to the world of work.
“I had always thought that City Hall School was a program directly linked to the Grade 6 curriculum. My admin and I were so excited to see all of the many connections that were made for my Grade 3 class – science, social studies, math and of course language arts. The real world experiences brought our curriculum to life.” - Teacher
Through City Hall School, students have the opportunity to explore, discuss and take actions on complex topics related to their learning. Presenters shared their passion and perspective on poverty, homelessness, reconciliation, inclusivity, and equality to help with this learning.

Opportunities for action projects were somewhat limited due to COVID restrictions but students found ways to make a difference. Several classes were recipients of United Way Dentons Make Your Mark on Poverty grants for student-led projects that take action against local poverty.

As students organized and ran donation drives in their school and community, they had the opportunity to share their understanding and passion for helping others. Students learned that little things like sandwiches for the Mustard Seed Community or lunch bags for Hope Mission, even socks for Human or cereal for the Food Bank - can all make a difference. Our ‘Hello How Are You’ actions to combat social isolation were simple ways to show caring.

CONNECTING WITH SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Their words, their compassion and their actions show that City Hall School has opened their heads and hearts to some complicated issues. My students have developed empathy for vulnerable people in our community. I too must admit that I have grown this year and know that I will take these important lessons forward.

-Teacher

“Even the youngest can show us that caring leadership is possible at any age.”

-Lieutenant Governor of Alberta
Students reflect, record, and evaluate new learning and their experiences through the use of a journal as a learning tool. They start using their City Hall School journal in September as they begin an inquiry process, start class projects, and respond to the weekly City Beat eNewsletters. The journals become a passport for the year; students “earn” stickers they place on their journals for the sessions they participate in, providing evidence of a student’s personal learning throughout the year. When students came for their in-person days, their journals were filled with the many experiences and connections they had made since September. They were proud to show their work (and stickers) as well as build on them as they explored yegdt.

Typically at City Hall School, there are daily opportunities for the City Hall School teacher to read and respond to student journals; however this year, that daily connection wasn’t available. Many teachers made arrangements for journal pickups from the school so a written connection with each student could be made throughout the year. Additionally this year, parents were able to help with journal connections when teachers sent the journals home for a weekend; students could share what they learned and parents could respond in the journals. Some students even interviewed their parents and recorded that information in their journal. Through their interactions with guests (from Poets to Peace Officers) students were able to observe and learn how adults use their own version of a “journal” in their daily lives, further supporting the value of learning how to journal.
I’ve had many parents talk about how their dinner conversations have shown how engaged their child is with the sessions we’ve had (the daily AMA – “ask me about” in their agenda would be about the session and/or discussion we had). Parents loved being able to read their journals and see evidence of all the learning.

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-Teacher
At City Hall School, students learn that Edmonton has been a gathering place for Indigenous Peoples for thousands of years and that we are all Treaty people. They were offered many opportunities to further enrich their knowledge and education of Indigenous Peoples through a variety of presentations and speakers.

We connected with Indigenous languages and meanings – for example amiskwaciwâskahikan is the Cree word for ‘Edmonton’ meaning ‘Beaver Hill House.’ Edmonton’s Historian Laureate, Amber, introduced students to the Wahkohtowin - the foundation of Cree traditional law based on the interconnectedness of relationships, communities and nature. This term is often used to refer to Cree law, or Cree codes of conduct.

Students had the opportunity to learn firsthand about the historical and cultural meanings behind Edmonton’s newly amended Wards with Indigenous names. They learned how Indigenous cultures traditionally upheld women as leaders in their community, and that it was a group of women who decided upon the names to honour sacred places and preserve history for future generations.

We learned about the bridge building work that Edmonton’s Indigenous Relations Office does. We visited the EPL’s Thunderbird House at the Milner Library to learn how this community space will be used for intergenerational and cultural teachings. They learned about the plans for kihciy askiy Sacred land development and heard from Edmonton Police’s Nîsohkamâkewin Council. Whether it was in-person or virtually, students were inspired by the art at ÎNÎW (ÎNÎW) River Lot 11=Indigenous Art Park and the Tawatinâ Bridge.

