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2006 ACSA/CELA Administrators Conference Scottsdale, AZ

see page 8 for details and registration

in this issue:

- 2 Student Director's Report
- 3 2007-08 Board of Directors Call
Regional Directors Call
- 4 JAE Call for Papers
2007 Teachers Seminar
- 5 Call for Book Proposals
MCA Student Competition
- 6 ACSA/AISC Student Competition
- 7 Historical Preservation Student Competition
- 8 2006 Administrators Conference
- 11 ACSA 95th Annual Meeting
- 16 ACSA 96th Annual Meeting Call for Topics
- 17 2006-07 ACSA Awards Program
- 26 ACSA 2006 Fall Conferences
- 29 ACSA 2007 Fall Conferences Call
- 31 REGIONAL NEWS
- 43 AASL
- 44 Architectural Education K - 12
- 46 OPPORTUNITIES
- 60 2006 Carter Manny Award Winners
Fall Calendar

GLOBAL MOVEMENT IN ARCHITECTURE DESIGN EDUCATION FOR YOUTH

BY ATSUKO SAKAI, QUINN EVANS ARCHITECTS



Along with the sustainable architecture movement, there is a concurrent need in our profession for architecture design education for the general public, especially children. It is critical that people have a good understanding of their environment in order to help sustain it and keep it beautiful. After all, the public plays a major role in the design process although few of them comprehend either the process or their part in it.

Architecture design education helps to make the environment visible to the public and it is a wonderful and innovative learning tool for young people. Many creative aspects of the design process can be utilized to teach a variety of subject matter and this integration can make learning both challenging and fun particularly in a studio setting.

The concept of architecture design education for youth has developed over the years and there are currently many groups and programs all over the world. While there are some differences in the approach taken by individual groups, there is much commonality in their missions and goals. The shared objectives of architecture design education for youth include:

- Understanding our environment
- Experiencing the design process with hands-on activities

- Promoting creativity and problem solving skills through integrated learning
- Raising public awareness of good design and fostering citizen input on community design issues
- Promotion of the architecture profession for a new generation

The "European Forum for Architectural Policies" was started in 1995 to encourage cooperation between countries, to ensure architectural quality and to spread the culture of architecture. Among other things they proposed establishing a European network to raise awareness among decision makers and the general public and to encourage the public's participation on issues affecting quality of life. In some countries this took the form of educating the public about the built environment.

In Finland, educating the public about architecture has been a topic of discussion since the 1980's. Finland and the other Nordic countries experimented with projects and came up with the concept of "Civic Education in Architecture." In 1992, the "Act on Basic Art Education" became law improving education in the visual arts. By 1993, architecture was added to the national core curriculum of arts education as an extracurricular activity. In 1998, the "Architectural Policy Programme" was issued, which was the first policy statement to give architecture a high political profile and emphasize the importance of civic education. The new "Land Use and Building Act" came into effect in 2000 and it brought both opportunities for people to participate in planning process as well as a responsibility to gain the knowledge required to look after their environment. Supported by these three key elements, the National Board of Education included architecture in the elementary school curriculum in 2003.

Parallel to these public policy movements, international non-governmental networks have been growing. The UIA (International Union of Architects) has established the "Built Environment Education" program. (<http://uiabee.riai.ie/>) Its working group, composed of representatives from different countries, produced the

"UIA BEE Guidelines" in 2002 relating to Architects in Schools, Curriculum Resources, and Teacher Training.

The Alvar Aalto Academy has been active in promoting architecture design education. Since 2003 they have been organizing international workshops called "Soundings for Architecture" in conjunction with their annual Alvar Aalto Symposium. Promising young architects and educators from around the world are invited to exchange ideas and work together at these workshops. As a result, an international network called "PLAYCE" was established in 2004 by the participants. (<http://www.playce.org/>)

In Japan, new courses of study which include "Integrated Study" were introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2002. After a long history of teaching within strict guidelines people were searching for a way of introducing innovative project-oriented applied learning. Environmental education has become a popular subject among teachers for introducing this new curriculum, together with the support of communities and professionals. For example, since it was founded in 1993, the "Architecture & Children Network of Sendai" has been organizing events including workshops for families and schools, international exchange programs, town planning projects in conjunction with symposia organized by the city, and local community improvement projects. Once the new study was announced the "Sendai Network" organized the "Educational Design Council" to support teachers and conduct workshops for an exchange of ideas and to help implement a new environmental design curriculum.

