

Lesson Plan Abstract

LESSON TITLE: From Plans to Plants: When Design Becomes Space

LESSON TOPICS: Design, Scale, Concept Plan, Program, Circulation

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of this lesson is to engage students in multiple grade levels in the process of landscape architecture, specifically conceptual design. Students will receive a broad overview of the profession and a more detailed look at the design-build landscape architecture process, from concept plans through finished construction. Students will understand the concepts of scale, circulation, and programming, and will use these ideas to collaborate and conduct their own design charrette together using simple drawing tools and base plans we provide for them. Students will have the opportunity to present their completed designs.

KEYWORDS: Design, Scale, Concept, Plan, Program, Circulation, Residential, Process, Collaboration, Charrette

TARGET GRADES: Pre-K/Kindergarten, 5th Grade, 8th Grade

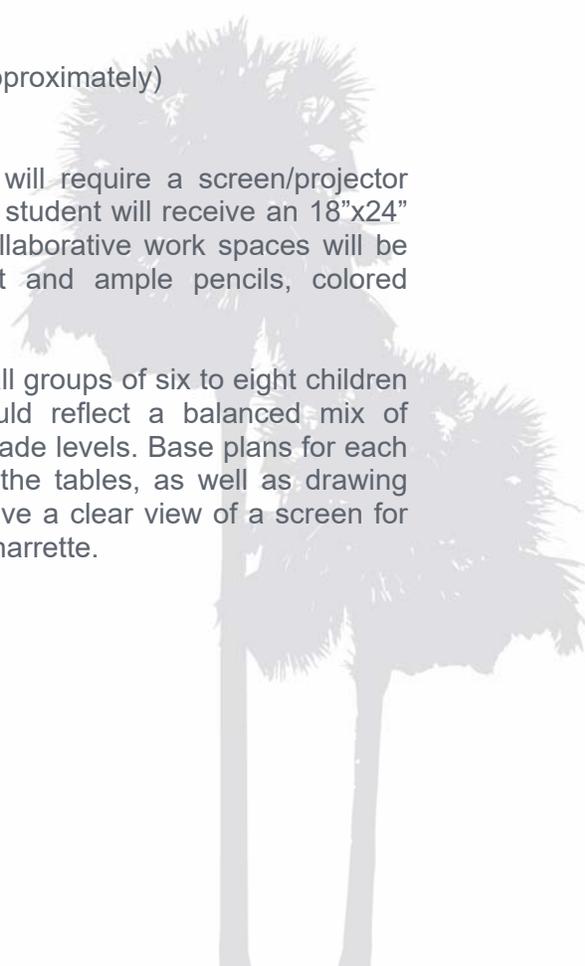
DURATION: 60-75 minutes

STUDENT RATIO: 1 professional for every 16 students (approximately)

MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT:

Presentation by landscape architects will require a screen/projector with USB or internet capabilities. Each student will receive an 18"x24" base plan for a residential project. Collaborative work spaces will be equipped with one ruler per student and ample pencils, colored pencils, crayons, etc.

PREPARATION: Tables should be arranged so that small groups of six to eight children can work together. Each group should reflect a balanced mix of students at each of the collaborating grade levels. Base plans for each student will be printed and placed at the tables, as well as drawing supplies to use. Tables should also have a clear view of a screen for the presentation that will precede the charrette.



Lesson Plan Outline

LESSON PLAN OUTLINE:

- I. Introduction (5 MINUTES)
 - i. What is a Landscape Architect?
 1. “Fancy” Definition
 2. “Fun Definition
- II. What are examples of Landscape Architecture? (5 MINUTES)
 - i. Central Park
 - ii. Disney
 - iii. Local examples
- III. How do Landscape Architects design space? (5 MINUTES)
 - i. What’s in our toolbox:
 1. Conversations
 2. Drawings
 3. Photographs
 4. Scale
 5. Pencil and Paper
 6. Creativity
- IV. From plans to plants: The Casey Key Pagoda Garden (15 MINUTES)
- V. Now it’s your turn! (Facilitate Design Charrette) (20 MINUTES)
- VI. Student Presentations (10 MINUTES)
- VII. Our solution to the same design problem (5 MINUTES)
- VIII. Conclusion / Q+A (10 MINUTES)



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INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

The landscape architect briefly introduces him/herself and thanks the students for their warm welcome and attention. He/she then asks how many of the students have heard of landscape architecture, and gauges the level of detail that will follow based on their response, keeping in mind that this is intended for a collaborative group of mixed ages.

