Urban ACADEMY

ROAR

NOVEMBER 2026





THE URBAN ACADEMY

PATHWAY TO FUTURE-READINESS

From day one to graduation, each stage builds the capable, courageous and compassionate changemakers of tomorrow.
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WINTER CONCERTS

Grades 1–12
Wednesday, December 16
Massey Theatre

JK & K
Wednesday, February 17
Urban Academy





SPRING CONCERT AND MUSICALS

GRADES 6–12
THURSDAY
APRIL 29

GRADES 4–12
WEDNESDAY
MAY 19

MICHAEL J FOX THEATRE

PAX PRESENTS

THE URBAN ACADEMY CARNIVAL

Saturday, May 15
GAMES • ENTERTAINMENT • FOOD • AND MORE!



Letter from the Editor

The hardest task for an editor crafting a magazine that features the JK to Grade 12 journey is choosing from the sheer abundance of vibrant, transformative stories unfolding at 466 Rousseau Street every single day. Urban Academy is a place teeming with life and joy, brimming with moments of intentionality in teaching and learning, and filled with incredible students, staff and parents who astound us daily. Selecting the handful of articles to include and stories to tell is a challenge, but one that I hope we've met in this issue.

Like all good stories, books and magazines, we begin by thinking about you, the reader. You are the students, parents, families and friends who care about our student body and what happens at UA daily. We ask questions like 'what do our parents want to know more about?' and 'what kinds of articles do we think they would appreciate reading?' We believe you would like to read stories of our incredible students and would appreciate joining us in celebrating our amazing staff and volunteers. Then we begin.

For this issue, we know that parents have questions about how math is taught, and how the new UA ARC Program is unfolding. They want to know what we actually mean by 'student-led initiatives' and how those initiatives impact their child's experience. They also ask questions about how we are doing as a school and what lies ahead for UA. In putting together this issue of the Urban Academy Roar, we set out to answer those very questions. Our hope is that you will find the answers in the stories and the Annual Report featured within these pages.

A UA educator or leader writes or guides every article. Like our teaching, we hope they inspire, inform, bring joy, and ultimately make you proud to be part of Urban Academy. Please enjoy this meaningful glimpse into the days, life, and learning of our school community.



Happy Reading,
Sonja Kennedy

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CAIS Canadian Accredited Independent Schools
ISABC Independent Schools Association of British Columbia
FISABC

UA's Model UN:
A Masterclass in Student Agency

Sonja Kennedy



True learning, deep learning, can change who you become. Because we believe this wholeheartedly, UA educators work hard to help students become 'future-ready', not just in theory, but by offering space to shape the world around them. This past year, the third annual Urban Academy Model United Nations (UA MUN) Conference provided a masterclass in this for four student leaders, showing again that supporting student-led initiatives is a keystone of UA's culture.

When the call went out for student leadership, students like Nyah, Anika, and Aydin in Grade 10, and Michael in Grade 9, answered with a purpose: to take ownership of their own educational experience and influence the experience of their Grade 7–12 peers. Because of the connection to the Social Studies 10 curriculum, Grade 10 students were required to participate; however, it was optional for other Grade 7–12 students. The conference was UA's largest yet, with 46 participants.

"Every time I thought to bring something up, they had proactively done it and already found the solution," says Mr. Forry, UA Senior Humanities Teacher. His role as mentor was to empower the student leadership team and provide logistics support, leaving the actual leadership to the students. He continued, "These students stretched themselves, moving far beyond their comfort zones." They managed technical crises, designed complex committee simulations, and planned everything from the tablecloths and lunch to selecting award winners. From planning the conference logistics to grading 30 position papers with nuance and maturity, the task was no small one.

The committee began by selecting the topic of the conference discussion. They chose the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), and the topic they would debate was the Prevention of Weaponization of Emerging Technologies. Nyah, the conference Director who wrote the backgrounder papers students would read to understand the topic, shared how much that work impacted her. "Anytime you're researching something like that, you come out with a whole new perspective and realize there is a whole other world that you didn't know existed." All four committee members agreed that the topic they dove into opened their eyes to the scary reality of how AI is being used by terrorist organizations. A big topic for an MUN conference to handle!

For the four directors, the goal was to ensure that all delegates, but especially the younger ones, felt supported and included rather than overwhelmed. The leadership





group really took into account that this would be the first time Grade 7 students would be part of the event. As Assistant Director of the dais, Anika's role was to ensure the rules of procedure (all 250!) were followed. She noted, "I really enjoy empowering young people. I know when I was starting out at MUN, I wouldn't always be called on, so we tried to actively encourage them to participate." By mentoring the younger students through the rules of procedure and nudging them to speak, the organizers created a space where belonging was a priority.

Aydin, who also served as an Assistant Director, upon reflecting on his contribution, captured the essence of his own leadership style. "The kind of work I enjoy is in the background and isn't always seen, but doing what it takes keeps things going," he said. "I enjoy learning about what it takes behind the scenes. As someone who enjoys programming, it's important to keep things flowing."

In speaking with all four students in the interview, one of the most obvious takeaways is how they all encouraged one another and found their own areas of strength. Michael noted, "I found out that I was good at evaluating student performances by offering feedback on position papers and could provide thorough and meaningful comments for the delegates." To this, the rest of the group offered wholehearted support with comments like, "Yeah, I'm not sure how Michael got through all of them," and "He's so great in that role. Reviewing all of those papers is tough!"

As the conference concluded, Mr. Forry recalled a moment when he knew that the vision had paid off. "Near the end of the day, seeing the event running so smoothly, they adapted to tech challenges, encouraged other students to speak up, did all the prep work to prepare a complex topic, and they were working on awards. They did it all on their own, and it was clear that this was their event," he noted, reflecting on the transition from advisor to observer. Even

"I really enjoy empowering young people. I know when I was starting out at MUN, I wouldn't always be called on, so we tried to actively encourage them to participate."



though it was a lot of work, Nyah, Anika, Aydin and Michael were grateful for the opportunity as students to lead the conference and appreciated the confidence staff had in them and the belief that they could pull it off.

This initiative is an example of the deliberate arc where students are known, stretched, and empowered to lead, which we call the UA Pathway to Future-Readiness™. The student leaders didn't just build a conference; they helped further create a community where growth is expected and celebrated. They proved that when you give capable, curious students a platform, they won't just meet expectations; they will impact the learning of those around them.

This is what it means to be a changemaker. For these students, the conference was just the beginning of the journey, as each of them is already looking forward to the next steps in MUN and other forms of student leadership, each in their own way.









The Science and Soul of Mr. McQuiggan

Sonja Kennedy

If you walk into a UA classroom with Doug McQuiggan, you are as likely to hear a guitar as you are to hear a discussion about digital citizenship. As our Junior Performing Arts Teacher, AI Lead, Junior Ed Tech coach, and founder of the student rock band program, Mr. McQuiggan brings a truly unique perspective to Urban Academy, interestingly one rooted as much in rigorous neuroscience as it is in artistic expression.

Before finding his home in education, Mr. McQuiggan spent seven years in a Toronto neuroscience lab, studying aging and memory. That scientific lens remains a cornerstone of his teaching today; his deep understanding of brain plasticity—the brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections—directly informs his belief that every student is capable of growth and learning through consistent, joyful practice. He realized early on that his true passion was knowledge translation, helping people understand complex ideas; it isn't a far stretch to see how that may have led him to a career where he could have a lasting impact on young minds.

The 'Fun First' Philosophy

In the Junior Performing Arts program, Mr. McQuiggan's approach is refreshing: fun comes first. He isn't interested in drilling for perfection; he wants to keep the "door to music and performing arts" open for every student. Central to this is his philosophy of performing arts as a primarily social experience. He views the stage not just as a place for performance, but as a venue for building community, shared vulnerability, and strengthening social bonds. By prioritizing joy and engagement, he helps students build what he calls a "bank of confidence."

"I want to fill their bank of confidence before they hit those middle years when things can get complicated," Mr. McQuiggan explains. By using comedy, skits, and low-pressure performance environments, he ensures that students feel capable and comfortable standing in front of an audience—a life skill that will serve them long after they leave the stage.

Three years ago, Mr. McQ, as he's so lovingly known, saw an opportunity for middle and senior students to try something a bit different. So, he took it upon himself to start student rock bands. The desire for offering club-based rock band opportunities stemmed from his own school experience as a teen, when being part of a rock band was such an influential opportunity. What started as

a small project has grown significantly, as Mr. McQuiggan pushes for performing at any opportunity available. Again, with his belief that stage performances build lifelong connections and confidence!

His musical influence isn't limited to student groups; he is also a key member of the "UA teacher band." Performing at school assemblies, the annual carnival, and the gala, the group brings the school community together through music, embodying the collaborative and creative spirit he encourages in his students.

