

AIA Cincinnati Architecture By Children

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SUMMARY

Since 1994, Architecture By Children has been providing an opportunity for children in grades K-12 to learn about architecture directly from local architects & designers.

THE PROGRAM

AIA Cincinnati administers this free educational outreach program in partnership with the Architectural Foundation of Cincinnati. Over the years, ABC has grown from 6 schools to nearly 100. It brings a fun and engaging educational experience to as many as 2,000 children throughout the Cincinnati metropolitan area annually.

Through ABC, AIA Cincinnati aims to educate their community about the value of the role of the architect, and how what architects do affects everyone's lives through the design and development of their shared environment. Students are given an opportunity to connect skills learned in the standard curriculum to real-world problem solving through the conceptualization, design and presentation of a themed building project.

In August, schools on their contact list receive registration forms and an outline of the specific theme chosen by the committee. Registration closes at the end of October. In December, at the Architects' Kick-Off Event, ABC matches registered schools with local volunteer architects.

Upon returning to class in January, students receive a classroom visit from their assigned architect. The Architect presents to the students images of significant and recognizable buildings and spaces. They review what is involved in being an architect, how architectural design affects the built environment, and they take a look at historical and modern forms used in the design of the theme building type. Past themes include "Gateway to Your City," "House of the Future," "Cool School," and "Skyscraper." Following the architect's presentation, students work with their teacher to continue their architectural studies by designing their own projects, researching and developing an understanding of the building type, architectural theories, building materials, and spatial relationships. The students work either alone or in teams of 2-3 to create models and/or drawings of their designs.

At the end of the semester, top projects from each school are selected for a week-long public presentation and entered into a mini-design competition, culminating with awards and prizes for excellence in several categories. Each student participating in the program receives a certificate of participation and a commemorative t-shirt, along with a new appreciation for architecture, design, and the value of the built environment.

IMPACT

Participating in the 2001 program were approximately 850 students from 27 schools. In 2008, 1,587 students from 38 schools participated. About 120 schools in the Cincinnati area have

participated in the program since it started. This includes schools that have participated for multiple years, as well as schools that no longer exist.

All area schools are invited to participate, but the group actively pursues Cincinnati Public Schools, which represent the core population of the city.

Benefits for the students include creativity, self-esteem, communication skills, and an enhanced appreciation for the built environment. Benefits to the community include an increasingly aware populace willing to support good, sustainable design into the future.

For some architect volunteers, ABC becomes a catalyst that eventually leads them to join AIA Cincinnati. Their participation in the program exposes them to all that the chapter has to offer.

HOW IT WORKS

To recruit volunteer architects, AIA Cincinnati advertises through their local membership and asks their members to invite colleagues to participate. Non-AIA architects, interns, and upper-year architecture students are also invited to participate as presenters.

ABC accepts in-kind (printing, postage, etc.) and monetary sponsorships; and they receive small donations from local architecture firms and construction and materials vendors. The committee conducts a letter-writing campaign to current contacts, and emails are sent as a follow-up.

Follow-up phone calls are also conducted if needed.

The Architectural Foundation of Cincinnati provides approximately 50% of Architecture By Children's funding through their own fundraising and by writing grants on behalf of the program on an annual basis. The AFC has also organized local tour programs related to the project theme for participating teachers, students, and parents.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

[Architectural Awareness Program for Junior High Students](#)

[Architecture: It's Elementary! A K – 5 Curriculum](#)

[Kids in Architecture: A Grade 5 Curriculum](#)

For More Information on This Topic

<http://aiacincinnati.org/Committees/ArchByChildren/>

<http://www.architecturecincy.org/>

Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact diversity@aia.org.

Keywords

- AIA Components
- Associations
- K-12 Education

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