Next, the landscape architect will give the “fancy” definition of landscape architects, according to the American Society of Landscape Architects: *Landscape architects analyze, plan, design, manage and nurture the built and natural environments. Landscape architects have a significant impact on communities and quality of life. They design parks, campuses, streetscapes, trails, plazas, and other projects that help define a community.* Immediately following this definition is the simplified, “fun” definition of our profession: *Landscape architects design outdoor spaces!* A much more palatable idea.

EXAMPLES OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE (5 MINUTES)

The landscape architect gives the students a broad and basic history of the profession, showing them Central Park in New York and explaining how Frederick Law Olmsted’s vision is still a much needed and vibrant part of the city today. He or she then moves into examples that are more relatable for our community, like designed spaces at Disney World and Epcot, and throughout Sarasota, Florida, where we practice.

A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT’S TOOLBOX (5 MINUTES)

The landscape architect will share his or her process with the students, including what we need to begin a conceptual design. We equate this to a “toolbox,” and explain that our most important tool is having good conversations. We need to learn about our clients, who they are, how they live and move, and the way they envision using their landscapes. We explain that these conversations happen throughout the design process, and may become more detailed as they continue.

Also in our toolbox are drawings (base plans, surveys, elevations, sections), which we show the students, as well as photographs of the site before construction, including views from all angles and points of entry.

We also show the students the concept of scale, one of our most important tools, and explain how one inch on a drawing may represent ten feet in a finished space. Finally, we complete



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our toolbox with our pencils, our favorite sketch paper to trace with, and the tool that makes our profession so enriching: creativity.

FROM PLANS TO PLANTS: THE CASEY KEY PAGODA GARDEN (15 MINUTES)

The landscape architect will then illustrate the concepts of the design “toolbox” by walking the students through a finished project, from concept to final construction. In our presentation we show students the Casey Key Pagoda Garden, an award-winning three year project that allowed us to push the envelope of creativity and incorporate elements we knew the students would find fascinating.

Our presentation includes a series of conceptual plans, from the first base plan and survey sketches to more detailed, beautifully rendered presentation quality drawings. We show a wide range of illustration techniques, including hand sketches and three-dimensional computer modeling. The presentation takes the students through the construction process with a series of interesting photographs that show the breadth and depth of not only the project, but of a landscape architect’s influence on all design elements, including structures and water features. Finally, we finish the presentation with our professional photographs of the project, taken in different seasons and stages of growth.

DESIGN CHARRETTE (20 MINUTES)

Engaging the students in the process of design is the best way to allow them to begin the eye-opening exercise of spatial thinking. After learning about examples of landscape architecture and the design process, the students are ready to collaborate and dream big! We created a base plan for them using a small single-family project we completed several years ago. We removed all identifying characteristics from the plan, showing them only a property line, adjacent street, house footprint, and some existing vegetation.

We ask the students to be sure and incorporate a driveway and walkway into their designs. Beyond that—the sky is the limit! Armed with base plans, rulers and drawing tools, the eighth and fifth grade students work to guide the pre-K and kindergarteners as together they come up with some incredible concepts.

During the design charrette, the landscape architect and professionals from the school will walk around the tables to answer any of the students’ questions.

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (10 MINUTES)

Three groups of students are selected to present their designs, in the same way they watched the landscape architects present theirs. They explain why they chose certain elements and how they decided, together, where they should be placed on their plans.

When we presented this exercise, we were rewarded with some out-of-the-box creativity! Student designs included swimming pools, swirly slides, treehouses, conservatories and prayer gardens. Other students incorporated basketball courts, baseball fields, birdhouses, trampolines, and many more creative ideas—even an outdoor library, a bowling alley, and a helicopter landing area!



