

Architecture + Kids

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This poster brings to the forefront our responsibilities as architects to educate the public on our profession, and where better to start than in our elementary schools! Through both your local AIA Chapter and your university, opportunities to connect children and teachers with architectural professionals and design students can be made possible with a little effort that is sure to benefit all parties. This poster takes a glimpse into three creative projects and lessons that have been tried-and-true with participating third graders.

Repurpose + Reimagine:

With less and less open space in our cities, we will need to find ways to re-envision and repurpose the buildings that already exist. To encourage kids to think about the idea of repurposing while in elementary school can give them a respect for the life-cycle of materials that we encounter every day. At their age, they can begin to take responsibility for the negative impacts of trash and waste as well as the positive impacts of recycling and reuse. Learning about repurposing is a creative endeavor that is both challenging and fun for all ages. For this lesson images of everyday objects are provided so that they can be reimagined at various scales, and repurposed—even if their new purpose serves no broader function than sheer creativity.

Rhythms + Patterns:

Rhythms and patterns are fundamental aspects of architecture that we see (or do not see!) in almost every building structure. Whether it is patterns made by windows, panels, or structural columns, it is evident that they exist in countless ways throughout architecture; it is because of these aspects that architecture has been referred to as “frozen music,” (having a pace, a tempo, a beat—with layers of repetition). Perhaps nowhere are these rhythms and patterns more visible than in the facade of a building: expressed through repetitive elements, structures and patterns like windows, columns, and masonry.

In this lesson students have an opportunity to explore these concepts as they imagine the facades of a city street. How do different functions of a building affect the patterns on the outside? What would the facade of an office building look like versus the facade of an apartment building or a movie theater?

Sites + Scenes:

Sites and Scenes is a drawing activity that includes four (with the possibility of many more!) different environments that children can imagine inhabiting: a hot dry desert, a cold snowy hill, a cool, rainy forest and a warm, breezy beach. For this exercise it helped to engage in a brief discussion on building in different climates before the students were handed a scene and tasked with designing a structure specifically for that site. The discussion led children to compare clothing and accessories that one might wear in certain climates to the way things might be built in those same climates. For instance, in the wintertime we wear large puffy jackets. This may relate to the need for thick, insulated walls. In the summer, we may wear a large brimmed hat. This may encourage a large roof overhang to keep the hot sun out of the interior space. And in both rainy and warm beach climates, it's convenient to be elevated off the ground so that we can stay dry or so that air may circulate around for cooling.