Demystifying AI and Tech

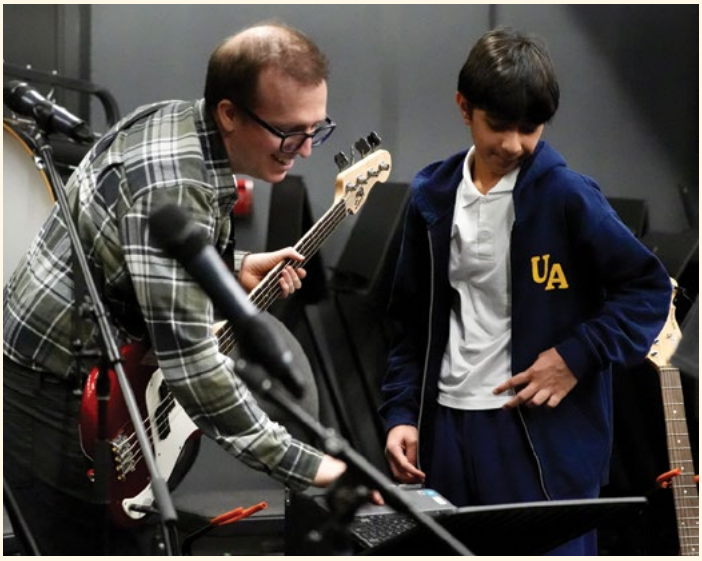
Beyond the stage, Mr. McQuiggan serves as a crucial guide for our staff in the ever-evolving landscape of Artificial Intelligence. It may feel like a stretch for the Performing Arts Teacher to fill this role, but now, understanding his background, it makes sense! For many parents and educators, Artificial Intelligence can feel daunting. Mr. McQuiggan's ethos is pragmatic and grounding: he views AI as a tool, no different than a calculator, that must be used intentionally.

Rather than dictating how technology should be used, Mr. McQuiggan focuses on "de-bogging" the teacher experience. He works alongside our staff to identify time-consuming, repetitive tasks that AI can streamline—such as using Large Language Models to draft initial lesson outlines or automate administrative workflows—giving teachers more time to focus on what matters most: their students. "I ask teachers, 'If we could streamline administrative work, what would you do with that time?' And it's always, 'I'd go spend more time with that student,' or 'I'd go check in on so-and-so.' It's always about good student-relational opportunities."

In his role as AI Lead at Urban Academy, he champions crucial initiatives focused on safe utilization and AI literacy, ensuring both educators and students grasp the ethical complexities and practical limits of these technologies. Additionally, as UA's representative on ISABC's Project 13, he works alongside fellow ISABC Technology Leaders in Education at the vanguard of establishing clear interaction guidelines for students and professionals. This collaborative work keeps Urban Academy at the leading edge of digital citizenship.

For Mr. McQuiggan, the interest in AI stems from a love of 'demystifying' technology. He views the rapidly shifting tech landscape as a puzzle to solve, one that can ultimately create more space for human connection and creativity in the classroom by removing technical barriers.

Mr. McQ embodies the entrepreneurial spirit of Urban Academy. Whether he is leading a rock band practice or



helping a colleague integrate new technology into their classroom, he is a teacher who listens, iterates, and adapts. His motivation is to foster a community where students feel seen, heard, and, most importantly, inspired to learn.

> *"It's a rare place where I can be a performing arts teacher, lead the tech charge, and be encouraged to do both. That's the beauty of UA; it's not a siloed environment; it's a place that actually embraces the full breadth of who you are."*

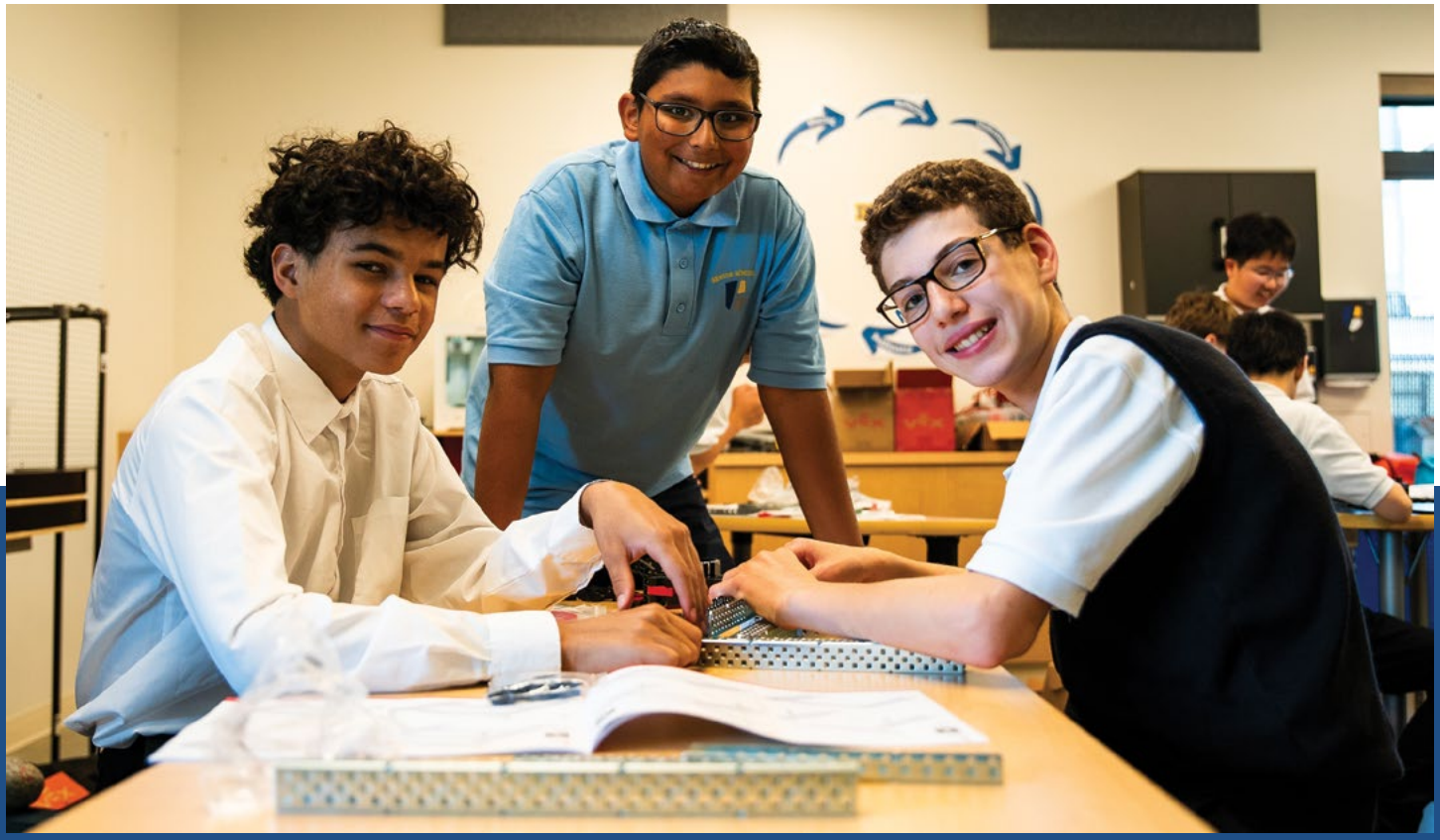
UA students and staff are grateful for his leadership, skills and passion, and the school is a better place for it!



Taking the Driver's Seat:
The Urban Academy ARC Program

ARC PROGRAM
Applied Real-World Connections

Sonja Kennedy



Something happens when students start walking up to the 4th and 5th floors for their classes—officially part of the Senior School! It isn't just moving from one classroom to the other for their subjects, or the copious number of stairs keeping their quads strong; it's a profound mindset shift. They go from everything being about their 'today' to starting to consider their 'tomorrow'.

Not tomorrow as in "Is it week one or week two?" or "What am I going to wear for Friday Spirit Wear Day?" rather, the further tomorrow questions like, "What am I going to do with my life?" and "What subjects most interest me and how can I make them evolve into a career?" This is why Grades 8 and 9 serve as a critical crossroads where students transition from the passengers of their education to beginning to sit in the driver's seat.

UA Students are thoughtful and intentional. Their feet are planted in today, as they prepare for tomorrow. They feel they have many opportunities before them, a mark of an enriched educational environment. Urban Academy provides them with various opportunities to explore their interests before making decisions about Senior School course selections and post-secondary pathways.

To bridge the gap between abstract learning and real-world execution, Urban Academy created and launched the Applied Real-World Connections Program, known as the ARC Program. For the duration of the school year, 5 groups of Grade 8 and 9 students meet for an afternoon a week to deep dive into their area of interest. As initial ARC sessions got underway, students revealed diverse interests linked by a deep underlying desire to help people, protect their environments, bring joy to others and serve their local communities. Over the last few months, a beautiful program, built on discovery, has been brought to life!









Impact ARC, led by Ms. Cameron, focuses on citizenship, social justice, law, political systems and ethics, representing a wide range of interests from this particular cohort. Their lineup for the year includes attending a real-life hearing in a court of law, volunteering with local non-profits, hearing from those involved in various levels of government, exploring animal rights, learning about how new immigrants navigate their arrival and learning from real-life journalists.

Kinetic ARC, guided by Dr. Agrawal, explores the interests of the students, including medicine, anatomy, nutrition, ecology, lab work, and veterinary studies. With a passion for service to others in a variety of fields, students will become first aid certified, take field trips to hospitals and labs, take on volunteer experiences in the field and hear from professionals ranging from paramedics, physicians, technologists, therapists and medical engineers.

Summit ARC, led by outdoor education leader Mr. Barker, focuses on wilderness survival, ecological stewardship, emergency management, and leadership. Students will hear from ER physicians, environmental stewards, paramedics, and spend time learning about and exploring the great outdoors from farms to mountains. They will also learn survival skills and earn first aid certification. The Summit ARC will allow students to engage and learn from the natural world around them.

Studio ARC, directed by Mr. Chan, bridges visual and performing arts, digital media, gaming design and production work. Students in the Studio ARC have a wide range of interests, from the stage to interior and fashion design, to graphic design. They will have the opportunity to hear and learn from professional actors, tour production stages, get their hands dirty creating a wide variety of arts and dive deep into projects in their areas of interest.

