

# architecture & children

UIA Built Environment Education network



UNESCO/UIA

**CHARTER**

FOR BUILT  
ENVIRONMENT  
EDUCATION  
FOR CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ARCHITECTS



# Preamble

**Built environment education is to acquire an unprecedented role in present-day society, as a vital component of cultural, social, economic and political development and as a pillar of endogenous capacity-building, the consolidation of harmonious living together, sustainable development, democracy, human rights and peace.**

**We, architects, strongly believe that in a booming world the quality of life and its humane shape is essentially dependent on the quality and adequacy of built environment. The built environment itself cannot be solely planned, designed and made by architects; it is largely built by people working together. To comprehend and to be able to take decisions and understand their repercussions pertaining to the humanly shaped environment greatly attributes to the pertinence of it as a whole. Therefore, the future quality of our lives largely relies on the ability of coming generations to understand the processes that shape the built environment and have the knowledge and tools to direct this process so that it advances humanity. It is of our responsibility -architects with authorities and law makers- to direct our knowledge toward initiating, nurturing, encouraging and facilitating an architecture and built-environment education on a worldwide level.**

# Aims

The aims of this Charter are that it be used for the creation of a widespread network of built environment education for schoolchildren and young people within which individual achievements can be shared by all.

## I. General Considerations

1. **Architecture and the built environment – our buildings, villages, towns, cities and landscapes – provide the framework for all human activity and interaction. We give it form and it forms us. It affects mind, spirit, body, the ways we move from place to place and the people that we meet. It involves collective, social and critical action. Through symbolic, significant, public and private structures and spaces it represents the values of a community in a concrete form.**
2. **The creation of architecture is an exercise of the imagination which draws on humanity, culture, heritage, history, environment, economy and a critique of what exists.**
3. **Good architecture and a good environment, produced in genuine dialogue with the community, contribute to a more harmonious society where citizens feel empowered and where heritage and creativity are reconciled.**
4. **The future quality of our environment will be determined by the children of today. Their ability to make sound, informed decisions will depend on the knowledge, skills and abilities they gain in the course of their education.**
5. **Our ‘environmental education’ begins at the moment of birth. We get our first spatial and social impressions in the circle of parents and family, in our houses, schools, shops, parks, neighbourhoods. We learn to see, to hear, to feel, to understand and to communicate.**

6. Home, school, neighborhood and community send to children a message about their place in the world. For good or ill the environment provides the context, the 'cadre de vie' which so affects the physical and psychological quality of their lives, and in which they start to grow into their future roles as citizens.
7. Architectural education for young people should be an element of any new Government Policies on architecture and Architects professional bodies in each country should ensure that this is so.
8. Built Environment Education will help children and young people to understand architectural design and the process by which the environment is shaped so that as adult citizens they will be able to participate effectively in the creation of high quality architecture that is humane, sustainable and respectful of its context.
9. Analysis of the built environment allows young people to orient themselves in space, to re-appropriate their environment, understanding that in a short time it will be they who will have the right and the responsibility as active citizens to take initiatives to create a sustainable future.
10. Educators and architects should work together to provide children around the world with knowledge that will help them become caring participants in the environment. They should help children grow up knowing their heritage and develop an awareness of respectful and sustainable action within the built environment.

## II. Objectives of Built Environment Education

1. The goal of built environment education is that the pupils gain a standard of values enabling them to form an opinion with increasing independence which will help them to improve and participate in building a harmonious and safe society for all.
2. Built environment education should be an integral part of the educational formation of the child, regardless of whether it is carried out in schools, through public platforms or joint institutional initiatives.
3. The injection of built environment education into the mainstream school curriculum should be encouraged. This will have long term effects on a society's understanding of good architecture and a good environment.
4. Because of its large scope, Architecture presents endless possibilities for learning experiences for students of all ages, from the very youngest to those who are about to enter the adult world.
5. Built environment topics make excellent vehicles for educating and motivating pupils in a wide range of subjects and present exciting possibilities for collaboration between teachers from different disciplines.
6. Critical thinking, spatial awareness, imagination, responsible citizenship, cultural literacy, social relevance and environmental sustainability all can be addressed using issues of the built environment to teach new and traditional school subjects.
7. Architecture uses the knowledge of history, geography, sociology, psychology, sciences, mathematics, semantics, literature, arts and technology, and in turn irrigates and vivifies these disciplines.
8. Architectural thinking is integrated, visual and non-linear, and to work on architecture-based experiences contributes to generic skills such as communication, problem solving and research, which pupils use in other areas of their studies.