In the United States, there are already various organizations including networking groups, university programs, mediators between architects and educators, museums that offer hands-on activities, community services, and research support. The American Institute of Architects has a position statement called "Architecture Education in K-12 and Community College Settings" and also sponsors the "Committee on Architecture for Education" which is one of the "Knowledge Communities" involved with design of educational facilities.



Unique to the United States is the existence of architectural foundations. While their organizational structure and funding sources vary, many foundations offer architecture design education programs for K-12 students. In October 2005, the American Architectural Foundation and the Chicago Architecture Foundation created a new network called "A+DEN" (Architecture + Design Education Network) and they will be holding a national conference in Chicago on October 27-28, 2006. (<http://www.adenweb.org/>)

Creating one policy for the United States may not be practical because of its geographic size, diverse culture, and a varied regulatory system in each state. However, without some form of governmental involvement and funding, it is difficult to improve the curriculum offered in any meaningful way. These programs take time, resources, and money. What is missing currently is a holistic system that connects the existing groups so that they can expand and make an impact on society because it is not easy for the general public to grasp the benefit of these concepts. Therefore, it is important for us as architects and educators to;

- Concisely define and articulate the rationale and importance of these programs
- Convert the concepts into practices and make them easily available for anyone anytime through developed methods
- Establish a new evaluation system because sometimes traditional ones do not

adequately express the benefit of these creative programs

- Design innovative learning environments and educate teachers how to creatively utilize them as three dimensional learning tools

In the U.S. architecture design education for youth often relies on the volunteer efforts by architects. Although they may have the best of intentions, working architects have a limited amount of time for volunteer work. This means expanding the scope of existing programs is often difficult. In order to further develop we need dedicated people of vision with long-term goals whose job it is to develop curriculum, to conduct research, and to evaluate programs.

That is why it is beneficial to incorporate these programs into an academic environment. Universities are the melting pots of intellectuals. Because their focus is on interdisciplinary learning and research, students and faculty can conduct experimental projects and in-depth research to develop curricula and strategic intervention while volunteer-oriented programs do best with an efficient rotation of people.

For example, the Institute for Environmental Education has been a part of the architecture program at the University of New Mexico for many years. Under the direction of its founder Dr. Anne Taylor, students who take the "Architecture & Children" class learn not only how to teach architecture and design to children (conducting classes in area schools), but also spend time learning the educational concepts behind the program and in developing curriculum. There is also an opportunity to teach at the institute's summer youth program, and to take an additional design studio involving an educational facility. This studio generally includes a charrette and interaction with community, students and teachers.

The design of a modern educational facility is now seen as integral to the teaching and learning experience. Along the lines of a children's interactive "Exploratorium," within the "Architecture and Children" movement, the design of the "school room" is now recognized as an in-

separable part of the education process. Going beyond "form follows function," the building can actually be a part of the learning experience. Dr. Taylor calls the physical environment of the school so important that it becomes a "silent curriculum," which deeply affects learning and behavior.



We architects contribute to society objects which are functional and beautiful, and that create environmental settings which affect ones' quality of life. We also provide a service (i.e.) the design process in order to come up with creative solutions and thoughtful ideas together with our clients who ultimately benefit from them. To learn this complex process and system of thinking, architecture students spend 5+ years in school, the primary instructional method being the design studio. The studio method has many benefits and it can be successfully used for teaching many subjects to young students while promoting creativity, problem solving and all the other positive aspects of the studio experience.

Architecture schools have the ability and resources to invite their local communities to explore creative experiences and to encounter the world of architecture. Together with other interested organizations, it should be our mission to help our children fulfill their curiosity while guiding them on an enjoyable learning experience because we are on the "Spaceship Earth without an instruction book" as Buckminster Fuller once said. •