

# Architectural Awareness Program for Junior High Students

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## SUMMARY

For more than seven years, the American Institute of Architects Southern New York Chapter, the Coalition for Better Schools, and the Career Development Council have offered the Architectural Awareness Program (AAP), an educational experience for seventh- and eighth-grade students that has gradually expanded to more than 25 schools in five New York counties: Tioga, Broome, Chemung, Steuben, and Schuyler. While designed for students in grades seven and eight, the AAP has been offered to students in grades 6 through 12.

## ARCHITECTURE IN THE SCHOOLS

The AAP imparts fundamental principles of architecture and provides students with collaborative student/teacher "hands on" learning experiences and direct contact with design professionals. While architecture is the primary focus of the curriculum, math, science, history, English, and technology are incorporated into the presentations and projects.

Working as individuals and in teams, students learn the relationships between other academic subjects and actual architecture projects. They learn to work collaboratively with each other, their teachers, and volunteer professionals as they execute learning projects from conception through final presentation. The focus is on imparting knowledge to students, but teachers, design professionals, and communities benefit from the program too.

## GOALS

The Architectural Awareness Program is founded on these clearly defined goals:

- To promote individual ability and learning
- To promote teamwork toward a common goal
- To create awareness of architecture as a potential career choice
- To promote community awareness and appreciation of both architecture and local school systems

- To promote good community relations among schools, business, and the public
- To demonstrate that a number of different subjects relate to the architectural profession

## ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Like any good educational program, the AAP depends on key elements for success:

- The commitment of teachers to the Architectural Awareness Program
- The support of school administrators who recognize the program benefits
- The enthusiastic involvement of architects and other professionals willing to volunteer time for the benefit of others
- An atmosphere in which everyone participates and has fun

## TYPICAL PROGRAM OUTLINE AND STRUCTURE

In addition to specific goals, a successful program has a clearly defined structure to ensure that results can be measured. The AAP structure includes a project statement, implicit learning objectives, a defined team structure, and list of desired outcomes.

### Project Statement

Define a clear project statement, such as "adaptive reuse of an existing building in the community."

### Implicit Learning Objectives

While "solving the problem" is the explicit goal, be mindful of implicit learning objectives such as

- Team-based activity with as much individual participation as possible
- Learning about careers in architecture and related fields
- Recognition of individual student skills within the team

- Student self-evaluation of results based on concept papers developed by the student teams
- Hands-on experience
- Open project and research structure to allow students to explore a wide range of creative methods and learning experiences

### Team Organization

Each school may have one or more project teams, typically made up of the following members:

- Five to ten students
- One or more classroom teachers and advisers
- An architect
- Other professionals (occasional participants based on need and availability)
- A guidance counselor or adviser

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

A typical AAP begins in mid-October and ends in early February. The major milestones of a program based on the "adaptive reuse" program statement include the following:

**Group Activity.** Students work together to complete the following projects:

- A concept paper that describes a building's architectural orientation, historical significance, relationship to other community structures, present community needs, and future community needs
- A project model or presentation
- An application of the "new technology" of architecture to the problem

**Student Research.** Students research problems and present their findings in

- Concept papers
- Drawings and/or sketches
- Photographs
- Models and/or representations
- Oral presentations
- Demonstrations of relevant technology

**Concluding Activities.** At the end of the program, students will demonstrate acquired learning by

- Developing student presentations of models, papers, and oral explanations

- Participating in community displays
- Receiving recognition for participation

All individuals are recognized for their participation in the AAP. Individual awards are discouraged because the AAP is a learning experience, not a competition.

### RESOURCES

#### More Best Practices

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

- 22.08.04 Kids in Architecture: A Grade 5 Curriculum
- 22.08.15 Celebrating Architecture, Educating the Public
- 22.08.07 Architecture: It's Elementary! A K –5 Curriculum

#### Feedback

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#### Key Terms

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architecture associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA Components