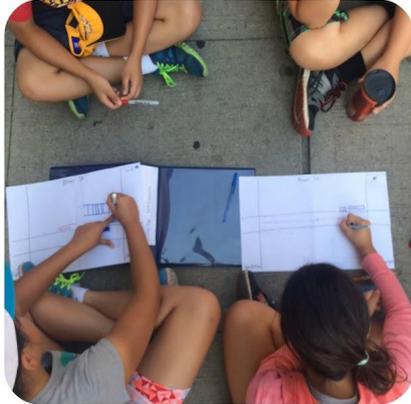


Maximum City Research Report 2016



Report Contents

- Organization Profile
- Report Overview
- Approach: New Urban Pedagogies
 - City as Classroom
 - Relevant Content
 - Authentic Process
 - Youth Agency
- Summer Program
 - Overview
 - Alumni Feedback
 - 2016 Feedback
- Eureka In-School Research
 - Overview
 - Impact Summary
 - Feedback
- Methodology



Organization Profile

Maximum City began in August of 2011 as a pilot project to teach youth about sustainable urban design and was incorporated in 2013. Now it divides its time between working with schools to train teachers to deliver its hands-on urban and environmental curriculum and as public consultation and engagement specialists for cities. Maximum City specializes in the use of innovative methods to engage populations not usually reached by planning, design, and development processes, with a particular focus on youth. Maximum City's clients have included schools, school boards, universities and colleges, ministries and municipalities in southern Ontario.



Report Overview

Teaching cities and creating citizens are the cornerstones of Maximum City, and our imperative is grounded in the fact that the complex problems of our urban future – of infrastructure, technology, affordability, and movement, for example – will be tackled with growing urgency by the students currently in our cities' kindergartens, elementary, middle and high schools.

Going one step further, Maximum City is also deeply concerned with **transforming cities** – teaching relevant and innovative urban content in a way that is meaningful, promotes agency, fuels citizenship and a sense of place, and has impact. This report examines the approach and impact of Maximum City programming across three contexts:

1 SUMMER PROGRAM 2011 & 2012

The first two years of the Maximum City program engaged 55 students in a new curricular experience for young city-builders. Alumni from these sessions were contacted in 2016 for input to gain insight on the longer-term impacts of the Maximum City summer institute.

