

ORGANIC CLASSROOM DESIGN

GRADE: 3-12

TIME: Four 50-minute sessions

One way to foster understanding of Frank Lloyd Wright's design philosophy is to directly apply Wright's approach to an environment that students are already familiar with: the classroom. In this lesson, students of all grade levels apply Wright's concept of organic, total design to the redesign of their classroom space, incorporating themes that run through Wright's work such as bold use of geometry, nature-inspired design, and harmony in design.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Media Literacy

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Paper

Pencils

Library or Internet access for independent student research

Various images of Wright's interior spaces and/or furniture designs

Model making/art supplies as needed and available (modeling clay, tissue paper, construction paper, etc.)

1. Apply Frank Lloyd Wright's design philosophy to the design of a classroom.
2. Design and create a model classroom inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's concept of organic design.
3. Understand the concept of organic design and the role that furniture plays in organic design.
4. Learn and practice safety skills associated with working in a hands-on laboratory learning space.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What themes or motifs exist in Frank Lloyd Wright's work and how can they be effectively applied to a 21st century design?
2. How can many parts form a whole?
3. How can a designer balance form and function in their designs?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- **Introduce Frank Lloyd Wright and the concept of organic architecture.** Information can be found at <https://www.teachingbydesign.org/about/organic-design/> and <https://flwright.org/explore/furniture-and-decorative-arts>. Emphasize Wright's furniture designs as an important component of an organic space.
- **Challenge learners to search independently for images of Frank Lloyd Wright-designed furniture and interior spaces, taking note of anything that is particularly inspiring.** Ask: How are these designs examples of organic design? How are geometric shapes repeated throughout the design?
- **As a class, discuss findings and select one or two themes, motifs, or design elements in Wright's work to use as inspiration in a new organic classroom design.** Consider how these elements might be incorporated in the design of a classroom. Remember to consider all of the elements that make up the classroom space, such as desks, tables, work stations, and windows.

ENGAGE

Session Two

- **Review Frank Lloyd Wright's concept of organic architecture and how your classroom will use Wright's designs as inspiration for a redesigned classroom.**
- **Based on your classroom setting, the needs and skills of your learners, and the available resources, the engagement of the learners can be differentiated:**
 - Students can process their explorations as design teams or as individuals, considering the process for designing Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired classroom furniture. You may delegate design and construction responsibilities according to prior discussion and encourage design teams to communicate regularly with other groups during the design process.
 - Determine if learners will create drawings or create small-scale models of their designs with any resources and materials available in your classroom.
- **Ask students to sketch a few ideas, remembering to incorporate any motifs or themes that were identified in Session 1 for the new classroom design.**
- **Allow time for students to share their initial sketches as a group and offer constructive feedback.** Ask: Do these designs feel cohesive or unified? How can we better tie our collective designs together?

DESIGN

Session Three

- **Encourage students to continue refining their ideas, incorporating any feedback from Session 2.** To create a supportive environment during the design process, encourage learners to check in with each other throughout the session to share their designs and offer positive feedback.
- **Once sketches are complete, develop a process for students to construct small-scale models or prototypes of their designs.** If working in teams, stress the need for all learners to participate in the creative process. Have learners consider images of the Drafting Room at Frank Lloyd Wright's Studio in Oak Park to reinforce the idea of design as a collective effort.

LESSON PROCEDURE (continued)

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Four

- **Have students finish their models and display them all together in a group. With students, explore ways to arrange the designs for successful learning and teaching.**
- **Ask students to identify ways they have succeeded at the project. Encourage students to highlight the work and effort of their peers.**
- **Invite other school personnel and/or community members to the classroom to view and comment on the learners' efforts. Encourage students to communicate how their classroom was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright and/or is an example of organic architecture.**
- **Ask students to write short reflections about the furniture they designed. In writing, have students consider:**
How comfortable or productive would I be working in a setting with chairs designed in this way?