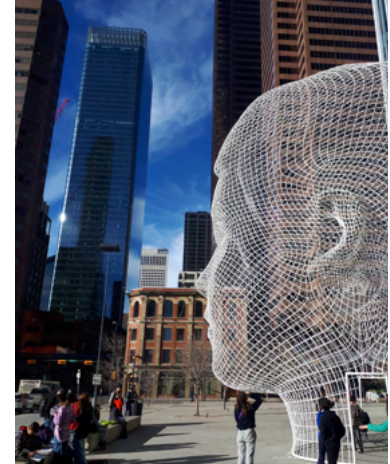


# Explore | Connecting with Partners

2School: an urban experience at the education center  
2024-25 Annual Report

learn



explore



Calgary Board  
of Education



Queen Elizabeth Grade 2/3 students document a swimming muskrat at the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary. They ask: What makes a sanctuary environment?



How might you greet a polar bear? Students explore Paola Pivi's whimsical art exhibit at Contemporary Calgary.

Thirty-two years ago, the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) created Campus Calgary/OpenMinds, an innovative educational model that takes students beyond traditional classrooms for week-long, real-world learning experiences.

In 2003, the idea of 2School was conceived when planning a new downtown administrative office. The name is derived from the linkage between the historic Central Collegiate High School (now named the Dr. Carl Safran Centre) and the Calgary Board of Education's office highlighting the role of schooling and public education through time. This urban location allows city-wide students to explore community connections and public education's role in community development, including access to a historic 1908-1912 classroom with original CBE artifacts.

Today, Campus Calgary/Open Minds operates 11 full sites and 3 pilot sites. The program is 80% oversubscribed, with applications received a year in advance and schools regularly turned away due to high demand.

## What is 2School?

2School is a partnership between the Calgary Board of Education, its stakeholders, the surrounding community and Campus Calgary. As a program, 2School brings teachers, students and community experts together for a week-long curriculum-based experience utilizing the downtown urban environment as their classroom. This program brings together Calgarians to learn, talk and celebrate the vibrant inner city neighborhoods and the many exciting things they have to offer. Each week is personalized for the attending class with CBE employees, members of the community, the Land and urban spaces sharing their expertise while working alongside students.

## Student Experience

Students are immersed in a yearlong study through an interdisciplinary curriculum and come to understand how education serves citizens. Students explore stories and have direct experiences with spaces and places which help them develop a greater connection to the Calgary community and their own identity as a Calgarian.

Students also create change as they realize their importance in shaping their city and the gratitude and reciprocity that accompanies being connected to the community.

### Teacher Support

Teachers participating are offered the following throughout the year:

- **Three In-person workshops:** With our coordinator team exploring ways to integrate experiential place-based learning through interdisciplinary curriculum.
- **Journaling workshop and journey into journaling resource:** Techniques to slow down, capture, document and analyze their understandings, evaluate their experiences and reflect on their learning.
- **Four virtual workshops:** Campus Calgary/Open Minds Coordinator/Collaborator led workshops designed to share a concept and accompanying task or journal technique.
- **Weekly newsletters:** Highlighting what is happening in our schools and in our city, community celebrations and current events that connect their studies and curriculum (Alberta Program of Studies). The newsletter introduces teachers to resources that support learning in their classroom.
- **Community explorations:** These are embedded throughout the year with the intent to get teachers and students out in their school community to observe and document their findings through journaling. Feedback has been very positive as it supports teaching and learning.

This report aims to offer insight into how a week at 2School was embedded into a year of learning in the 2024– 2025 school year, highlighting our many partners.



Grade 5 students share their thoughts and ideas about the Confluence with Sarah, a representative from O2 Landscape.



Students are proud of their journals.



## Explore

## Collaboration & Relationships



What makes something abstract?  
Students from Varsity Acres learn about the use of angles and imagination through murals.



What does quality of life look like for everyone in a community?