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SOLUTION TO THE DESIGN PROBLEM (5 MINUTES)

After the students' presentations are over, the landscape architect shows the group their solution to the same design problem by presenting the finished landscape plan as it was installed, giving them a presentation much like the one they just finished.

CONCLUSION / Q+A (10 MINUTES)

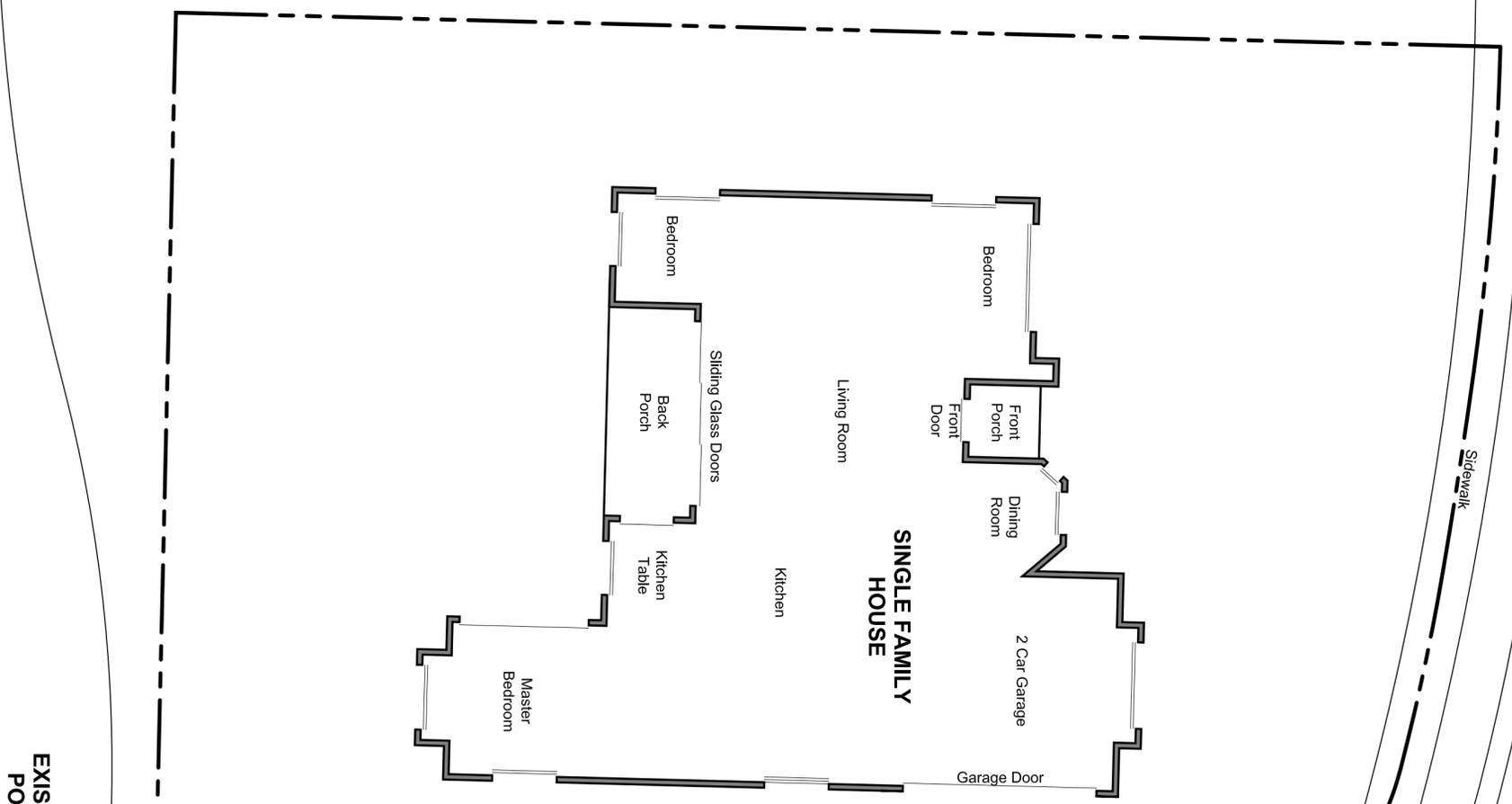
It is important for the landscape architect to offer an opportunity for students to ask questions. Working with a varied age range yields a rich array of topics, from what kind of software landscape architects use and how many years of college it takes to become one, to how much gardens cost, and what our favorite plants are.