TechEng ARC, led by Mr. Douglas, immerses students in CAD modelling, 3D printing, software development, engineering and robotics. Students in the TechEng ARC have interests ranging from coding and web design to building design and robotics. They will tour factories, learn from gaming designers, build their own computers and robots and learn about the intricacies of designing and building environmentally sensitive and seismically safe buildings.

These ARC experiences will answer the questions “What is of greatest interest to me?” and “I know what I like, but what opportunities are available as a career?” Most importantly is the question that students will answer for themselves at the end of their ARC year: “I thought I was interested in this area of study; was I correct?”

Even in these first few months, there have been so many experiences and meaningful opportunities for discovery. Our parent community has also keenly supported the program by offering to share their experiences with UA Students. We are already looking forward to the final June ARC presentations, where we hear from each cohort—what they all learned about the world, what they discovered about themselves and how that learning has impacted their futures.

Service, Sports, and Spirit!

Sonja Kennedy



If you look at an Urban Academy athlete, sinking a 3-pointer on the basketball court, handing off a baton on the track or burying a ball in a soccer net, there is one element consistent from athlete to athlete that a spectator, and even our students, may never have noticed. It isn't the look of intensity in their eyes—anyone watching a Grade 5 volleyball player knows that that intensity is fleeting at best!

Across all sports and UA athletes, found usually on the bottom of each UA jersey, are four little letters. Four little letters that speak to 3 of UA's values: belonging, entrepreneurial spirit and changemaking all at the same time. Four little letters: L… A… G… A…

Each UA jersey, since the beginning of UA sports jerseys in 2013, has been donated by a local company called LAGA Sports. And yes, you guessed it, LAGA Sports is owned by a generous, long-time UA family, the Laga Family. Parents Vlas and Jaki enrolled their eldest son, Marek, in UA way back in 2012 when Marek was entering JK. That year their second son, Matthew, now in Grade 9, was born.

When asked where their deep commitment to community and service originates, Jaki points to their shared small-town roots. Though raised on different continents—Jaki in a small town in Saskatchewan and Vlas in what was Czechoslovakia—both grew up in close-knit communities. Bringing that same sense of community to their children, who were being raised in a big city, became a priority when looking for a school. It is what ultimately led them to join and get involved in Urban Academy.

For Jaki and Vlas, stepping up to volunteer isn't an extra duty; it's a natural extension of those core values and a meaningful way to help build the vibrant community they cherish. As Jaki put it, "If our family is part of it, we get involved. End of story... that's just the belief that is ingrained in us." The Laga family's involvement spans many years and touches nearly every corner of school life.

From the moment their son Marek joined the school, Jaki and Vlas have sought impactful ways to support UA's growth. Right from the start, they saw a need that their young and growing company, LAGA Sports, could support. UA needed jerseys! Since 2013, they have been making that happen, supplying high-quality, artistically designed jerseys that have outfitted every UA athlete and sport—tallying up to a staggering 800 jerseys to date!





Their contribution didn't end there. Jaki quickly got involved with the Gala Committee, and it wasn't long before the board took notice and asked her to consider putting her name forward for the Board of Directors. Stepping up to the challenge—because that is what the Lagas do— she served as a UA Director from 2017 to 2023.

Those were pivotal years as the school navigated significant changes, outgrowing current facilities and seeking new opportunities for the next season of UA. "That work was so exciting. Looking back, knowing the heart of the school and understanding what it was before and what it is now, is like a dream. To go through that period of time was very special."

These days, while still supplying some of the coolest jerseys in any league, Vlas has taken on a new role, that of Senior Boys' Soccer Assistant Coach. Because 'if our family is part of it—we are part of it', and younger son Matthew's sport is soccer. Word has it we haven't seen the last of older brother Marek either—now in university—with whispers of him assistant coaching a UA boys' basketball team in the near future. The Laga family provides a clear example that volunteerism, service, how to give of oneself to make this world a better place, truly is a family value—passed on from one generation to the next.

When asked about what service has done for their family, Jaki put it best. "Everything I've learned has been from giving of myself... It's when you give that you receive. There's so much to learn from people from so many different professional fields coming together out of passion and a desire to build a community." You only have to look through the family's social calendar to see UA families and alumni are some of their closest connections and best friends, demonstrating that service grows friendships, too.

As people, Jaki and Vlas reflect a characteristic humility: service is simply part of being an active, engaged family in a community you care about. For new families entering the community, she offers empowering encouragement to dive straight into school life: "Sometimes people can be trepidatious because they think they have to follow the leader —they are the leader." Rather than waiting for an invitation, Jaki urges parents to take initiative and step forward with confidence.

As Urban Academy continues to grow, it is the spirit of families like the Lagas and many others like theirs that keep our mission alive.

On behalf of the students, staff and families at Urban Academy: Thank you, Jaki and Vlas!





Ayyan Datu



Student Initiative Creates a Place for Everyone

Jessica Randall

Students who volunteered at the OneAbility Games last spring, also had a chance to try accessible sports.

It's not every day you have the chance to walk through a building that holds so many stages of life. From a student's first day in JK to graduation in Grade 12, Urban Academy gives students the opportunity not only to grow up here, but with the value of 'changemaking' encouraged, the opportunity to help shape the community around them.

For Grade 9 student Ayyan, that meant seeing a gap and filling it. Living with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, a condition that weakens the body's connective tissues, Ayyan saw an opportunity to make inclusivity and accessibility more visible at Urban Academy. Rather than waiting for someone else to act, he decided to start the Inclusivity Club himself.

With the support of the Associate Principal of Student Life, Mr. Twaites, the idea quickly became a plan.

"Everyone at our school has that opportunity to do whatever they want to do, whether it's playing on a sports team or attending camp or it's having a club opportunity… if they want to do it, we'll make it happen," said Mr. Twaites.

The club meets weekly, and it is an opportunity for members to turn ideas into action. Whether creating kindness and inclusion displays around the school, reading inclusive stories to younger students, volunteering at the OneAbility Games, or developing new initiatives like a buddy bench where students looking for someone to talk to can find a friendly face, the club is always looking for ways to make every student feel welcome.

One of the club's biggest highlights was volunteering at the OneAbility Games last spring, where members also had the chance to try accessible sports like wheelchair basketball. The experience gave students a new appreciation for accessible sports and reinforced the importance of creating spaces where everyone can participate.

In just two years, Ayyan's leadership has already left its mark on the school community. "Ayyan has been a huge advocate for inclusivity at Urban Academy," said Mr. Twaites. With four more years of high school ahead of him, there's no doubt the Inclusivity Club, and Ayyan's vision, will continue to grow.

Growing Minds, One Seed at a Time

Jessica Randall



Every school has classrooms. One of Urban Academy's most vibrant ones just happens to be outdoors.

Step into the Urban Academy Student Garden and you'll quickly discover it's much more than just a place where vegetables grow. It's a space where curiosity takes root, confidence blossoms, and learning happens with muddy hands and curious minds.

A walk through the garden in the spring tells the story. Pollinators drift between flowers, vegetables spill from raised beds, and nearly every corner holds something different. Behind each plant is a student who planted it, cared for it, and watched it grow.

Each December, Middle School students plant more than 75 varieties of flowers, fruits, vegetables, herbs, and native plants. Along the way, Junior and Middle School students learn about the world of mason bees and pollinators, explore composting with red wiggler worms, hunt for insects during nature scavenger hunts, create nature-inspired crafts, and watch seedlings sprout beneath new classroom grow lights before transplanting them into the garden in the spring. They care for their crops and eventually harvest them, from leafy greens to a fan favourite, peas. Many of which never actually make it back to the classroom because they were simply too tasty. Watching students make the connection between a tiny seed and the food on their plate is invaluable learning!

An extension of the classroom, science, math, environmental stewardship, and discovery come alive through hands-on experiences. A garden has a wonderful way of building confidence. Not every student is eager to dig in the soil or hold a worm on day one, but it's amazing to watch hesitant hands slowly become curious ones.

Students ask questions, make observations, test ideas, solve problems, and discover that not every seed sprouts, and that's okay. The garden is messy. It's unpredictable. Rain falls, plants fail, insects appear, and wildlife occasionally gets the first harvest. Yet these moments often become the greatest teachers, encouraging students to adapt. Through these experiences, students strengthen communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and personal responsibility in ways that simply can't be replicated indoors.

This year, Grade 8 and 9 students who are part of the UA Kinetic ARC (Applied Real-World Connections) Program will play a key role in the Garden. With a desire to pursue careers in science, Kinetic ARC students have career interests ranging from becoming health care professionals to veterinarians, scientists and environmentalists. As part of their program, the Kinetic ARC will dive into ecology studies by helping lead the garden initiatives, creating another opportunity for cross-grade connections.

One of the moments we are most proud of from last year was harvesting garlic from the garden and donating it to "Dan's Legacy" in New Westminster. Through its social enterprise, Dan's Diner, the organization provides job-skills training for vulnerable youth. Knowing that something they had planted could help support such an important local organization is a great lesson for students on the impact their hard work can have.



As we begin another growing season, we're excited to continue expanding the garden as an outdoor classroom and creating even more opportunities for students to explore, discover, and connect with nature. While we'll certainly grow more vegetables, flowers, and herbs, our greatest harvest will always be the confidence, compassion, and lifelong connection to nature we cultivate in our students.

Mathematics at UA, Grounded in Problem-Solving

Melissa Herman







The "Handshake Problem"

How many possible handshakes can take place in a room with 5 students who take turns shaking hands with each other? With 10 students? With 58 students? With n (any given number of) students.