Collaboration is an integral part of the 2School program. Each week is uniquely designed specifically for that class. Students walk in the footsteps of the experts working side by side with CBE staff and community partners. Being on the Land and in place, builds relationships. Students come to understand how Land is our teacher and how our communities store intergenerational knowledge.

### How Does Living in a Community Help Shape Individual and Collective Identity?

During their week at 2School, Grade 4 students from Hugh A. Bennett explored the Beltline Urban Murals Project, engaging with important questions:

**What does this mural represent? Who does it represent? What story does it tell? What does it reveal about our collective identity? What does it tell us about Calgary?**

Through these reflections, students developed a deeper understanding of how art can express stories, culture, and community. They also recognized the powerful impact public art can have on a community by fostering belonging, culture, and identity while encouraging dialogue and reflection. Inspired by the murals they studied, each student designed their own mural that tells a unique story, reflecting their personal experiences and connection to the world around them.

### How Do Our Past and Present Communities Influence our Identity?

Grade 3/4 students from Highwood School explored how identity has merged in Calgary's past and present. They visited historical sites of the city's first and second Chinatowns, learning about the Canadian Pacific Railway, settlement, and the enduring commitment to create a thriving community.

At the Chinese Cultural Center, students documented the struggles and discrimination Chinese Canadians faced through the Chinese Immigration Act and head tax—a tax no other immigrant group was forced to pay in Canada. Many students reflected in their journals that they were surprised to learn about this moment in Canadian history and how their identities as Chinese Canadians have been shaped by family and ancestors who fought for Canadian citizenship.

Students observed the Takao Tanabe exhibit at the Glenbow at The Edison. Tanabe, a Japanese Canadian from British Columbia, was sent to a Japanese internment camp at age 15. After his release, only an art school in Winnipeg would accept him, where he learned painting and printmaking. His landscape works represent his deep connection with the land, and students spent time connecting his pieces to their own life stories and relationships with the land. Inspired by Tanabe's printmaking and landscapes, students created art pieces reflecting their identities and connections to the city.

A poem using the 6-Room Poetry technique was created collaboratively by students while walking along the Bow and Elbow Rivers.

## Wandering to The Confluence

Rushing currents brush past us and the gusty winds blow.  
 Strong rivers splashing through the cracking ice.  
 Bright sunlight reflects off the snow and waves, looking like fish swirling in the teal water. Is the water as cold as the night the Titanic sank?  
 I feel calm from the sound of the gurgling water.  
 Icebergs flow past us.  
 Cars rushing through the streets and people walking on sidewalks.  
 Vehicles and trains dash through the busy road.  
 Dark blue shadows cast squiggly lines on the white, shiny snow.

What is the record for how high the floodwaters have come?  
 Feelings of curiosity to think that this natural space is an island, in an island.  
 Icebergs flow past us.

As the bright Sun glows on our face, we see sheets of ice move down the river.  
 Airplanes swooshing above us one after another.  
 The glittering rivers meet, passing around the snow swiftly, making their way to the Arctic. Do any of the fish from the Bow River end up there?  
 Relaxing views of the confluence.  
 Icebergs flow past us.



Chinese Head Tax.



The meeting of the Bow and Elbow Rivers:  
 6-room poetry.



Where is Indigenous presence in our city?  
Jesse Campbell's mural highlights Métis matriarchs.

## How Do People Leave Their Mark on Our Community?

Grade 5 students from Riverside School began their year exploring this question as it related to their Bridgeland school community. Throughout the year, teachers and students collaboratively planned 24 community walks, learning about Bridgeland's history from Indigenous gathering spaces and early settlement to the city's expansion and urban development. Students discovered important Calgarians, significant places, and businesses that shaped our city while asking what marks will be made now and in the future.

During their week at 2School, students met with mark makers to gain insights into how different people and events have shaped our city:

**Urban Design Markers:** Jewel Chan, a landscape architect with Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC), taught students about urban design and planning for the East Village community and the upcoming Culture and Entertainment District.

