

Provincial Court of Alberta

# Edmonton School Legal Education Program

2018 – 2019 Report



## History

In the fall of 1999 the Canadian Bar Association, the Provincial Court of Alberta and the Edmonton Public School Board piloted an educational initiative in three Edmonton Public Schools. At the time, the provincial curriculum incorporated legal education in Grade 10 programming. This curriculum is now in Grade 9 social studies. The pilot involved judges (from Queen's Bench and Provincial Court) and lawyers as volunteers, travelling to the schools to address topics negotiated with the teachers. The objectives of the program were:

1. To enhance students' understanding of the justice system
2. To encourage students to learn more about justice issues
3. To promote students' willingness to exercise their rights and duties as a citizen in society
4. To enhance students' understanding of the role of judges and lawyers in society
5. To help judges and lawyers to become familiar with issues affecting students and teachers
6. To promote crime prevention
7. To provide positive role models for students

By 2008 the program was being entirely delivered by volunteer Provincial Court Judges. In the fall of 2010 Court Services became involved to significantly enrich the program by providing visiting classes with a comprehensive tour of the Law Courts to supplement the 30 minute in court teaching session with a Provincial Court Judge.

The current Legal Education Program is a partnership between Court Resolution and Administration Services (RCAS) and Provincial Court Divisions in Edmonton.

In 2015/2016 the program was revised to reduce the amount of staff time required from Court Services and the Sherriff's Office due to resource issues. The comprehensive tour of the Law Courts was discontinued; the students toured the Law Courts under the supervision of their teachers and volunteers aided by a tour brochure. Groups were met by a Judicial Clerk and given a fifteen minute orientation. The participants were provided identifying buttons, which enabled judges to address the participants in a group if an adjournment occurred while a group was in the courtroom.

The program revision in 2015/16 was a success. The junior high school program has continued in the same fashion. In 2018 the school tour names were added to the electronic Digital Display Boards to assist teachers finding their assigned courtroom. A power point presentation was created and sent out in advance to enhance their experience. In addition, the Legal Education Program partnered with City Hall School to offer an in court judge session for grade 6 students. Given resource constraints these sessions proceeded without any clerk involvement.

## Program Impact

Since 1999 thousands of students have benefited from the Edmonton School Legal Education Program. In the last 6 years alone over 13,000 students have participated in the program.

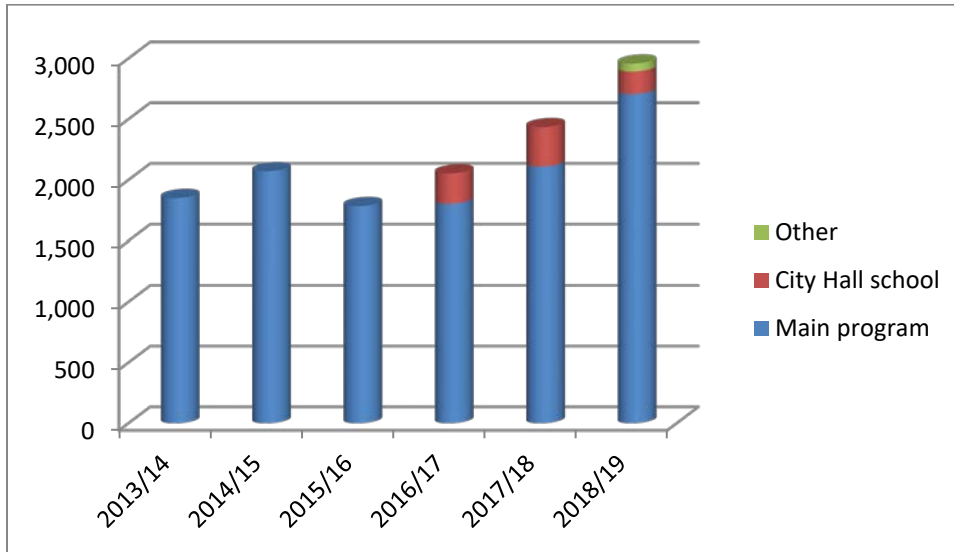
The *Curriculum Handbook for Parents* published by Alberta Education describes the aim of the Grade 9 curriculum as promoting a sense of belonging and acceptance in students as they engage in active and responsible citizenship. Knowing and understanding the law and justice system is a reasonable first step for these students to positively support and participate in the justice system.

This curriculum objective is enhanced by the Edmonton School Legal Education Program. The vast majority of these student participants have never been to the Law Courts or considered how the justice system works. In this one day experience students are immersed in the legal culture which helps them to understand the justice system and its role in a vibrant democracy.

In addition the Program partnership with City Hall School has a significant impact. We are very pleased to note that Linda Hut, the teacher for City Hall School, received the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence. Part of her teaching concept is to make the entire city into a classroom. Whenever possible the Law Courts become part of that classroom with the students participating in a Judge hosted session in a courtroom.

## Participation

In the 2018 – 2019 school year 2,957 students participated in the program. This is our most successful year since we began keeping statistics.



Notwithstanding the resource challenges this program continues to be delivered to Edmonton and area students due to the dedicated staff from RCAS, Judicial Assistants from Provincial Court and Judges of the Provincial Court who remain committed to public legal education.

The demand for the Edmonton School Legal Education Program continues to exceed our capacity to respond. We are turning away many requests from junior high teachers to book a session.

## Program inputs

The success of the Edmonton School Legal Education Program is only possible through the active support of several people and departments. While time is taken away from regular duties all of the staff also provide generously of their own time to ensure the program is a success. Special thanks to Crystal Cowan and Edson Cruz for their continued dedication to this Program and to Kelly Andres who took over administration and bookings of tours and coordination with all partners this year and maintained and enhanced the exceptional quality of the program.

Thank you to the following individuals for providing their expertise and enthusiasm over the last year:

Kelly Andres

Crystal Cowan

Edson Cruz

Tim Spencer

Crystal Van Dusen

Judge Andrew

Judge Cochard

Judge Corbett

Judge Creagh

Judge DePoe

Judge Dixon

Judge Doyle

Judge Hancock

Judge Hayes-Richards

Judge Ho

Assistant Chief Judge Holmstrom

Judge Lester

Judge Lloyd

Judge MacDonald

Judge Moher

Judge Richardson

Judge Sharpe

Judge Veylan

Judge Wheatley

Judge Zalmanowitz