If you're a parent, Math Class today very likely looks different from your own school experience. The world has changed: information is available at the click of a button; we all carry calculators in our pockets (despite what your math teacher may have told you in the 90's); most mathematical tasks can be quickly input into an AI generator and swiftly solved; mathematical problems unsolved to any human mind are being finalized and successfully tackled by AI. In this complex landscape, we now, more urgently than ever, want to support our students in developing their abilities to solve problems and to think.

Significant educational research (Liljedahl, 2020) in the last 15–20 years has demonstrated that in the typical mathematics classroom, historically and even recently, students have not been thinking. Classroom activity may take place, such as recopying notes or procedures to problems, mimicking similar solutions for similar tasks, or memorizing algorithms without making sense of them, but this does not lead to thinking. Without thinking, there is no learning. However, the best way to become a good problem-solver is to truly grapple with unfamiliar problems and to experience solving them (Pruner, 2023), which is why UA teachers continuously find ways for every individual student to experience both thinking and problem-solving for themselves.

As the Science and Math Instructional Coach at UA, I am pleased to share that we practice "Thinking Classrooms" in Math, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. This is where genuine collaboration takes place as students work together to tackle a problem, be it an unfamiliar task such as the "handshake problem" or a curricular skill like factoring a polynomial for the first time.

Collaboration is not always easy; however, it is a competency that students will undoubtedly take into all aspects of their lives through their studies from Junior to Senior School, post-secondary, and into the workforce. As students work together, they learn to converse with one another about their approach, and their teacher is nearby to guide them, provide hints, keep them on track, and help them consolidate and discuss their solutions with any additional needed input.

Students experience their mathematics learning in various interactive ways aside from group problem-solving on whiteboards. They engage in interactive Desmos, a web- and app-based mathematical software suite that lets users plot functions, create dynamic graphs, and explore math visually. They work through application assignments like planning a starter budget after graduation, predicting the ocean's tide with a sinusoidal function, optimizing the volume of a can of tomato sauce using differential calculus, or scaling up a drawing and modelling project, including finding a parabola out in the world to draw with a quadratic equation.

Parents, please note: We still work to develop fluency in our students over the years! We support students in learning math facts along the way. We work on algebra

skills, and factoring returns around every turn across Pre-Calculus from Grades 10 through 12!

The added layer we emphasize is that alongside knowing facts and skills, we aim to have students understand why procedures and methods work and to be able to explain their approach (or multiple approaches) to solve a given task.

Rote memorization alone without understanding how to apply knowledge will not serve our students in this century(!) In fact, it is problem-solving, being stuck, persevering, conceptual thinking, and deep understanding that best prepare students for university-level learning and for life.

Our classes are small in size, and students work with a variety of teachers with mathematics backgrounds through Middle and Senior School. Many are comfortable asking different teachers questions during class, study blocks, Advisory and even at lunch as they work to practice "Check Your Understanding" questions or practice assessments in preparation for formal assessments.



We believe in all our students. Strong relationships between students and teachers nurture student self-confidence as they move through the program. We believe all students are capable of learning mathematics to the highest levels with the appropriate tools and supports in place to help them achieve their goals. We are proud to note that a significant portion of our graduating class (~60%) are undertaking Calculus ahead of graduation this year in our concurrent Pre-Calculus 12 and Calculus 12 track, with several students undertaking AP Calculus AB.

Our methods have proven to serve our students well, as shown on external provincial assessments. Our 2025 Independent School Profile Report from the Ministry of Education indicates that UA Students demonstrate results exceeding those across both private schools in BC in aggregate and all public schools in aggregate. We see this trend in all assessments the Ministry conducts: Grade 4 and 7 FSA Numeracy assessments and Grade 10 Numeracy assessments.

For our most passionate mathematicians, contest opportunities are available throughout the year, with keen students challenging themselves through various CEMC (University of Waterloo), Math League, and AMC (American Association of Mathematics) contests. We see excellent scores in many of these contests, often noting distinguished scores for various participants.

Having taken a small glimpse into mathematics at Urban Academy through this article, we hope to spark some questions you might ask your child/student: What problems did you encounter today in math class? How did you solve them? What did you learn? Their answers might surprise you.

Real-World Math in the Junior School

Khatereh Dadar

Math education in the Junior School looks slightly different, but shares very similar philosophies: that students learn best when the content is relevant to their experience and they collaborate to solve problems.

Our youngest students start learning math in JK through interacting with everyday objects and the natural environment around them. A wide variety of manipulatives are used in all junior classes to make learning in math more hands-on and tangible, and to make abstract concepts visible. Problem solving — using what students see as toys and games — infuses fun into their learning and provides authentic opportunities to transfer math skills and apply them to "real-world" situations.

This could look like students using 'kitchen math' in Grade 1 where they learn about capacity and measurement, then apply that knowledge to measure ingredients as they make healthy snacks. After building these foundational mathematical skills, the students get to apply these skills in a more organic way to other areas of learning. An example is in Grade 3 when they apply an array of math skills in a zoo project, measuring the diameter of cages, linked with their Unit of Inquiry.

Regardless of age, by connecting learning to doing, students are able to understand the 'why' of learning mathematical concepts in a way that will allow them to build upon their skills year over year.

Smarter, Stronger, Kinder, Braver and Better Together

Sonja Kennedy





When you bring Junior Kindergarten and Grade 12 students together under one roof, you create a culture where mentorship defines the school experience and learning is positioned as 'cool.' As a result, planning those intentional cross-grade connection opportunities, as they are called at UA, is a focus of staff as they plan the year. Offering mentoring and buddy opportunities gives younger students the chance to get to know the 'big kids on campus' who they see as living, breathing celebrities, while those pseudo-celebrities flex their mentorship muscles as they work with younger students.

This approach is rooted in educational research, which demonstrates that multi-age interactions provide profound cognitive and social-emotional benefits for both older and younger children. When older students step into leadership roles, they reinforce their own understanding and build empathy, while younger learners develop an immediate sense of belonging and confidence by observing their older peers.

These stories abound in the classrooms and hallways of UA, which was the case for a recent French project. Grade 6 French students visited a Grade 1 classroom to read original storybooks they had written and illustrated in French. Ms. Pederson shared that "it's great seeing the Grade 6s take ownership of their work and share it with the Grade 1s. It was also really nice to witness so many smiles and laughter." It was evident that Grade 6 students took pride in their work, boosting their confidence and stretching their language skills, while the Grade 1 students were given a preview of what they will be capable of achieving in the upper grades. By positioning learning as something to aspire to, the intrinsic motivation we see in most of our senior students begins to take root in our younger students.



Being intentional about the timeline of student learning and the opportunities teachers have to collaborate with one another can sometimes result in student learning that spans various ages. This very thing happened when Grade 11 Chemistry and Grade 7 Science teachers Ms. Herman and Mr. Edmonson collaborated on a fun winter holiday activity. Students worked together to solve the mystery of which staff member stole cookies from the Kindergarten class (who would do such a thing??) They conducted various physical and chemical tests to examine different white powders found at the crime scene and deduced which thief was the one with baking powder on their pants. Mr. Edmonson shared that his "students loved hearing about the Sr. School from the Grade 11s, and going up to do work in the 'big science lab' was a fantastic opportunity for hands-on learning!"

Bookending oldest and youngest students, there is an intentional annual collaboration between UA's JK and Grade 12s. These buddy classes are matched up regularly throughout the year in various ways. Grade 12s have been the buddy leaders during kindness week, and every two weeks, grads will join JK during library time to get to know their buddy better and share stories, celebrate holidays, and create art pieces, puppets, and masks. Their buddy relationship culminates in the JK's walking the Graduates, complete with cap and gown, through the middle and junior school floors on their way to commencement for their 'Step Out' ceremony. Because of the year-long connection, this final event is a shared celebration of growth and community, marking a meaningful milestone for both the graduates and their young mentees.

Buddy relationships can especially enhance student learning when younger students take the lead. This was the case when Grade 1 students created and proudly showcased their Unit of Inquiry animal research projects. It was then the role of their Grade 5 buddies to offer feedback and mentor their younger partners through the creative design process. Ms. Leeson noted that the process "created valuable leadership opportunities for the older students, as well as creating confidence, connection, and a sense of pride for everyone involved."

Buddy relationships ripple out far beyond the project itself. It transforms the school hallways into a warm community filled with high fives, familiar hellos, and fangirl/fanboy whispers of 'that's my buddy'. Through these simple, consistent moments, our youngest students build an unshakeable sense of belonging and look ahead with excitement at their learning to come. And our seniors learn to lead with genuine purpose and compassion. Ultimately, it is these cross-grade bonds that transform our school from a collection of classrooms into a truly connected, supportive family.

















The Rise of the Lions

Mike Twaites

At Urban Academy, sports are no longer just a token extracurricular option that some students take part in. Sports are a core part of the school's program and identity. For many students, memories made in athletics are also the highlight of their school year!

Because of this excitement and momentum, over the past three years, a quiet revolution has taken place on our courts and fields: student-athlete participation has surged by a staggering 36%. From 157 athletes in 2023 to 214 last year–and numbers continuing to climb this fall–more students than ever are proudly putting on the UA Lions uniform.

This energy spans every age group. Middle School participation has jumped to an impressive 69% of all students participating in athletics, while Senior School athletics saw an incredible 48% growth spurt. Whether it's Track & Field dominating the spring with 61 participants, Volleyball packing the gym in the fall, or Basketball remaining our ultimate November to March anchor, our teams are brimming with enthusiasm.