**Safety Markers:** Jacki Oriold, a City of Calgary mobility expert, explained different types of cycle tracks downtown and across the city. Students learned how Calgary designs streets and mobility options to help people move safely throughout the city.

**Calgary Art Markers:** Sharon Stephens from Calgary Arts Development explained how the city funds arts projects and discussed the importance of arts for sharing stories, beauty, tourism, and economic development.

**Indigenous Markers:** Artists Daniel J. Kirk and Tiffany J. Harper shared the Cree word "aski" (ᐱᓂᐅᓂ), meaning a relationship to and with the land. They discussed early mark-making through petroglyphs and pictographs at Áísínai'pi (Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park), a sacred site for the Siksikáítsitapi (Blackfoot Nations). The sandstone walls of the Milk River Valley contain engravings and paintings that bear witness to spirit messages. This sacred landscape continues to be honored through ceremonies and deep respect. Students then created their own collaborative mural, "marking" their time at 2School.



## Explore

**Confluence Marking:** Students met with O2 Design + Planning to discuss the Confluence site where the Bow and Elbow Rivers meet. Known as Moh'kins'tsis in Siksikáítsitapi, this gathering place has been significant since time immemorial and is integral to our city's history as Treaty 7 people. The Confluence Historic Site & Parkland helps locals find identity and connection to the land while teaching visitors about this special place's stories and cultures. Students reflected on: How might we shape this place to encourage Calgarians and visitors to play, explore, learn, and grow? Teachers and students will continue following how their voices inform this important gathering space.



Hugh A. Bennett students create their own murals with accompanying artist statements.



A parent's journal from exploring Rouleauville, Calgary's Francophone community.



Riverside students take photographs of places of importance for learning while at the Confluence.

## Partnerships | Connecting

Participating in the 2School program gives teachers and students the opportunity to connect to their city, communities and their school in new ways. Many students don't realize that the CBE is more than their school; they are a part of the almost 145,000 students who attend 251 CBE schools. Many students have never spent so much time downtown. Whether it is an examination of the value of public spaces, or how we collaborate within our community, teachers' and students' worlds become larger when they venture outside the four walls of their classroom. Both students and teachers felt a greater connection to the land, their school community and to their city after attending 2School, building on their own identity formation and enhancing their sense of belonging and attachment for where they live.

### Engagement Statistics:

600+ Students  
26 classes  
28 teachers  
8 school board trustees  
321 parent volunteers  
27 CBE teaching staff  
90+ school board, city and community experts  
7 education assistants  
5 administrative staff  
10 student teachers  
23 classes from the Calgary Board of Education  
3 classes from the Calgary Catholic School Division

*Our experience with 2School has significantly enhanced how my students' connect to the land and the community they live in. By exploring the Beltline, students have learned to see the land as an active part of their lives. They've gained a deeper understanding of how their community is shaped by both natural and human forces, and how they, as young learners, have a role in contributing to it. This experience has encouraged them to think about their place in the world and foster a sense of responsibility for the land and the community they are a part of.*

*(Teacher)*

*After my week at 2School where we learned about park design, I went to Vancouver and could not stop thinking about the design of parks. I have a feeling that I will never look at them in the same way again.*

*(Grade 5 Student)*

*2School changed my thinking by showing what the government has done to try to improve the space. I can tell that they really think through everything and try to make it a better experience for everyone.*

*(Grade 6 student)*



*I liked visiting the confluence because we got to create this really good poem and watch the river flow and hear birds chirping. I came back to the confluence on Sunday to share it with my family.*

*(Grade 4 Student)*

*Being downtown exploring the idea of change made me realize that change is bigger than it might seem, the world around us changes so much everyday and yet people like me don't even notice. I am going to look harder now and ask more questions.*

*(Grade 3 Student)*

*I believe this experience has brought my students together and heightened our sense of community within our class. One of our education assistants who does bussing at the end of the day told me that she has noticed a marked difference among my students: that at the end of the day, students who previously were not close or usually did not interact with each other often would be waving goodbye to each other and saying "see you tomorrow!"*

