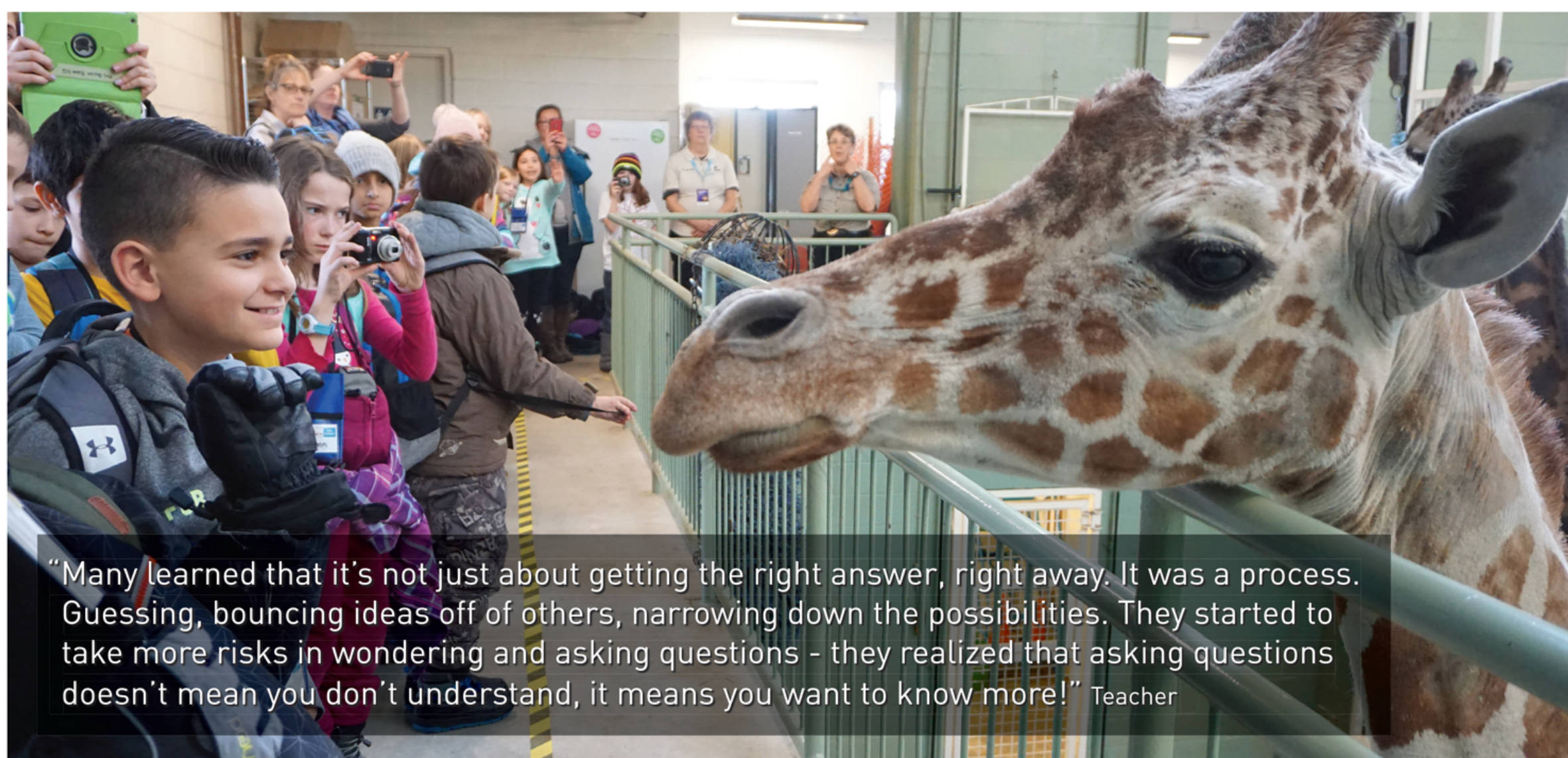
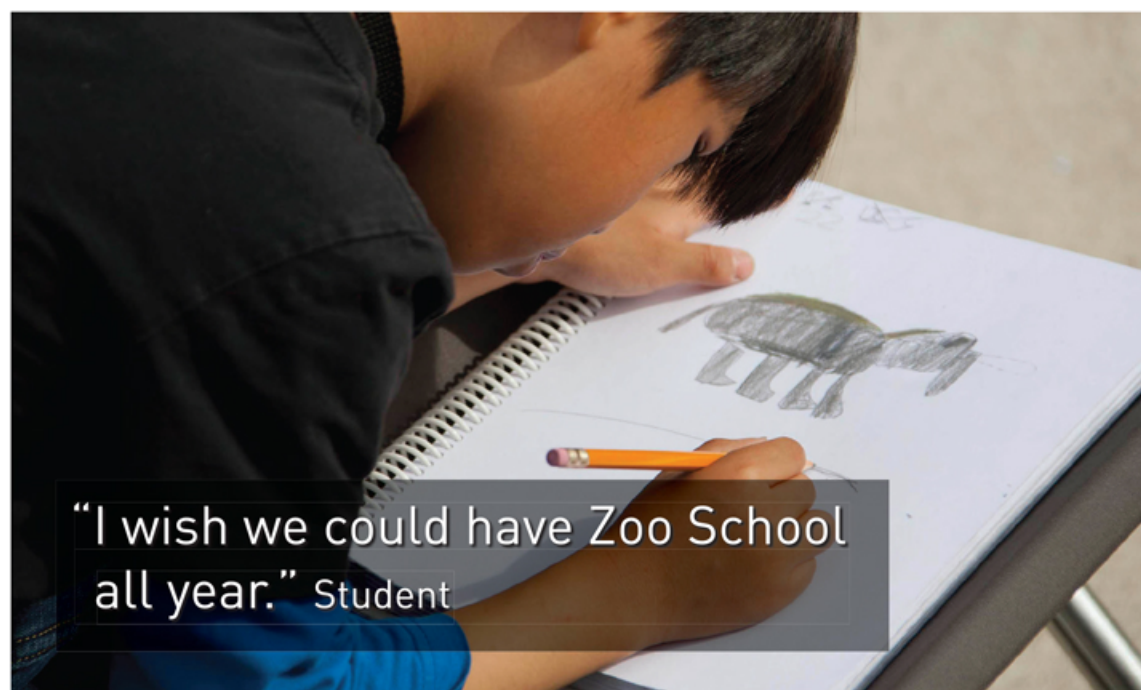