The 2025/2026 school year pushed the boundaries even further. New teams were started as UA launched Senior Boys Soccer and also opened up soccer rosters to eager Grade 4 athletes. Volleyball expanded its footprint with brand-new Senior Boys' and Junior Girls' squads. Unsurprisingly, these new teams hit the ground running and delivered major highlights:

- **Girls Soccer:** The Grade 7 Girls snagged second place at the Grizzly Cup, while the Grade 6/7 squad dominated league play before capturing silver in the Tier 1 ISEA Championship.
- **Boys Basketball:** The Grade 7 Boys brought home the gold, winning the Tier 3 ISEA Championship.
- **Girls Basketball:** The Senior Girls battled their way to a second-place finish at the competitive Fraser North Zone tournament.









Rather than resting on these wins, the 2026/2027 season is raising the bar again. With the growth in athlete numbers, our Grade 8–12 Girls Volleyball will now have teams in all three divisions this year (Grade 8 Bantam, 9/10 JR and 11/12 SR). Senior Basketball is split into dedicated Junior and Senior Girls teams, and Senior Girls Soccer will make its official school debut this spring.

The statistics tell a compelling story, but the real victory lies in what sports do for students. Research consistently shows that school athletics sharpen executive function, boost classroom focus and build the mental resilience needed to navigate life. While being part of the athletics program does wonders for the student competitors, parents, siblings, friends, coaches and staff are fanning the flames and also reaping the rewards. The gym gets packed with cheering onlookers, while fields are lined with hopeful UA fans following games from region to region. Regardless of the outcome, community is made and strengthened with each missed goal, organized cheer or sunk penalty shot. UA Lions are not just on the pitch and on the court; they are everyone who shows up to support our athletes.

UA's blend of athletics that pairs competitive drive with commitment and a welcoming atmosphere is building stronger teams and athletes, and an even stronger community.

Go Lions!



The Golden Lion

Jessica Randall





There's a certain culture to Urban Academy's 3rd floor. Beyond the sense of family and community is an unmistakable energy. On many teachers' desks, alongside the usual papers and supplies, sit small golden lion trophies that hint at part of what makes this floor so unique.

"The idea came from needing to pick from 40 children who would go to a chess tournament," explains Middle and Senior School Principal Clare Manifold. "The kids loved it so much that I thought, 'What else can we do?'"

From paper airplane contests and Rubik's Cube races to hula hoop competitions, spelling bees and geography challenges, every Golden Lion event is different. More importantly, each one gives students a chance to shine in ways that traditional academics, athletics or the arts might not. By winning competitions, students earn trophies for their classes while discovering new interests and hidden talents, all leading up to the class with the most wins claiming the final Golden Lion trophy and the bragging rights that come along with it.

"It's certainly brought out a competitive spirit among teachers and students," says Manifold. She has watched students practice skills after school, study maps before geography competitions, and spend hours designing paper airplanes, all with the goal of helping their class come out on top.

For Manifold, however, the real purpose goes beyond the trophies. The Golden Lion is about "celebrating achievements that don't always get celebrated" and giving students the chance to shine in unexpected ways. Most of all, she hopes it proves to students that "school can be more than just a classroom."

The success of the Golden Lion has surprised many, with students embracing the competition, cheering on

their classmates, putting in the work, and taking on challenges they might never have tried otherwise. For many competitors, the biggest victory isn't the trophy itself, but what they discovered about themselves throughout the year.

Byron, who won the jump rope competition, credits his daily figure skating training for helping him stay calm under pressure. He says the experience taught him just how resilient he could be and how important it is to stay focused on his own performance.



But not every winner arrived overprepared. Spelling Bee champion Iris admitted she went into the contest with little preparation and only realized how strong she was at spelling when she found herself in the finals.

Rubik's Cube champion, Theo, says the biggest lesson he learned was not to panic under pressure. He believes one of the Golden Lion's greatest strengths is its variety. There's an opportunity for almost every student to discover something they excel at.

These stories are exactly what Manifold hoped to create when she launched the program. More than anything, it has become another way Urban Academy builds a sense of belonging, where students feel seen, celebrated, and cheered on, not just for their achievements, but also for the quirky talents and strengths that make them unique. At UA, it isn't just about winning. It's about giving every student a place to shine.



> *The Golden Lion is about "celebrating achievements that don't always get celebrated"*







Con Brio Music Festival: The Peak of Harmony

In April 2026, students in Urban Academy's Grades 7–12 music program had the option of joining an enriching musical adventure to the prestigious Con Brio Music Festival in Whistler, BC.

Thirty students took part in the three-day music festival that transformed Whistler Village into a massive, walkable music camp, bringing together student musicians from across the province, country and international communities.

The journey was designed to combine musical excellence with personal growth. Throughout the weekend, UA students had the unique opportunity to:

- Perform in professional settings and receive adjudicated feedback from world-class musicians.
- Participate in intensive, hands-on 50-minute workshops and ensemble sessions led by outstanding faculty.
- Support, listen to, and connect with other school ensembles.
- Engage in a special Indigenous cultural experience, offering students meaningful insight into the land, stories, and traditions of local First Peoples.

Feedback from the trip was incredibly positive. Students and staff very much appreciated the experience, and it gave those who are passionate about music the opportunity to refine their skills and see what could be next in their musical careers.





Grade 8 & 9 Québec
Language & Culture Trip

In February 2026, 37 of Urban Academy's Grade 8 and 9 students embarked on a remarkable five-day language and cultural immersion trip. Travelling to Québec City and Montréal, the excursion immersed students in francophone culture, offered real-world language practice, and fostered an appreciation of Canada's winter traditions and heritage.

Throughout the week, students participated in exciting activities and explored historical landmarks:

- Bonhomme Carnaval & Celebrations: Students experienced the famous Québec City Winter Carnival (Carnaval), participated in seasonal festivities and met the iconic Bonhomme.
- Winter Activities: Students enjoyed outdoor winter recreation, including tubing and sledding down the Dufferin Terrasse.
- Historic Landmarks: The group walked the historic streets of Old Québec and toured majestic structures like the historic Château Frontenac.
- Indigenous Connection: To enrich their understanding of local history, the group visited the Huron Traditional Site and learned about the heritage, contemporary life, and ancestral traditions of the Wendat Nation.

Beyond the language and history lessons, this travel experience marked an important developmental milestone for students as they grew in their independence. These immersive journeys invariably become student highlights, not only of their year, but of their Senior School experience. They offer opportunities to bring curriculum to life while building lifelong friendships and memories.





‘Duke,’ More Than a Medal

Jessica Randall

The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award Program (Duke of Ed) took off with a bang last September! A total of 31 Grade 9 to12 students spent the year being challenged well beyond the classroom. As a globally recognized program, employers as well as post-secondary schools around the world look favourably upon students who have completed it. Students work toward Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards by committing to regular physical activity, volunteering in their communities, developing a new skill and completing an adventurous journey. They spend months building habits before putting them into practice on a self-directed overnight expedition. This year, over 40 students have once again committed to stretching themselves as part of what is affectionately called simply, ‘Duke.’

For Grade 12 student Mia Gracia, that journey included hiking in soaking wet shoes after an overnight rainstorm drenched nearly all of their camping gear.

“I had to put plastic bags over my socks so I could put on my really wet shoes,” she laughed.

The soggy hike wasn’t exactly enjoyable, but it became one of the moments she remembers most.

While the Duke of Ed Award is a respected addition to university and scholarship applications, Middle & Senior





School Principal Clare Manifold believes that is only part of its value.

“The award is great to have,” she says, “but what students really gain are the habits that earn it.”

Many Urban Academy students are already active in athletics, have hobbies and passions and contribute to community service through volunteerism. Duke of Ed encourages them to commit to those pursuits over time while developing perseverance, time management and the discipline to follow through on their commitments.

Katie Cameron is a UA Duke of Ed teacher who supports students with the program's volunteer and skill-development components. At the bronze level alone, students must complete 13 weeks of skill development, athletic pursuits, and volunteerism, one hour per week. Their requirement doubles to 26 hours for silver. She adds, “It's fantastic to see kids commit to things, learning a new skill, or taking on a volunteer role. It also gives them an opportunity to connect with leaders who aren't their teachers or parents to find volunteer roles of interest to them. Making those connections can be really meaningful long term as well!”

> *“It's fantastic to see kids commit to things, learning a new skill, or taking on a volunteer role."*
>
> | *Katie Cameron*



For Mia, one of the most rewarding parts of the program was becoming a mentor to younger students through Urban Academy’s Out of School Care program. Over the course of the year, she learned how to improve her communication skills, build trust, and form meaningful connections with younger students.

“Now, when I walk through the halls, every time I pass one of the younger classes, they shout my name.”

By the time students receive their Bronze, Silver or Gold Award, they have earned more than a medal. They have built the confidence, resilience and sense of responsibility that will continue to serve them long after graduation.



Urban Academy Class of 2026

The stage, the diploma, the cap and gown mark a moment in time. Whether their UA story began with the giant backpacks of Junior Kindergarten or the nerves of arriving in Grade 10, each student started with the same finish line in mind: walking across this stage. But looking back now, the moments that actually defined their time at UA weren't just the milestones of their graduation year or the ceremony. The real magic was in the journey itself. It was the late-night study sessions, the uncontrollable laughs in the hallway, the wins on the court, the hours of rehearsals, and the quiet resilience they discovered when things got tough. That was the journey, and that is what helped shape who they are today.

We often hear the advice to "find your passion," yet rarely are we told how. Mr. Slinger has come to believe that passion isn't something you find. It is something you build. It is born when you commit yourself to a cause larger than yourself. Mr. Slinger challenges the grads of UA to use these questions to guide them: "Whose life will be better because you chose to show up?" and "What problem are you willing to fall in love with solving?"

