

Big Marble Community Classroom Learning @ Co-op Pioneer Village

Located at the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede Grounds



What is a Community Classroom?

A Community Classroom is an opportunity for cultural and educational immersion. This innovative curriculum-based program moves student learning “beyond the classroom” into a community venue for a period of days, not hours – this is more than a field trip...

There has been a shift in education practice that moves away from subject-specific content and emphasizes “big ideas” that span multiple subject areas. With this in mind, the Community Classroom allows for engaging, concept-based learning in a unique, historical, community space.

Children learn best through active engagement, in other words, by “doing”! The Community Classroom learning experience offers teachers and students the opportunity to move beyond their classroom to a community venue for hands-on, multi-sensory, experiential learning. Meeting Alberta Education learning outcomes and curriculum expectations through meaningful, cross-curricular connections to the real world, this experience enhances active student learning. Students and teachers use this new “classroom” to engage in learner-led, inquiry-based learning and exploration through tours, journaling, viewing, observation and a host of creative interactive activities.



Where?

Entire classes come to Co-op Pioneer Village for 2 - 5 days for a Community Classroom learning experience (generously sponsored by Big Marble). The site becomes their classroom for the duration of this time with the Carriage House as the gathering space.

As the history of Medicine Hat, of Alberta, and of Canada is a focus in many grade levels, spending time in/with the seven buildings in Pioneer Village, has the potential to offer a number of valuable learning experiences for students across grade levels and subject areas.



Who?

Community Classroom experiences can be enjoyed by any/all students! There are inclusive opportunities for cross curricular learning at every grade level and can be uniquely tailored for each individual class. Specific modifications are also made to accommodate unique student needs. Although the experience is led by the teacher and may be facilitated by volunteers and/or a lead teacher at the facility, it can be enhanced through the involvement of a number of experts.

When?

Due to the nature of the space, the Community Classroom experience is available during the fall and spring.

Students visit the site for two-five days. During this time, students may explore the facilities to create projects, solve problems, and gather data/documentation for future learning throughout the school year.

How?

Initially, classroom teachers work closely with an Education Facilitator to custom design a multi-day, interactive learning experience in this unique heritage space. This lead team would design activities to meet integrated learning objectives and to tailor each Community Classroom to accommodate specific class and student needs.



In 2024...

During the months of May, June, and October 2024, 8 classes (grades 1 -6) from Southview, Crestwood, River Heights, and Ross Glen Schools participated in this learning opportunity. There are now several classes from a number of schools that have booked for the spring of 2025.

What did you do at school today?

Samples of some of the activities used to meet specific learning outcomes included:

- Measuring using nonstandard measurements
- Using Venn diagrams to compare/contrast a variety of differences between living in the early 20th century and now (e.g., school, prices, industry, community helpers, energy, vehicles)
- Gathering information from historic photos to write letters, newspaper articles, scripts
- Using experiences from the Blacksmith shop to create individual brands
- Photo scavenger hunts to determine ratio, part-whole, looking for physical evidence



- Learning pioneer games (jacks, pick-up sticks, crokinole, marbles, spoons, Kick-the-Can)
- Baking bread and making butter - from farm to factory
- Artifact Inquiry - drawing and describing items in the General Store to determine how they may have been used in the past and how they may be used in the present