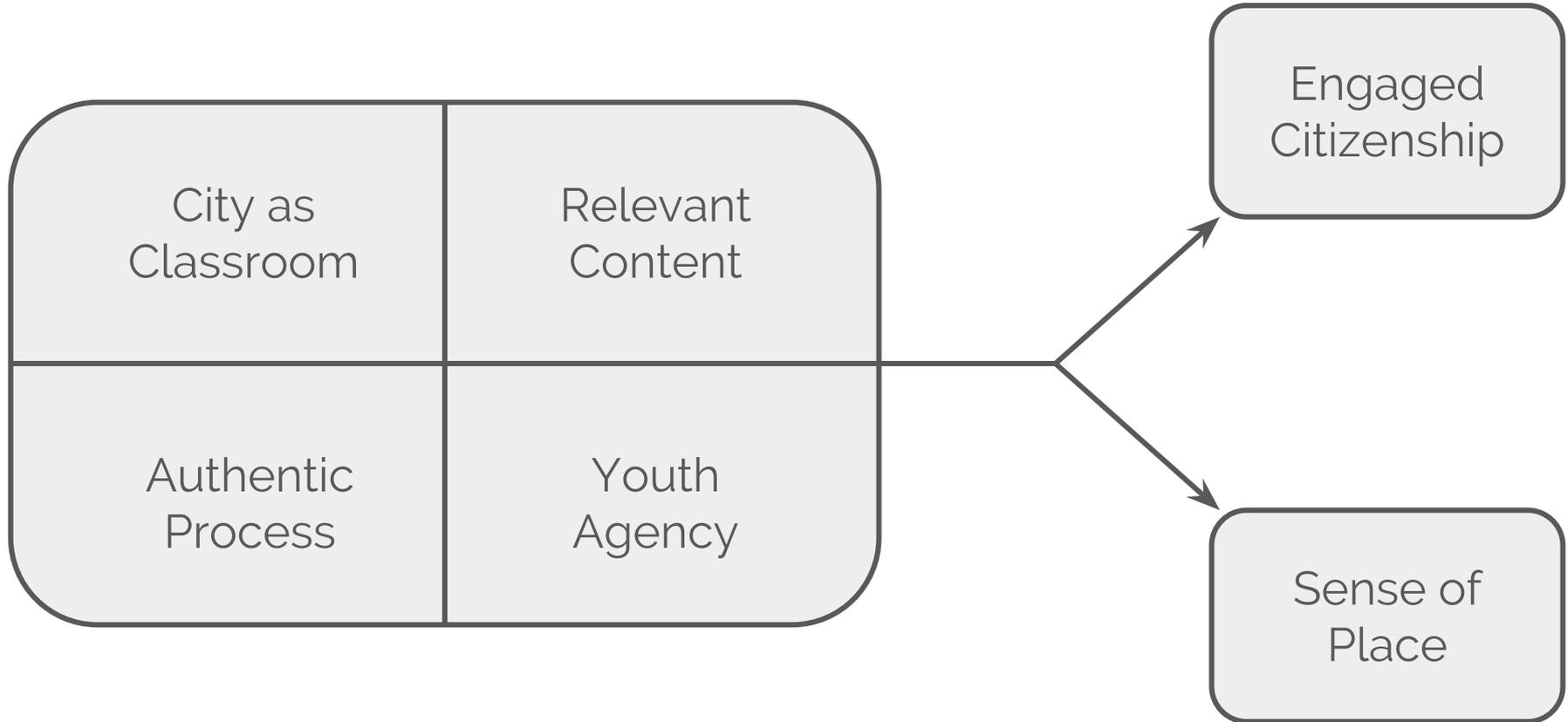
2 SUMMER PROGRAM 2016

In 2016, 132 students from over 40 schools and 7 countries participated in the sixth annual Maximum City summer institute. For four weeks and with over 20 professional partners, Junior and Senior campers participated in design challenges to improve and imprint on the urban landscape.

3 EUREKA RESEARCH 2014-2015

This research surveyed the experience of Grade 8 students studying Maximum City curriculum modules as part of their Geography course at the University of Toronto Schools in the 2014-2015 school year. 70 students participated through pre- and post- qualitative & quantitative surveys throughout the year.

Approach: New Urban Pedagogies



City as Classroom

HOW:

Field trips
Site Visits
Interviews

Tours
Public Life Surveys
Cycling Modules

WHY:

Allows students to experience, observe, and interact with the urban environment first-hand.

Encourages students to bring the insights and observations of the city into classroom designs & discussions.

Students **learn by doing**.

IMPACT:

"It was neat to have a hands-on street-level approach to different issues of civic importance... It is always necessary to experience the issues you are advocating for first-hand."
- 2011 student

"(Maximum City) allowed me to explore an area of the city that I had not explored, allowing me to build upon my views and knowledge of the city."
- Marcus, 2011 student



Relevant Content

HOW:

Topics and problems are relevant to a youth audience.

Focus is on current issues that are recognizable and pertinent to students – things they can see and touch in their daily lives.

WHY:

Students feel connected to issues and challenges, have a stake and crucial voice in both the process and the solution, feel empowered to make change.

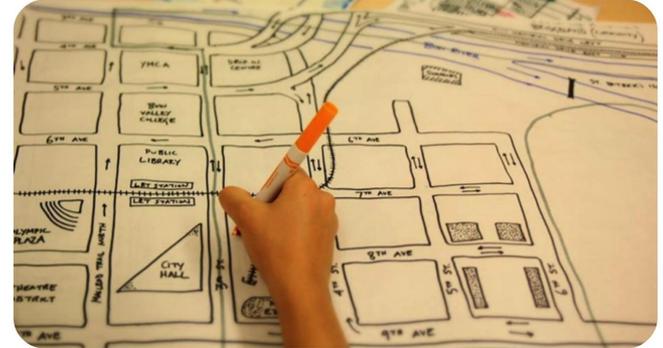
IMPACT:

"Maximum City showed me that no issue is out of reach if you are passionate about it. This lesson has played a crucial role in university life, where there are a plethora of clubs and groups that advocate for all kinds of issues. I gained the confidence to search for a place where my voice will be heard and where my ideas will be taken seriously."

