



MEANINGFUL
STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT

hord | coplan | macht

“Building” as a Noun and a Verb

At Hord Coplan Macht, we believe that every school project provides an opportunity to support and enhance the learning that happens within the facility. While it is common in the industry to look for ways that allow the finished building to function as a teaching tool, we have expanded the way we look at the concept by using the word “building” as a verb – to use the actual design and building process as a teaching and learning tool.

HCM has a strong commitment to meaningful student engagement and exposure to the building profession as demonstrated through our involvement in programs such as:

- The ACE Mentor Program
- Architecture In Schools
- “SchoolsNEXT” design competition – A4LE
- Career Fairs
- Internships & Shadow-days



Project GreenBuild & Project ReBuild Foxcroft School, Middleburg, VA

One of Hord Coplan Macht’s most successful student engagement programs involved partnering with the Foxcroft School in Middleburg VA to develop and lead a series of courses that aligned with design and construction projects on the school’s campus. The first was called “Project GreenBuild”, aligning with the design and construction of Foxcroft’s first LEED-certified building, a new dormitory. More recently HCM led “Project ReBuild”, which tracked the design and renovations to one of the school’s oldest dorms, converting it to a new welcome center. Both of these hands-on learning initiatives brought together groups of approximately 25 students, who participated in the year-long courses.



Both programs featured monthly classes that focused on the design and construction process and used the actual construction-related activities as the topic of the various classes. The 90-minute classes featured in-class instruction and discussion on the subject matter, followed by hands-on learning activities and projects, and concluded with a site tour of the construction project.

The courses were divided into topics, designed to follow the design and construction progress. The foundations class had the students mix their own concrete, while the masonry class allowed students the opportunity to lay their own brick walls. The finishes class allowed the students try their hands at taping a drywall joint, and the computer-aided design session had them work in Sketch-Up to create their own virtual 3-D structures.

One of the highlights of the program was a highly interactive session that demonstrated how the various parties--architects, engineers, construction managers, sub-contractors--all work in concert to design and build a building.



While the time spent with the students was immensely rewarding for all involved, what HCM is most proud of are the actual impacts these classes have had and will have on their lives of the students. More than a quarter of the original 26 GreenBuild students are now pursuing degrees in the design and construction industry. The fact that our work as part of Project GreenBuild© and Project ReBuild© helped to inspire them to this path is the greatest reward we could imagine.

Design – Build – Learn Abingdon Elementary School, Arlington, VA

Another Hord Coplan Macht student engagement project is the “Design-Build-Learn” program created for Abingdon Elementary School in Arlington, VA. Hord Coplan Macht is currently providing design services for the renovation/addition of the elementary school which will take place on multiple floors and expand the capacity of the school from 589 to approximately 725 students. While the school is in the process of being renovated and expanded, Hord Coplan Macht is leading four classes relating to phases of the construction process.


The engagement program is designed specifically to expose third graders to construction and create meaningful learning opportunities that relate to the real-life experience of the construction taking place in their school. The third-grade class was chosen because they will not only live through the construction, but will also be the first class to “graduate” from the newly expanded and modernized Abingdon Elementary School as fifth-graders



The first class provides an introduction to the Abingdon Elementary School design, offering students a basic understanding of building foundations and masonry construction. Five classes of 3rd-graders received a brief introduction to the subject, followed by a group project where they all mixed concrete, then they had a tour of the construction site.

The three other classes cover Structural Elements, Interior Design and Site Principles and include topics such as different types of building structures, visual and experiential architecture and stormwater management principals. By the end of the renovation/addition, the students will have a well-rounded knowledge of the different aspects of constructing a building and will have participated in several hands-on projects related to each topic.



A black and white photograph showing a woman wearing a hard hat and a safety vest, likely a construction professional, engaged in a conversation with a group of children. The children are gathered around her, and one child in the foreground has their hand raised. The background shows a construction site with a chain-link fence and trees.

At Hord Coplan Macht, our firm philosophy has been shaped and refined by the vision of our founders. In 1977, Ed Hord, Lee Coplan and Carol Macht started Hord Coplan Macht, with the goal of providing the highest quality architectural, landscape architectural and planning services to our clients. From our inception, we have subscribed to a collaborative, multi-disciplinary approach to problem solving. And while we have grown from the three founders to a 240-person national firm, we steadfastly maintain our small-firm values as a collection of education, residential, healthcare, landscape architecture and planning studios.

hord | coplan | macht

750 East Pratt Street Suite 1100
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
410.837.7311
fax 410.837.6530

2000 Duke Street Suite 120
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
571.388.7761

1331 Nineteenth Street
Denver, Colorado 80202
303.607.0977

www.hcm2.com