ZOO SCHOOL CALGARY ZOO

It all began with an idea and a dream. Don Harvie, a well-known Calgary philanthropist, dreamt of having a permanent school at the zoo. When Don met Gillian Kydd, who was then a part of the Calgary Board of Education science team, she turned his dream into a reality. Her idea was to dedicate one classroom at the zoo to be used each week by a new group of students and their teacher, allowing for many more students and teachers to benefit from the program. She believed that one week at the zoo could be so rich with learning, that it could become the catalyst for a year-long study at the school. Thus, Zoo School was born. It slowly evolved into a program that was based around the study and observation of animals. It encouraged students to slow down, grow, learn and ask questions. A key element to the program was the need for it to be initiated and orchestrated by the teacher, with a site coordinator who helped to provide expertise, and be the liaison with the zoo to create impactful learning experiences. Students used journals to record their findings and document their learnings and community volunteers became an integral part of the program to assist the children with their development their real world classroom. Lastly, the week became a natural fit for interdisciplinary learning to take place. This idea was 25 years ahead of it's time. This program, from its inception, encapsulated what we know today to be 21st century best learning practices. This is inquiry learning, this is critical thinking, this is creating ethical and global citizens. Since the

beginning, this idea has expanded to 15 learning sites around our city, and also across the world. This is the type of learning that is no longer novel, but is expected.

So what is its relevance today? Zoo School has created an opportunity for generations of students, teachers and parents, to build connections with animals, by allowing them to come swimming, crawling, running and flying, out of their text books and story books and into real life. Each week is tailored to meet the needs of the students and teachers involved, whether that be building the science vocabulary for new immigrants to Canada and helping them to become familiar with our local flora and fauna or exploring life at the zoo for our penguin population and linking it to ocean health, our goal is to bring the curriculum to life and to improve the environmental literacy of our younger generations. Most importantly, by having students watch, learn and wonder about an animal for a week through regular observations and listening to experts, it provides them with a window into its life, prompting them to feel empathy and concern for other living things. As the natural world continues to shrink around us, there is no other time in the history of this program when it has been as relevant as it is today. Hopefully it will continue to have a profound and lasting impact on our students, building the conservationists of our future.