By answering these questions, they can start to identify the issues that genuinely matter to them, whether it's fighting climate change, confronting social injustice, solving a flaw in technology, or simply bringing kindness into their everyday environment. They can then begin to see where they want to make a difference. And whatever path they choose, that sense of purpose can give them the motivation to keep going, even when the odds may seem stacked against them.





Spirit of UA Scholarship

Hansah Deol

A graduate who fully embodies the characteristics and values defined in our Profile of a Graduate. Demonstrating strong character and a true commitment to their education, they are a caring and contributing member of the UA community. Above all else, we are proud to recognize this citizen and leader as a role model whom every student would be proud to aspire to.

Cheryle Beaumont Achievement Scholarship

Hart Zawadiuk

Awarded to a graduating student who demonstrates a strong sense of community, leadership, and academic strength. Recognized as a well-rounded citizen and a force for positive change in our world, this recipient has shown an unwavering commitment to their education that positions them for post-secondary success.

Post-Secondary Acceptance (Last 5 Years)

British Columbia

BCIT, CapU, Douglas, Emily Carr, KPU, Langara, SFU & Beedie School of Business, TRU, UBC & Sauder School of Business, UBCO, UFV, UNBC, UVic, VIU

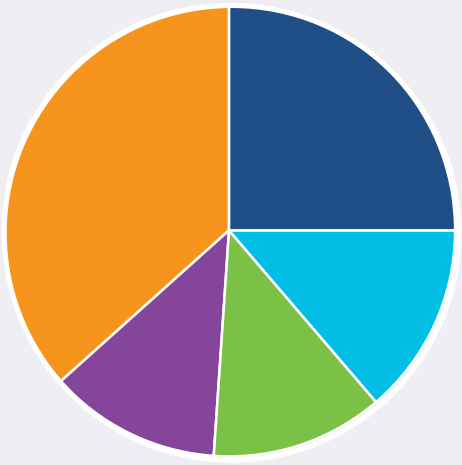
Canada

AUArts, UofA, UofC & Haskayne School of Business, NSCAD, OCAD, McMaster, Queen's, UofT, Waterloo, Western, uOttawa, York, Carleton, McGill, USask

International

UC Davis, UC Irvine, UCLA, UC Santa Barbara, Babson College, Northeastern University, University of Richmond, University of Washington

Post-Secondary Area of Study (Last 5 Years)



- 12.2% Business & Economics
- 12.2% Fine & Performing Arts
- 14.3% Technology & Engineering
- 24.5% Sciences
- 36.7% General Arts (Education, Law, Psychology, etc.)



Recognition of Legacy Students

Students who attended Urban Academy for 10+ years

Niviah McKenzie (JK)
Jessica Aitken (JK)
Heather Ward (K)
Walden Ly-Sit (K)
Kai Lewin (K)
Matthew Terepocki Grant (Gr 1)
Beatrix Langran (Gr 2)

Student Awards & Recognition

Urban Academy proudly celebrates the exceptional character, academic drive, and community spirit of our students. From Middle School through graduation, our annual awards recognize diverse talents across academics, arts, athletics, and leadership.

We are thrilled to introduce two new honours for 2026/27: the UA Limitless Scholar Award (Middle and Senior), celebrating outstanding intellectual curiosity; and the UA Lions' Pride Teammate of the Year Award (Middle and Senior), recognizing athletes who champion unity and team morale.

Outstanding Achievement in Leadership Awards

Dedicated to lifting others up, these exceptional students champion diversity and lead our community with unwavering respect. Through their daily actions, they inspire their peers to embody the very best of Urban Academy's core values.

Middle School | ***Loïc Mills*** | "A quality every leader should have is confidence, because a leader without confidence cannot lead."

Senior School | ***Portia Becker*** | "I've learned that it's about showing up, and it's more about collaborating, and also letting others take the lead sometimes."



Lion's Pride Athletic Awards

Fierce competitors and natural leaders, these standout athletes consistently elevate the game and drive team success. Through their exceptional talent and dedication, they represent the absolute highest standard of Urban Academy athletics.

Middle School | ***Jayden Peng*** | "It's taught me to embrace myself and to work as a team. To communicate because you can't do things alone all the time. Respect people and improve with feedback."

Middle School | ***Amrita Parmar*** | "Being an athlete has taught me that I can do so much, and I can test my abilities and see how far I can go."

Senior School | ***Adrian Akbari*** | "Being an athlete has taught me to be more of a leader and how to support others."

Senior School | ***Prisha Kumar*** | "A proud moment for me was getting MVP during a game in the Fraser North Tournament."







Fine & Performing Arts Awards

Driven by passion and bold creativity, these dedicated ambassadors truly elevate our arts community. By embracing creative risks and showcasing exceptional skill, they actively inspire and uplift the performances of their fellow students.

Middle School | ***Katie Weedon*** | "It's let me really show how creative I am, and flourish in a place that I know I will be supported and shine."

Senior School | ***Portia Becker*** | "I was really proud of taking on the lead role in The Drowsy Chaperone, while helping everyone else figure out their characters and choreograph the whole thing."



Shaping the Next 25 Years of UA, Together

Sonja Kennedy

As Urban Academy turns the page on its 25th anniversary, we are already looking to the future. This October, UA kicked off an exciting school-wide community consultation process. Our focus will be deliberate and intentional as we invest in, grow, and enhance both our programs and our facilities. Ultimately, we want to align our future path with what our community envisions it to be.



What is prompting this work right now? The short answer is UA's student population growth. We are quickly reaching capacity with a full school build-out of 520 students. The Senior School has grown 16% over last year and has never been so full. With this growth comes real pressure on our shared specialist spaces for all students. Our busiest spaces are the gym, theatre, makerspace, and science labs. UA can be creative in our solutions and figure out together what we wish to prioritize as additional spaces may become available. For instance, is a dedicated cafeteria more important to the UA program than adding a high-tech design lab? Is an additional playground or fitness facility a priority over parent parking? We have opportunities for some things, but not for everything!

We are a few months into this journey and have already learned a great deal from our staff and students. Right from the start, our goal was simple: set aside immediate space constraints, examine emerging educational trends, determine our unique context, and dream big about what is truly possible for our students.

We began this process where our educational vision comes to life: with our staff. As passionate, dedicated educators and leaders, our staff care deeply about the future of UA's programs and facilities. In our "Staff Dream and Design" workshops, they set aside current floor plans to reimagine the ultimate learning environments. Working in focus groups, they tackled key questions such as, "What opportunities and challenges will shape our future?" and "What investments are essential for academic excellence and well-being?" Their vision gave us incredible insight into key trends and how our spaces can best support educating UA students for tomorrow.

Next, we turned to our students in our "Limitless Explorer" sessions. Students see our campus and program in ways adults never could, and their feedback was a highlight of the process. They shared where they feel most known, stretched, and future-ready. These conversations offered genuine insight into the spaces and programs that foster connection and confidence, along with plenty of imaginative ideas for what could come next.

Building on this momentum, we have and will continue to invite our parents to join the conversation. Through round-table and interview-style sessions, parents will engage in honest, thoughtful discussions about their hopes and vision for their children. Instead of focusing on a traditional wish list, the goal is for parents to share ideas on what they would like to see for their children and how education shapes students as whole individuals.

Every conversation reinforces our commitment to plan well for the future. By combining insights from staff, students and parents, we are clarifying our direction for programs, facilities and the next Strategic Plan.

Thank you to everyone who has already, and will continue to participate in these conversations. Your energy, openness, and ideas make Urban Academy and the student experience stronger. We look forward to shaping the next 25 years of UA, together.



A Spring Double Header of Major Events

Sonja Kennedy











The extraordinary dedication of the parent leaders and volunteers shone brightly as UA hosted two of the largest community event fundraisers in the same year in the Spring of 2026! A strong desire for greater connection transformed the celebrations into a powerhouse double-feature of UA Carnival and UA Gala, offering opportunities for families and parents to come together and have some fun!

The second annual UA Carnival brought over 500 parents, students, staff, and alumni together for an unforgettable day. Families enjoyed games, food, live music from student and staff bands, and a highly popular dunk tank. Alongside the fun, a Silent Auction featured unique student artwork, and exclusive school takeovers. Thanks to the community's support, the Carnival raised an impressive $15,000 to further support the Garden Project and purchase new robotics equipment, both important elements to UA student's opportunities for hands-on and experiential learning.





Then in May, the community gathered to honour an historic milestone: **Urban Academy's 25th Anniversary Gala**. The elegant Gala hosted nearly 200 parents, staff, alumni, and friends for dinner, dancing, and live entertainment. Attendees were treated to a walk down memory lane and heard from three of the original founders about their initial vision of a school where every student is truly known, challenged, and supported. The talented Teacher Band and live auction were also great successes!

The Gala committee's hard work paired with outstanding parent generosity raised approximately $50,000. These essential funds are being used to bring parents and staff together to dream collaboratively and set a bold course for the next 25 years to help map out future facility enhancements and clarify exactly where the school wants to make long-term investments as we reach maturity.

These milestone events prove that the tireless energy of parent volunteers truly remains the heartbeat of our community! Ultimately, events of this magnitude only happen because of the exceptional parent leadership, unwavering support, and volunteerism that define what being a UA parent is all about. Looking ahead, the school will transition to an alternating schedule, moving to an every-other-year model between the Carnival and the Gala. Mark your calendars for the UA Carnival, which is scheduled for May 15, 2027!