We find that teaching children about landscape architecture is not only an enriching and rewarding exercise for the students, but for us as landscape architects as well. It helps us remember the basic root of why we found ourselves here in the first place. Creativity!

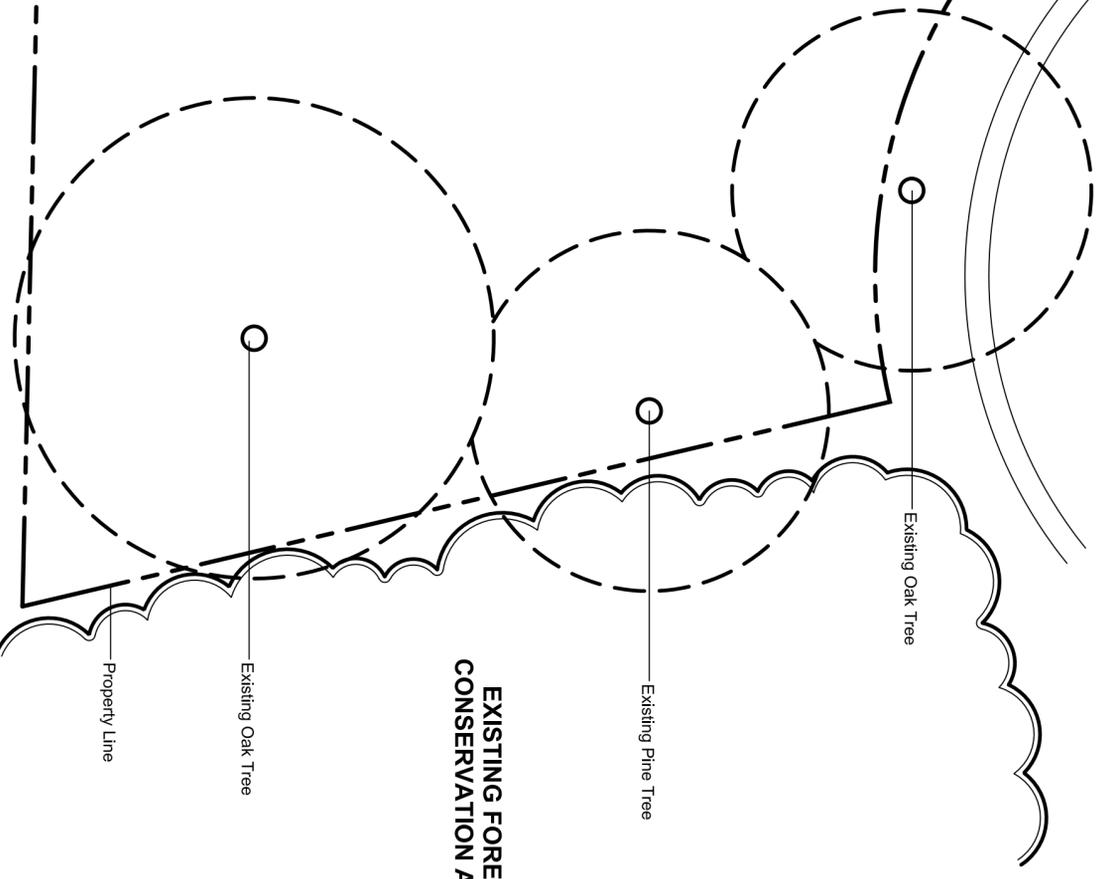
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COMPANY/UNIVERSITY: MICHAEL A. GILKEY, INC.
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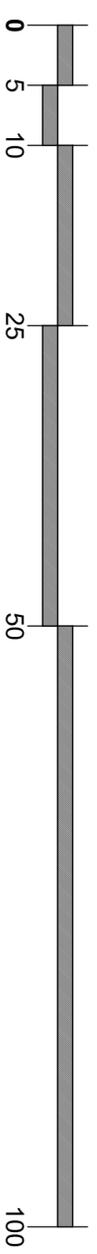
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