- Catherine, 2012 student

"The program encouraged me to consider the substantial impact that an individual of any age, at any level of education, can have on the formation of their community and built environment through conscientious design and civic engagement. Meeting with city leaders and seeing that they were as interested in my opinion as I was in theirs imbued me with a lot of confidence in my ability to affect change on a large scale, ultimately leading to my engagement with campus activism at university."

- Duncan, 2011 & 2012 student



Authentic Process

HOW:

Empathizing with multiple stakeholders and users.

Partnerships with professional experts throughout the process (programming and presentations).

Interactive & two-way engagement with professionals through discussion, field trips, panels.

Students co-create solutions to real challenges.

WHY:

Links students to a network of change-makers.

Provides meaningful feedback and insight to their designs and ideas.

Trains students in integrated problem-solving skills.

IMPACT:

"It stood out to me because it was an academic experience in a totally different way. It's not like being in a classroom and listening to teachers talk or sitting at a computer researching. I really enjoyed having people come in and talk about their experiences. It gives it a sense of real-life-ness... That was one of the biggest highlights."

- Isabella, 2011 Student

"I was always really blown away at the caliber of the guests that we got in and how involved they were in their field but also how enthusiastic they were in getting the opinions of young people."

- Duncan, 2011 & 2012 Student



Youth Agency

HOW:

Students have the freedom to explore, iterate, and refine.

Maximum City equips students with tools, skills, and concepts.

Students apply skills to solve real urban problems.

Students are co-creators of new knowledge.

WHY:

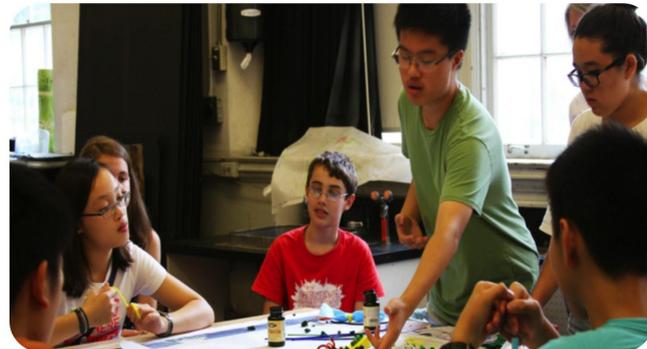
Youth are empowered as agents to design creative solutions in the urban environment.

Youth see themselves as actors and recognize the importance (and dearth) of their voice in civic engagement and urban change.

IMPACT:

"One of the best parts of Maximum City was the focus that it placed on developing and fostering a sense of agency and possibility within participants, such as myself. It demonstrated to me (as a young, impressionable student) that as a citizen and community member, I did have a say in the environment I operated in, and the way it was constructed. By introducing me to the various mechanisms and consultative processes that various city planners and designers undertake, it turned Toronto into a city filled with opportunity."

- Rebecca, 2011 & 2012 student



Observe
Play
Make

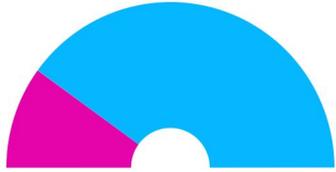


Summer Program Overview

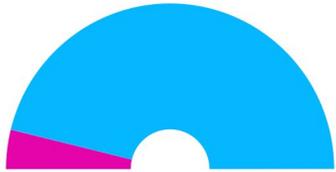
Maximum City's award-winning summer program offers an enriched curricular experience for young city builders entering grades 4-7 (Junior Camp) and 8-12 (Senior Camp). It is taught by leading experts and is hosted at the University of Toronto Schools and nearby sites. Partnering with various urban organizations and professionals on city building themes, the program includes a range of hands-on activities in topics such as architecture, urban design, the environment, technology, civic engagement and transit. The summer program culminates in a design challenge that asks students to solve a real-life problem in our urban environment, and present their solution to an audience of their peers and a panel of professionals.



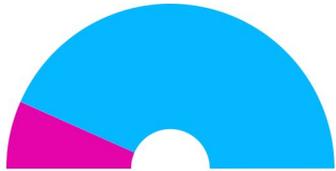
Alumni Feedback



80% responded that Maximum City had a medium to great impact on their **academic interest in urban issues**.



Over 90% responded that Maximum City had a medium to great impact on their **personal interest in urban issues**.



Over 86% responded that Maximum City had a medium to great impact on their **interest in civic engagement**.