The Urban Academy
Pathway to Future-Readiness



When adults think back on their education, it is not as a collection of isolated years, but more of a highlight reel of experiences, teachers, programs, challenges, projects and opportunities to learn from that differ from age to age and subject to subject.

For some, education and what is taught may be dependent on school to school, teacher to teacher, community to community or maybe even the government and leadership of the day. Given these influences, the student experience can be anything from planned and deliberate to ad hoc and sporadic.

Our belief is that a well-planned, deliberate arc where students are intentionally taught and offered experiences that build on one another, year after year, enriches a learning. It also improves a child's ability to build upon a strong foundation. As a JK to Grade 12 school, knowing what our 4-year-old youngest students are working towards in 13 years is an incredible benefit to fast-track their development.







Urban ACADEMY

PATHWAY TO FUTURE-READINESS

From day one to graduation, each stage builds the capable, courageous and compassionate changemakers of tomorrow.



Junior School

Grades JK–3

The Urban Academy promise takes root through a deliberate balance of academic rigour and joyful exploration. Our youngest learners are truly known through a specialized focus on identity and wellness, creating a safe foundation for intellectual risk-taking. Through concept-based, transdisciplinary Units of Inquiry, social and emotional learning, and outdoor adventures, we transform the world into a classroom, building the character and capability required for students to be grounded, confident and future-ready.

- **Units of Inquiry**
  Moving beyond rote learning to transdisciplinary, hands-on projects that foster a deep desire to understand how the world around them works.
- **Outdoor Learning**
  Utilizing our garden and local environment to cultivate living inquiries, resilience, curiosity and risk-taking.
- **Specialist-Led Wellness**
  Unique to UA, students participate in stand-alone Health and Wellness lessons taught by specialist teachers to build compassion and self-awareness.
- **Expert Exposure**
  Students work weekly with specialists in French, Performing Arts, PHE and Library, providing early exposure to a wide range of talents and interests.
- **Culturally Responsive Teaching**
  Integrating parent guest speakers and experts in the field to connect classroom concepts to diverse, real-world perspectives.
- **Digital Citizenship & Independence**
  Dedicated sessions with our EdTech Coordinator and a focus on homeroom independence ensure students develop the character to navigate the modern world responsibly.



Middle School

Grades 4–7

This is a transformative stage where experimentation is celebrated and 'failure' is reframed as a catalyst for growth. We intentionally stretch students beyond their comfort zones, integrating a rigorous curriculum with expansive opportunities for exploration. By fostering a growth mindset and inner resolve, we challenge students to think critically, lead with integrity and see themselves as capable global citizens.

- **Exploration**
  Students discover new passions through grade-specific courses in Music & Drama, ADST & Robotics and Visual & Media Arts. Our music program allows Grade 6 students to explore both Strings and Band before specializing in their chosen instrument for Grade 7 Orchestra.
- **Social and Emotional Learning**
  A dedicated program that focuses on self-advocacy, leadership with integrity, and navigating a broadening social reach with compassion.
- **Academic Enrichment**
  Platoon teaching and enriched classes designed to require critical thinking, requiring students to adapt to a more demanding academic pace.
- **Outdoor Education**
  Annual camp trips for Grades 4–7 that foster independence, teamwork, and the grit required to thrive in outdoor environments.
- **Scientific Experimentation**
  Hands-on science labs and field studies where students are encouraged to take risks and learn through the iterative process of trial and error.
- **Student Life**
  A robust Golden Lion program and a surge in athletic teams and academic competitions (like Math and Science challenges) build teamwork and a healthy drive for excellence.



Senior School

Grades 8–12

The Urban Academy journey culminates in a culture of high performance and real-world application. Senior students are stretched through AP courses and elite competitions while being deeply known by educators and mentors who champion their individual aspirations. Through flagship initiatives like the ARC Program, we develop courageous changemakers equipped with the moral compass and intellectual distinction to lead in an ever-evolving global landscape.

- **Academic Excellence & AP**
  A culture of rigour supported by Advanced Placement courses and enriched Math and Science competitions that challenge students to perform at a university level.
- **The UA ARC Program (Gr. 8/9)**
  Our flagship 'Applied Real World Connections' initiative allows students to deep-dive into career interests, moving from theoretical knowledge to authentic, mentored projects.
- **Leadership & Stewardship**
  Students engage in local and global changemaking through field studies, global travel opportunities and partnerships that foster responsible stewardship of our world.
- **The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award**
  A prestigious framework for deep engagement, encouraging students to master new skills, provide community service, and complete challenging adventurous journeys.
- **Specialized Mentorship & Advisory**
  Multi-grade Advisory groups and dedicated counselling ensure students lead with a strong moral compass while expanding their social connections.
- **Future-Focused Post-Secondary Transition**
  Comprehensive support, including university counselling, career fairs and application support to ensure every graduate is equipped for what's next.

Board Chair's Report



Chair, Urban Academy Board of Directors
Kate Begent-Connors

As we navigated this past year filled with rapidly evolving technology, global uncertainty and change, our vision of Educating for Tomorrow held steady as our North Star. As a Board, our fiduciary responsibility holds true to Urban Academy and ensures it will continue to succeed long into tomorrow.

I'm proud of the Board's unified courage and decisiveness in delivering on our strategic goals, including the financial changes needed to develop and deliver on a framework to strengthen our governance, financial and administrative health, to ensure continuous school improvement. While strategies such as keeping tuition below operating costs and subsidizing operations through parent equity funds helped fuel the start-up years of yesterday, our current financial model positions UA to deliver excellence, innovation, and continuous improvement into the future.

This year, the Board focused on two priority areas: advancement and performance measurement. We are pleased to see the continued success of our advancement efforts, which once again reached new heights, thanks to the generosity of our community. These contributions create meaningful experiences and lifelong memories for all our students, as you can see from the overflowing pages of Roar. We also strengthened our performance measurement by developing indicators of effectiveness that support the Board in informed, data-driven decisions.

This year, I honour the contributions of Hafeez Merani, who completed over three years of board service, including roles as Vice Chair and Chair of the Board Development Committee. I'm thankful for his support, leadership and the important role he played in strengthening governance through a period of significant progress. I'm delighted to welcome several new Board members: Maeghan Dewar, Narinder Gaday, Saskia Muller, Narinder Parmar, Lana Vijay and Andrea Wharram. These parents bring diverse skillsets and an impressive wealth of experience, and I appreciate their willingness to serve UA in this way.

On behalf of the Board, thank you to our students, families, faculty, staff, volunteers, and supporters for inspiring us all to be smarter, stronger, kinder and braver.



Head of School's Report



Head of School
Mike Slinger

As we look back on the 2025/2026 school year at Urban Academy, it's been an incredible period of growth and vibrant community life. Watching our students grow, hearing about their accomplishments, seeing them perform and learning about challenges and triumphs fills me with immense pride. Reflecting on how our students have challenged themselves, embraced new opportunities, and shown true excellence across academics, athletics, technology, the arts, and outdoor education is how I know that the UA program is ensuring that every student is stretched.

Our commitment to academic rigour continues to thrive in the Senior School through the expansion of our Advanced Placement (AP) Program. Beyond AP, we know that our students are motivated and committed to their learning and their future. As a result, our graduating class earned impressive post-secondary acceptances to top-tier universities.

Feedback from alumni on their ongoing success reminds us repeatedly of how exceptionally prepared Urban Academy graduates are as they transition into post-secondary life and career paths: equipped with confidence, critical thinking, and adaptability.

Learning at Urban Academy extended beyond classroom walls this year through numerous experiential opportunities.

- Our Grade 8 and 9 students embarked on an enriching cultural immersion trip to Québec, sharpening their language skills and cultural understanding.



- In the music department, 30 students in Grades 7 through 12 travelled to Whistler for the Con Brio Music Festival, taking part in masterclasses and performing in professional venues.



Continued on next page

- We launched the Duke of Edinburgh's Award program, where Senior School students dedicated months to volunteering, skill development, and physical training, culminating in a memorable off-grid outdoor expedition in Golden Ears Provincial Park.



- On stage, our performing arts department delivered fantastic productions. Our Junior and Middle School students brought energy and charm to Pirates Past Noon Jr., Grade 8 and 9 students put on a spirited performance of Disney's The Lion King Jr., and our Senior Theatre students executed a remarkably sophisticated staging of The Drowsy Chaperone Jr.



- Within the Middle School, student life was further energized by the launch of the Golden Lion initiative, a spirited tradition that fostered class collaboration, friendly competition, and school pride.



- Our athletics program saw considerable growth across all grade levels, achieving standout finishes in league play, playoff runs, and provincial competition.



- Our Junior and Middle School Garden Program provided students with essential hands-on learning, encouraging environmental stewardship, patience, and practical scientific discovery as they tended to seedlings and garden beds.



Behind every accomplishment this year is the shared vision and dedication of our entire community. Working closely with our Board of Directors, we made strides during this, UA's 25th anniversary year, to position the school for a bright, sustainable future. Central to this success is our extraordinarily strong staff culture, reflected in having all of our staff returning this year. This continuity gives our students stable, compassionate, and expert mentorship every day. I extend my deepest gratitude to our talented staff and dedicated Board for their tireless efforts and commitment to Urban Academy. Together, we look forward to continuing this trajectory of growth and excellence in the years ahead.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer, Urban Academy Board of Directors
Matthew Hudson

The 2025/2026 school year marked an important step in Urban Academy's financial evolution. As Urban Academy enters a more mature phase following a period of significant growth and campus development, our financial model is evolving to support long-term sustainability and continued investment in Educating for Tomorrow.