Throughout the year, students were given the opportunity to deepen their understandings and relationships with Indigenous Peoples. Orange Shirt Day was a chance to learn more about Residential Schools and how ‘Every Child Matters’; meeting Councillor Paquette during Metis Week allowed students to discover that he’s also an artist and author who brings his Indigenous culture and creative spirit to his work at City Hall; and National Indigenous Peoples Day gave students opportunities to take leadership roles by using their voices.
From Mayor Sohi’s land acknowledgement, to the EPL and EPS, and of course the public art, my students were able to deepen their understanding and appreciation for Indigenous ways of knowing.”

-Teacher

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-Teacher
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**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS**
- Paul Asnault, Jake Hamel, Marcel Kirchner, Nick Potz, Kyle Prousick - Anchorage
- Erin Isaac - Community Gardens
- Kent Hunt - Electrician
- Trevor Dennehy - LRT Operations and Maintenance
- Jordan Tyler - Parks and Road Services
- Jill Robertson - Playground Maintenance
- Kent Hunt, Darcy Michel - Lighting the Pyramid
- Ray Burgess - Safety & HVAC
- Erin Unschlicht - Simple Machines & Carpenter Internship
- Alexa Choma, Alex Cornwall, Cole Morris, Drew Morris, Isabel Papazian - Tristan: Peace Officer
- Shawn-Brian, Ramsha Sharma Easwaran-Potty, Yelanda Pyrdiel, Kateylyne Wells - Urban Forestry

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER**
- James Chenery, Jason Gemmell, Darren McIlraith, Nick Semtko - Fire & Rescue Services

**CITY OPERATIONS**
- Andy Layton, Sarah Munderli, Marjie Utash - Waste Services

**COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT**
- Kalina Broda - The Builders Comic Book
- Marwa Utash - Cart Rollout
- Aj Dixam-Lehndorf - Snow and Ice - A Community Effort

**COMMUNITY SERVICES**
- Wendy Keller, Shelley Kiatong - Age Friendly Edmonton
- Jennifer Cotran, Karon Melnyk - Animal Care and Control
- Greg Bourdeau, Jimena Casavant, Kevin Ellin, Stephen Gumer, Harley King - Arena Crew
- Dianne Gillespie, Debbie Mahwezeni, Lindy Ma, Al McCalley, Jackie Scott - City Hall Tour Guides
- Nate Feller, Natasha Shaw, Greg Witt - Commonwealth Place Centre
- Shannon derBode - Dr. Anne Anderson Community Centre
- Cheyles Anseuce - Hello, How Are You?
- Carrey Pettit - John Janzen Nature Centre
- Esghiar Curtan - Live Active Edmonton
- James Brooks, Ryan Hogue, Seamus Mastrin, Jayne Newall, Ryley Ross, Gareth Williams - - Pink Flamingos
- Peter Daly - Past Management
- Chris Blesmich, Sherry Webber - Rec Facilities Lifeguards

**FINANCIAL & CORPORATE SERVICES**
- Claire Liang, Logan Moran, Steven Nachtegaele, Karen Parker - Open Data

**INTEGRATED INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES**
- Tom Lamsdell - Blastfod
- Ryan Tepesch - Bridge Engineers
- Carol Belanger - City Architect

**URBAN PLANNING AND THE ECONOMY**
- Helen Whelan - Change for Climate
- Kerri Bauer, Marcus Beraldo, Felipe Caravanas, Anna Hulagina, Marty Vazquez, Jason Syvixey - City Planners
- Ian Hooker - Jane’s Walk
- Iris Boettcher, Alana Young - Mapping and GIS
- Catherine Shier - Ecological Planner