■ <3 out of 5 ■ 3+ out of 5

*When I first took part in the program as a 14-year-old, I looked at Toronto's streets, transit system, parks, and government through a glass wall: I could see what was working and what needed attention and I thought about how things should change, but not once did I think about stepping on the other side of the wall. From my first day at Maximum City, that wall vanished into thin air and **I found myself in the middle of the world of civic engagement, constantly being pushed and challenged to look at the world around me from the perspective of a city builder** as opposed to a passive city user. I learned that no problem is too grand to tackle and I gained the confidence to find open doors (and even open doors for myself) to make my voice heard by people with influence.*

- Catherine, 2012 student

*I think ideas [that small interventions can impact the city] were super useful in thinking that even if I'm you know, 13 years old, **I'm very much capable of going out with my friends make some sort of intervention, of making some sort of change**. Hearing these professionals who do have a lot of clout in making these decisions be interested in my feedback, I think meant a lot."*

- Duncan, 2011 & 2012 student

*It just helps to have that **extra layer of authenticity**. It was people that I normally wouldn't interact with and they're talking to me about what they do for a living. That matters a lot.*

- Isabella, 2011 student

*Maximum City gave me a different lens through which to think about both careers and problem solving. I learned that **I enjoyed working in a team on projects** and I plan to do that in my future career.*

- Jane, 2011 student

Alumni Feedback

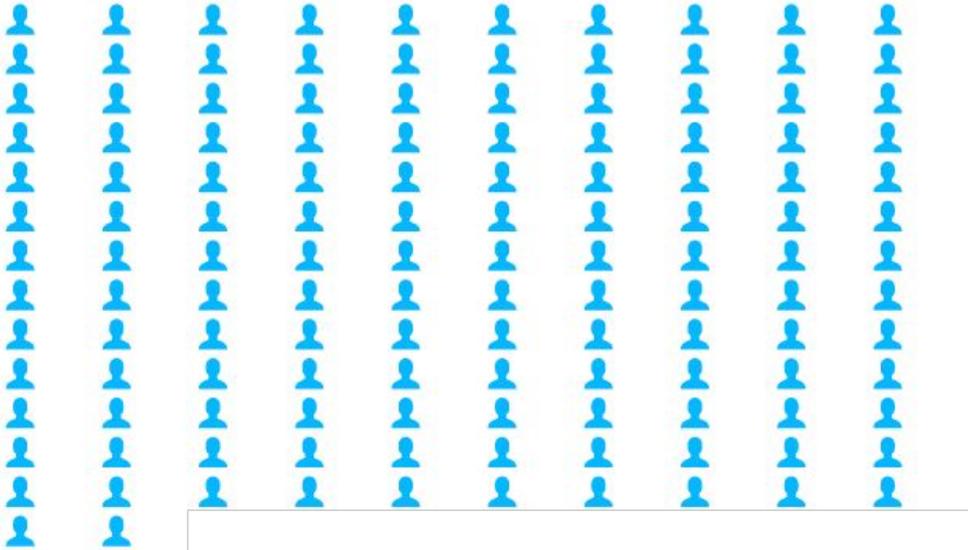
Alumni from the inaugural two summers of Maximum City reflected on the impact of the program on their current interests, academic and civic pursuits. Confirming the approach and values of Maximum City, students pointed to **hands-on & first-hand engagement** with urban issues, meaningful **connections with professional experts**, and the skills and **opportunity to become creators and agents** as successful and enjoyable elements of the summer program.

Participants also frequently noted how Maximum City developed their **collaboration, discussion, & teamwork skills** in practical ways that they have since applied in academic and professional settings.

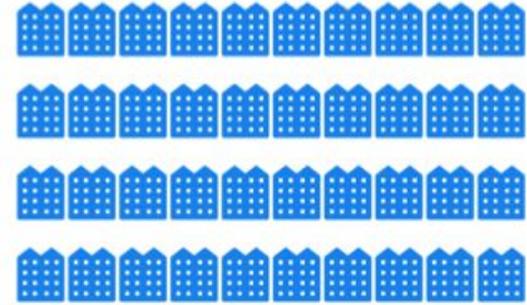
80% of alumni that completed our survey are taking **undergraduate courses in at least one related discipline** (e.g. Architecture, Design, Geography, Planning, Sociology, Urban Studies, Politics, Policy Studies).



