



LEARNING CURVE

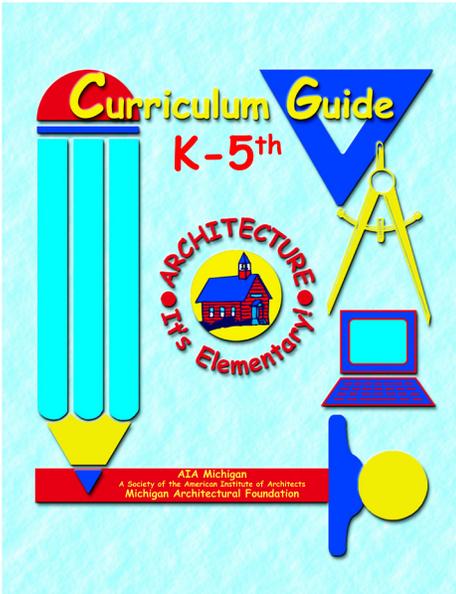
Michigan Architectural Foundation's *“Architecture, it’s Elementary”* teaches kids to think creatively, visually and critically (and it’s free!)

What happens when you inspire children to learn about architecture, in a hands-on, fun, and interactive way? They develop better observation, reasoning and critical thinking skills, learn to understand order and think visually - and become exposed to future career possibilities.

That’s the premise of Michigan Architectural Foundation’s ‘Architecture, it’s Elementary’, a multi-disciplinary educational curriculum designed to introduce kindergarten through fifth grade students to architecture and the built environment. The free curriculum encompasses social studies, art, language arts, history, science, and math, and

incorporates basic architectural principles. Lessons align with Michigan educational standards, and can easily be adapted to a school’s existing curriculum and interests.

“There are plenty of programs that introduce students to STEM (science/technology/engineering/math)-based subject matter and careers,” said MAF Education Program Chair Randy Case, “but none that incorporate traditional STEM subject matter in conjunction with arts and humanities programming the way Architecture it’s Elementary does.”



The web-based guidebook ([download it here](#)) includes ten lesson plans for each elementary grade year, with hands-on, engaging group and individual activities. For example, in kindergarten, students learn to identify the shapes that make up buildings, streetscapes, and neighborhoods; third graders learn to measure, about building systems and designs, and the role of mass, geography and climate in building design; fifth grade students learn about city planning, infrastructure, and preservation, and can put on play that imagines how cities began.

MAF and architects took early versions of the program to schools statewide for Beta testing, gathering feedback to refine the lessons and develop support systems for educators. “That Beta testing was critical, and we will continue to ask for feedback, to improve the curriculum guide into the future,” said Case. Local volunteer architects also are

available to answer questions and provide program assistance to educators and parents (contact MAF’s K5 educational committee for program support and more information).

Case stresses that making Architecture, it’s Elementary free to all students and educators is critically important to MAF, and that the program can easily be used by public and charter school teachers, in home schooling programs, and by parents who want to engage in interactive and creative learning experiences with their children, outside the classroom. [Want to help support Architecture, it’s Elementary?](#)

“Studies show thought processes that nurture creativity and critical thinking begin at a young age,” said Case. “Through the program, if we can help encourage those processes, fuel imaginations, teach kids the importance of architecture in their lives and in their communities, and even inspire a few future architects, we have success.”

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“The program is the first of its kind. Without a model to look to, MAF worked closely with teachers, education decision makers, and architects throughout Michigan to address criteria such as meeting existing curriculum standards, ease of use, and creating grade-appropriate lessons that would appeal to students and teachers.”