**AFFILIATES**
- Bob Risak, David Turnbull - Edmonton Arts Council
- Joseph Legapi, Melissa Rads - Edmonton Convention Centre
- Elyse Altimus-Bourne, Elaine Vip - Edmonton Heritage Council
- Brian Hodgson - Edmonton Solutes
- Amber Parackl - Edmonton Parks
- Traci Cockcroft, Patthi Milligan - Explore Edmonton's Urban Farm
- Nova Andrea, Kendra Kincalce & Sophia Wells - Elevate Edmonton
- Jason Blower - Novo YEG/Snowguy

**OTHER SPECIAL GUESTS**
- monks
- Brian Christy - Alberta Paleontologist
- Lisa Budney - University of Alberta Paleontologist
- Rajah Maggay, Katherine O’Neil - Searchlight for Teens
- Paula Sommers - Senator
- Mike Simpson - Senator
- LIsa Budney - University of Alberta Paleontologist
- Julia Moisan, Michelle Porick - Novo YEG/LRT - Revertex Communications

**MUNITY SERVICES**
- Edmonton Salutes
- Sean Arcata, Rik Hopper - HOPE Mission
- Rob Houl - Indigenous Ward
- Lewis Cardwell - Firstly ask for Sacred Earth
- Becki Dixon - Live Arts
- Lisa Budney - University of Alberta Paleontologist
- Claire Coleman, Amanda Gille, Sarah Ling, Chloe Taibbi - Nose Hill Student
- Amanda Bouchard - Oilers Entertainment Group
- Yasi Centr - Paths for People
- Mary Phekins - Past
- Kristine Archibald - River Valley Alliance
- Darrell Delisle - Valley Alliance
- Jonathon Luckhurst - Seato Sky Botanics
Student responses to ‘How has CHS changed you?’

- I learned that Edmonton is not just another city, it’s a whole ‘nother world where everyone matters.
- The people I met at City Hall School made me believe in myself, trust myself and know I can follow my heart and dreams.
- It changed how I thought about government for our city. I used to think it was a bunch of adults making up their minds but now I know that EVERYONE has a chance to be a part of what happens in our government. It’s called democracy.
- I am now more grateful for what I have and want to support people who aren’t as lucky as me.
- I was inspired to keep on dreaming and thinking about ways to have everyone included and one day it will be a reality.
- I learned about respect and thinking how someone else might feel…treating them the way you want to be treated.
- I noticed so many places in our city that have Indigenous connections for us. I know that we are all Treaty People. I want to learn more.
- I learned that even though there is a pandemic and a war in the Ukraine and bad news, there is hope in all the helpers.
- I understand that there are different views to a problem like there are different views to art. It is important to give people space to say their view.
- It changed me because now I realize how special and lucky we are to live in a unique city with a great quality of life.
- I love my journal and will keep on writing in it and learning about my city even though City Hall School is over.
- I want to help make our city a better place. When I am 18 (in 6 years) I will vote and volunteer.
- I was a newcomer this year and City Hall School made me feel like Edmonton is my home now. I want to tell more newcomers about this city.
- It changed my mindset on things I scarcely knew about. Now I care about things I never cared about before. I feel more kind, more helpful and more caring. I love that feeling.
- I know that the Mayor and Councillors work really hard to listen, learn and decide. I might want to be a city leader one day.
- Even though I am just in Grade One, I can make a difference.
- I found out that we have a lot of beautiful public art all over our city. Maybe one day it will be my art.
- I want to be a more sustainable person and use my voice to tell others that climate change is serious.
- I learned that Mayor Sohi is trying to build an Edmonton for Everyone.
- I want to help make our city a better place. When I am 18 (in 6 years) I will vote and volunteer.
- I learned about so many career pathways and that sometimes you start with one job in your plan and the plan can change.
- It has changed me by teaching me about all the teamwork involved in everything around me. I wonder what teams I will be on.
- I found out that there are so many caring people who care about helping people who are houseless or going through tough times.