Summer 2016 By the Numbers



132 students



40 GTA schools

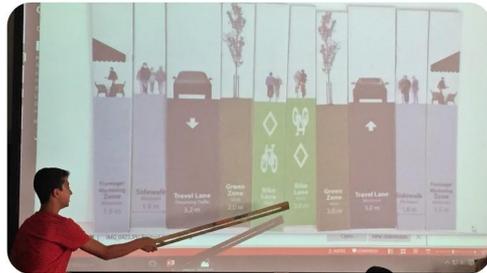


7 countries

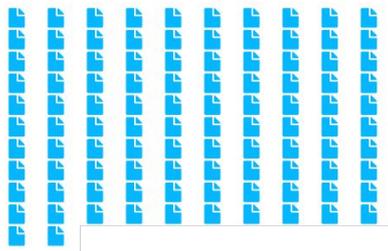
Summer 2016 Program Overview

Program Theme	Design Challenge	Key Partners
The Welcoming City	Create a tool/guide/app to help newcomers navigate the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aga Khan Museum & Ismaili Centre • Jon Johnson - First Story Toronto & NCCC • Yvonne Bambrick - Urban Cycling Consultant • Ian Malczewski - TOcore, Swerhun Facilitation
Green / Future City	Using various digital and tactile tools (e.g. maps, Streetmix, Betaville & SketchUp 3D software), design a better Bloor St. & reimagine Toronto's Green Line park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • iCity • Jacquelyn Hayward-Gulati - City of Toronto Cycling Manager • Paul Hess - U of T (Geography) • Nancy Smith Lea - TCAT • Kim Storey - Brown+Storey Architects • Jake Tobin Garrett - Park People
Active / Mobile / Street City	Redevelop a future Bloor St. parkette to create an active, safe, fun, and independent space for youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brad Ross - TTC • Tom Aylward Nally - Metrolinx • Andrea Oppedisano & Julie Bogdanowicz - City of Toronto Planning & Urban Design • Sam Carter-Shamai & Stu Pearce - City of Toronto Councillor Joe Cressy's office & Toronto graffiti artist
Art & Citybuilding	Considering the role of art & play in citybuilding, create the plans, programming, and content for an interactive museum of Toronto.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stu Pearce - Toronto graffiti artist • Daniel Rotzstain - creator of <i>All the Libraries</i> colouring book • Crazy Dames - Sara Udow and Jennie Suddick, based at the Gardiner Museum

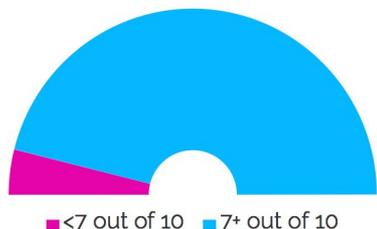
Summer 2016 Student Products



Summer 2016 Feedback



102 students filled out surveys to provide quantitative and qualitative feedback on their 2016 Maximum City experience.



92% rated their experience at Maximum City as a **7 or higher** (on a scale of 1 to 10).



Example of a word cloud created from a **"3 Words to Describe Maximum City"** survey question

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

"Interacting with other people and activities outside UTS."

"Going out to explore."

"I like teamwork, I like to cooperate with others. Maximum City program gave me this chance."

"The trips and tours were awesome and educational. A+!"

"It was cool to experience the city we were trying to better."

"Great camp, loved the activities and counsellors."

"I really liked all of the activities and curriculum."

TimelapseTO & Cycling Modules
(TimelapseTO is a downtown Toronto map + lego building activity)

Summer 2016 Feedback

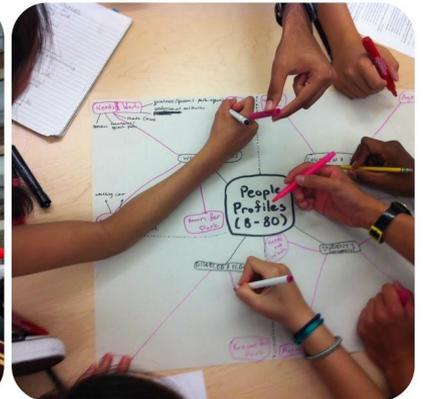
Field trips, hands-on activities, and off-site tours emerged throughout all 2016 camps as favourite elements for participants. The **enthusiasm and support of staff and guest speakers** were also identified as program highlights. Director Reports for each session noted how the **final presentations** played a key role in **motivating students and adding a layer of legitimacy** to the design challenge.