*I think it is very special to be able to see how this experience has brought students together, and hopefully has strengthened and even created some new friendships. I also hope that the experience has helped them learn to be more curious about everything around them, and to be compassionate and respectful to the land they inhabit.*

*(Teacher)*

*My students were really able to connect with China town and their roots, as well as learn about events that took place that they weren't previously aware of. Some students had emotional reactions to these events in history and it was clear that a connection was made. Many of our students are bussed to school and live in suburb communities quite far away. So by talking about what different communities have in common, they were able to relate to their own communities. I also loved the Indigenous teachings that were tied in, as it reinforced a lot of what we teach at school and the importance of knowing what happened in the past and how to use reconciliation to move forward.*

*(Teacher)*



## We're proud of our accomplishments this year

Big Idea/Inquiry Question	School	Grade
How might we walk in a good way?	Rosemont School	1
Does an urban environment still mean a connection to land? How does living in a community help shape individual and collective identity?	Hugh A. Bennett School	4
What does it mean to have an identity? Where do we gather?	Briar Hill School	2/3 4/5
How are we connected?	Sibylla Kiddle School	3
How do our past and present communities shape our identity?	Highwood School	4
How might Calgary continue? How do we live with and experience change? How can our community thrive?	St. Lukes School	6
What steps can we take to establish a meaningful legacy?	Cambrian Heights School	3
What connects us?	Douglasdale School	1
How might we contribute?	Grant MacEwan	4
How does our history impact our present wellness?	Varsity Acres	3
How is decision making done for the city?	Sir Wilfrid Laurier	6
How does the environment shape us? How do we shape the environment?	Queen Elizabeth School	2/3
How do people leave their mark on our community?	Riverside School	5
What makes Calgary unique?	Bowcroft School	2
How might we contribute to our community to impact quality of life?	King George School	3

Where does learning occur?  
How is my body moving?  
Do I belong here? Is my spirit honoured?  
Grade 5 students explore Pixel Park  
through the components of the  
medicine wheel.

## The Beltline Communities of Connaught and Victoria Park

The 2School program would not have been a success without the region of the Beltline, which includes the communities of Connaught and Victoria Park as well as other businesses and people in Calgary's downtown and inner city neighbourhoods. Calgary is filled with businesses and organizations that are integral to the growth and vitality of our city. Through the lens of public education, community organizations work with schools to help explore their big idea/inquiry questions. These organizations, spaces and people provide rich and thoughtful learning experiences which challenge and push students to take their learning to a deeper level of understanding.

Thank you to our partners for devoting their time and expertise to work with our students:

- Beltline Urban Murals Project
- Bow River
- Bow Tower
- Brookfield Place
- Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids
- Calgary Board of Education (CBE)
- Calgary Catholic School District (CCSD)
- Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC)
- Central Library
- Chinese Cultural Center
- City of Calgary Municipal Building
- City of Calgary Mobility Engagement
- City of Calgary Transportation and Planning
- City of Calgary Climate and Outreach
- Contemporary Calgary
- Eau Claire Wetlands
- Elbow River
- Glenbow Museum at The Edison
- Grand Theatre
- Ground Cubed Architecture
- High Park
- Inglewood Bird Sanctuary
- NewZones Gallery
- Kensington BRZ
- Lougheed House
- Memorial Park Library
- The Mustard Seed
- Nova Building
- O2 Planning + Design
- Peace Bridge
- Pixel Park
- Prince's Island Park
- Safeway
- Saint Patrick's Island
- Simmons Building
- Suncor Building
- Thomson Family Park
- University of Calgary
- Western Canada High School
- 17th Avenue Business District

### Your support has made a difference.

2School is fortunate to have the continued support of the CBE Board of Trustees, the CCSD Board of Trustees, CBE and CCSD superintendents, as well as many CBE employees who welcome students to their workplace.





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We are proud of the 2School program and our students. All photos are of students who attended 2School.