9. Built environment education should aim to give children and young people:
  - 9.1 Sensory awareness of the spaces – public/private, interior/exterior - that they move and live in
  - 9.2 Awareness of roles, rights and responsibilities in the creation of the built environment
  - 9.3 An appreciation of their architectural heritage and of contemporary architecture
  - 9.4 An understanding of the relationship between the built and natural environment and of the link between sustainable development and quality of life
  - 9.5 The vocabulary they need to discuss the qualities of buildings and places and how they relate to the life of a community
  - 9.6 Experience of the analytical and problem-solving methods of the design process
  - 9.7 The capacity to work in a team, to observe, to identify problems and find creative solutions
  - 9.8 The opportunity to experiment with techniques, forms and materials
  - 9.9 The capacity to exercise sensitivity and imagination, taste and critical judgment
  - 9.10 The discovery that architecture is a creative intellectual task of research and design that draws on humanity, culture, heritage, nature and society
10. Those engaged in built environment education around the world should connect to produce share and spread material, film, databases, pedagogical tools websites and networks
11. Research in this field should be encouraged, and shared worldwide. Architectural institutions together with pedagogical institutions and schools should join forces for a scientific development of built environment education.
12. Close partnership amongst all stakeholders - national and institutional policy-makers, governments and parliaments, the media, teaching and related staff, researchers, students and their families, the world of work, community groups - is required in order to set in train a movement for the in-depth built environment education for children and young people.

### III. Conditions for Practicing Built Environment Education

1. Architects, teachers and all actors participating in conceptualizing, organizing or executing built environment education must take steps to ensure that the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and all laws, codes and guidelines for the protection and safety of children are observed at all times.
2. All activities pertaining to built environment education should be conducted in an ethical manner and with respect for the cultural identity of the community within which the children live.
3. Ideally architectural education for children should be part of the central, normal, educational system and Architects associations should work with the authorities to achieve this.
4. Since the participation of architects in school-based projects is not always possible, architects and the legislative framework should strive to educate teachers who are well-trained in built environment education and produce suitable resources for them to use.
5. Architects engaged in built environment education should show an interest in education, ability to relate to children and young people, a will to collaborate with teachers and parents.
6. Teachers involved in built environment education should be open to the field of architecture and strive to make the interdisciplinary collaborations embedded in built environment education successful.
7. Architectural professional associations should seek to engage with the educational authorities and with training organisations, and offer their support in the development of suitable training strategies.
8. The successful addition of architectural topics to teacher training is best achieved by professional collaboration between teachers and architects, and may involve discussion and agreements with many partners: state or local governments, universities, academies, organisations responsible for teacher training, and teacher's associations.

9. The inclusion of built environment education should be open to discovering common interests with other areas, working together with teachers from other fields, and implicitly teach children about the importance of working together.
10. The educational framework adopted by teachers and architects should be open to change, diverse cultural settings, aim to ignite creativity and critical thinking and open new perspectives for future adults and citizens.

## IV. Conclusion

This Charter was created on the initiative of UNESCO and the UIA Work programme Architecture and Children to be applied worldwide to built environment education and needs the guarantee of protection, development and urgent action.

The Charter constitutes a framework providing direction and guidance to governments, authorities, institutions, architects, and teachers involved in founding, creating, implementing, organizing, and carrying out built environment education.

This Charter formulates the basis of dedicated action by architects and educators committed to providing built environment education to children and young people in every country all over the world. It is rooted in our awareness of the responsibility we, as professionals, carry toward future participants in creation of the built environment we share.

The authors of this charter are experts in the field of architecture and built environment education and members of the International Union of Architects (UIA) Work Programme Architecture and children:

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