Recommendations for improvement include the need for **more time to work on final designs**, a greater variety of **group & individual projects**, and **more time to reflect and discuss** as a group. Some challenges about combining/separating age groups (Senior & Junior campers) and providing some shorter & physically active programming for younger students were also identified by summer staff.



Eureka Research Overview

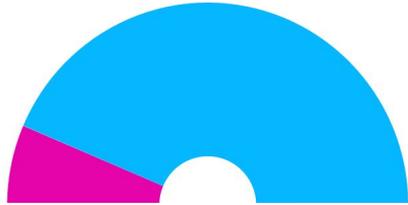
Maximum City curriculum units have been integrated into school academic programs at the middle and high school level in subject areas such as Geography, Civics, Science, and the Arts. Since 2013, all Grade 8 students at the University of Toronto Schools have participated in Maximum City curriculum modules in their Geography course. In 2014, these classes were taught by Josh Fullan (Maximum City Director) and Rebecca Levere. The curriculum was comprised of four major units and assessments throughout the year: the Transit Mapping Task, the Household Budgeting Activity, the Downtown Project and Child Poverty in Toronto. 70 students provided both quantitative and qualitative feedback in pre- and post- program surveys throughout the year as part of the Eureka Research project.



Eureka Research: Impact Summary

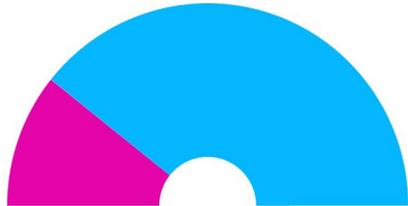
- Students reported an **increased knowledge** of the subject of cities and city planning at the completion of Maximum City curriculum modules.
- Students reported a high level of **interest and engagement** in Maximum City learning activities.
- The preferred ways of learning for Maximum City students were working by oneself, going on a field trip, and working on a group project.
- Students most liked the **hands-on, collaborative** nature of activities; **tackling interesting problems that were relevant to their daily lives**; and the **feeling of empowerment** of being treated like adults in real-world scenarios.
- Students least liked the lack of background information or resources provided in certain learning activities, and the **lack of sufficient time** provided in class to complete projects.
- There was a **strong current of empathy** in student responses expressing an increased capacity of being able to imagine how other people live in cities.
- Students enjoyed the **novelty of Maximum City content and teaching methods** compared to other courses or camps.

Eureka Feedback



■ <3 out of 5 ■ 3+ out of 5

When asked how **engaged** they were with the curriculum, **over 87%** responded with a rating of **3 or higher**. **Over 60%** gave a rating of **4 or above**.



■ <3 out of 5 ■ 3+ out of 5

When asked how **interested** they were in the curriculum, **over two thirds** responded with a rating of **3 or higher**. Nearly **60%** gave a rating of **4 or above**.

*"Very interesting and **relevant** to our life."*

*"The final project was entertaining yet helpful, very **relatable**."*

*"I enjoyed planning something **physical** in my own city."*

*"It's cool and **collaborative** and **hands-on**."*

*"I liked that we were given the opportunity to plan something that **normally wouldn't be given to the judgement of a 13 year old**."*

*"It teaches us how to think like adults, and **makes us aware of the problems** we will face in adulthood, which is what going to school and learning is really about!"*

*"I really enjoyed the project and can't think of too many changes I'd implement. However, I'd say that allocating **more class time** for the completion of the project would be my greatest concern/area for improvement."*

Research Methodology

Research for this report was collected through a variety of methods including surveys and interviews with Maximum City staff and participants, as well as through Director Reports from summer program leaders.

Alumni from the first two years of the program (2011 and 2012) were contacted and asked to fill out a survey of qualitative and quantitative questions. A selection of former students were also interviewed in depth by phone. 2016 campers were given exit surveys at the end of their program with opportunities for both qualitative and quantitative responses. Eureka respondents were given surveys before and after being taught the Maximum City curriculum as part of their Grade 8 Geography course in 2014-2015.

Director Reports were submitted for each of the summer 2016 sessions and included an overview of the week's program, highlights, survey data and analysis, and program recommendations.



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