A key focus of this year was advancing toward an operating model in which the recurring costs of delivering the school's educational program are supported by the operating revenues. This builds on the financial model that supported Urban Academy through a period of significant growth, while recognizing that our next phase of growth will be more measured and requires a financial model designed for long-term sustainability.

During the year, the school continued to take meaningful steps to improve its financial health. Cash resources increased by approximately $800,000, while the school reduced its financial obligations through approximately $450,000 of mortgage principal repayments and a net reduction of approximately $1.0 million in outstanding Parent Equity obligations. We also established the UA Community Fund, with approximately $630,000 contributed by year-end. Together, these



actions reflect continued progress in strengthening liquidity, building reserves and responsibly managing the school's financial obligations.

The transition from the Parent Equity Program to the UA Community Fund is an important part of this next phase. The Parent Equity Program played a critical role in supporting UA's growth and the development of the campus we enjoy today. The UA Community Fund builds on that legacy with a structure designed to support the school's future needs.

We are also reinforcing the distinction between funding core operations and the role of Advancement. While recurring revenues support core operations, Advancement can increasingly focus on initiatives that enhance the student experience. The enhanced Imagination Deck is a great example of how the generosity of our community can create meaningful opportunities for students to learn, play and grow.

We recognize that these changes represented a meaningful adjustment for our families, and we are grateful for the community's engagement and continued support. Looking ahead, the Board and school leadership remain focused on thoughtful financial stewardship, building appropriate reserves and open communication with our community as we position UA for the years ahead. ■





Board Development Committee Report

Chair, Board Development Committee
Iain Evans

I am pleased to provide this summary of the work completed by the Board Development Committee over the 2025/2026 school year. It has been a challenging, yet productive year. It has tested our resilience as a Board and focused the BDC on expanding and strengthening our board and supporting its ongoing effectiveness and growth.

Key Accomplishments:

1 Board Education:

We successfully coordinated continuing education for the Board. We focused on Financial Governance, offering a refresher on governance roles, responsibilities, and best practices—particularly valuable for both new and continuing members.

2 Board Recruitment and Onboarding:

We were pleased to welcome Lana Vijay to the Board this year. Her close connection to the parent community and proactive leadership support our ambitions of maintaining a well-rounded and capable board. A structured onboarding process was implemented to ensure she is well-prepared to contribute meaningfully from the outset.

We led Board recruitment through the school year, and were able to attract, screen, interview and undertake reference checks on a new cohort of Board candidates. We were able to approve 5 new candidates at our Final Board meeting.

3 KSA and Competency Assessment:

A full Knowledge, Skills, and Attributes (KSA) and Board Survey was conducted. This work provided valuable insights into the current strengths of the Board, while also identifying areas for continued development and future recruitment priorities. The findings will guide our planning for the upcoming year.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Kimberly Grant and Hafeez Merani for their dedication and thoughtful contributions throughout the year. Their insights and collaborative spirit have been instrumental in achieving our goals and advancing the work of this committee.

Thank you to the full Board for your ongoing support of the committee's work. I look forward to building on this progress in the year ahead.

Governance & Risk Committee Report

Chair, Governance and Risk Committee
Kimberly Grant

The Governance & Risk Committee is a sub-committee of the Board of Directors of Urban Academy. It was established years ago to support the school's commitment to strong, effective governance and proactive risk management. The primary role of the committee is to ensure that the Board operates within a sound governance framework, fulfills its fiduciary responsibilities, and is equipped to anticipate and respond to risks that may impact the school's operations, reputation and/or strategic objectives.

On the governance side, the committee is responsible for:

- regularly reviewing and recommending updates to governance documents and various Board and school policies;
- keeping the Board of Directors apprised of Societies Act and other legislative changes that affect the school; and
- reviewing and advising on the Urban Academy Society bylaws.

On the risk side, the committee is responsible for:

- identifying and reviewing key organizational risks - financial, operational, reputational and strategic; and
- working with the school leadership to monitor mitigation strategies and ensure appropriate risk oversight structures are in place.

Over the 2025/2026 school year, the Governance & Risk Committee reviewed, revised and created over 15 existing and new policies. It also supported good Board governance through the triennial review of the Urban Academy Board Position descriptions and the annual review of the Urban Academy Risk Appetite Statement and Risk Register.

The Board of Directors is committed to the ongoing work taken on by this sub-committee and values the work it continues to do in bringing forward suggestions and improvements to our governance framework in a constantly evolving environment.

Facilities Report

Director of IT & Infrastructure
| ***Dylan Hayden***

At Urban Academy, we believe that the physical environment plays a crucial role in shaping the educational experience. Over the past year, our campus has undergone a series of thoughtful transformations designed to enhance the daily lives of our students and staff. From early childhood play spaces to sophisticated senior student hubs, these upgrades reflect our commitment to providing a dynamic, safe, and inspiring community for all.

For our youngest learners, we are thrilled to have introduced a new 40-foot sandbox alongside a variety of specialized play items at Rousseau House. This addition is more than just a place to play; it is a vital environment for developing tactile awareness and fine motor skills. By providing a dedicated space for sensory exploration, junior students have a strong start to their educational journey.

As our senior student population continues to grow, we have prioritized the creation of spaces that support the unique needs of our older students. The 4th and 5th floors are now equipped with a significant amount of new Senior School furniture. These common areas have been reimagined as social and study hubs, offering a professional yet comfortable environment where students can collaborate on projects, socialize between classes, or find a quiet corner for focused study.

The "Imagination Deck" on the 2nd floor has also seen a major upgrade with the installation of a new playground over the summer. Featuring play structures specifically designed for gross motor skill development, this area is accessible directly from a number of the classrooms. It provides a transition from indoor learning to outdoor physical activity, allowing students to recharge and develop their physical coordination in a safe environment.



Infrastructure and safety remain paramount in our campus planning. We have also increased the height of deck railings on two of our second-floor decks to provide enhanced safety. Additionally, a new, sturdier storage shed was installed on the 4th-floor deck to house our expanding collection of athletic equipment, ensuring our resources are protected and well-organized.

The beautification of our hallways through murals created by our senior students has personalized the school. And finally, new office pods on the 5th floor and admin spaces are innovative solutions that provide staff with the quiet, private environment necessary for focused work. Together, these upgrades represent a significant investment in the future of Urban Academy, cultivating a campus that is as vibrant and hardworking as our students. ■



Advancement Report

Director of Development
Sonja Kennedy



The 2025/2026 advancement year speaks to the power of community, generosity, and shared vision. Beyond the numbers, it was defined by opportunities to connect and a commitment to enriching the educational experience for every student. Through our tireless parent volunteers and enthusiastic school-wide participation, our community came together to achieve fundraising milestones, connect, and have a little fun!

At the heart of the community is the UA PAX, led with passion by Co-Chairs Suman Ghataurah and Parveen Rai. PAX spearheaded a wide variety of initiatives throughout the school year, including Breakfast with Santa, Community Clean Up, Bake Sales, the Holiday Drive, and a variety of other fundraisers. In addition to the amazing contribution from Hot Lunch and the Used Uniform Store led by Lana Vijay, PAX's combined efforts raised just under $41,000, representing a 9% increase over the previous year.

Adding to this momentum, the elegant 25th Anniversary Silver Soirée Gala was an inspiring evening full of celebration. Led by Co-Chairs Susan Pattinson and Shaoyee Yao, alongside an exceptional committee, our community came together to raise nearly $50,000.

Ensuring families also had an opportunity to celebrate together, the Carnival Committee, guided by Tina Parmar, brought an afternoon of fun and games, raising approximately $16,000.

Capping off these achievements, the Annual Giving Campaign raised nearly $225,000, showcasing our strong culture of philanthropy and successfully fulfilling our ambitious financial targets for the year.

The true value of these contributions is how the generosity of our families directly impacts students. Funds raised have already supported a variety of enhancements, including second deck fencing, common area furniture throughout the campus and new office pods for administration. Outdoor play spaces were expanded and upgraded with a new sandbox at Rousseau House and a brand new Imagination Deck Playground on the Junior School floor.

Middle and Senior School students now benefit from revitalized social and study spaces that encourage collaboration and connection. Academically and artistically, contributions funded new robotics equipment, enriched Science, Athletics, and Fine & Performing Arts programs, and supported the UA Garden Program, which enables hands-on outdoor learning for all age groups. Furthermore, these funds provided essential scholarships and financial aid, ensuring that families from all backgrounds can experience and enrich the UA community.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the commitment of our volunteer leaders and community members. Thank you to Parent Volunteer Coordinator, Seema Kanji, and to all our class parents and a myriad of volunteers who brought these initiatives to life. To everyone who stepped up, shared their expertise, donated and participated, thank you for sharing your time, talent and treasure as we work together to enhance the UA experience!

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Thank you for your support!

Thank you to all our families who continue to support Urban Academy in ways that directly impact the student experience.

Community Leaders $10,000+

Banihashemi / Abdi Family
Poorooshasb / Dewar Family
Patel Family
Perry Family

Community Innovators $5,000-$9,999

Aitken / Hall Family
Begent-Connors Family
Carson Family
Cheung / Du Family
Ghataurah Family
Johnston Family
Kim / Lee Family
Lamoureux Family
Langran Family
Lewin Family
Li Family
Mehdi Family
Parhar Family
JH Parmar Family
Willis Family

Community Builders $2,000-$4,999

Abdullah / Hoang Family
Adriano Vasselai Family
Agoumi Family
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Wang Family
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Anonymous (1)

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Wu / Chen Family
Wu Family
Xiao / Fu Family
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