

Empowering Kids to Design the Schools of the Future

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Integrating visual arts learning throughout all disciplines significantly engages students. The [School of the Future Design Competition](#) (SOTF) offers an opportunity to illustrate the kind of creativity that students bring to the design process. The competition challenges middle school students to conceptualize or redesign their schools to enhance learning, conserve resources, be environmentally responsive and engage the surrounding community.

The SOTF competition integrates all subject areas and provides opportunities for students to ask questions, problem solve, collaborate and develop an eye for beauty and design. The multi-disciplinary solution requires students to follow a planning process from the concept phase to the completion of a formal school building design project. Each team is required to submit a project model, a 3- 5 minute video or PowerPoint presentation and a 750-word narrative description documenting the planning process and rationale.

The students also investigate how their proposed project will make it easier for students to learn, be healthy and feel comfortable in their environment, addressing issues in the use of materials, colors, textures, lighting and how temperatures contribute to a supportive learning environment. One of the goals of this project is to motivate students to learn using a variety of tools and resources, which is intended to instill a sense of pride and ownership of their school and community. Participants create an environment where kids can't wait to get to school every morning!

The first-place regional winning teams receive a trip to Washington, D.C. to participate in the final jury process sponsored by the [National Education Association](#) and the [American Federation of Teachers](#). The students experience the nation's Capitol and also spend a day on Capitol Hill with their respective members of Congress. They attend a reception and awards ceremony in their honor hosted by the [National Association of Relators](#)®, where the winning schools receive cash prizes.

The SOTF competition is a 21st century learning approach where students are enabled, engaged and empowered through the curriculum to develop and master skills in the visual arts, architecture, math, communication/language arts, science, technology, facility planning, leadership and teamwork. We're excited to see the student's submissions, and thank [all of those](#) who help to make this competition a reality.

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