

OFFICE SPACE

GRADE: 6-12

TIME: Three 50-minute sessions

At the completion of the S.C. Johnson Wax Administration Building in Racine Wisconsin, Life magazine called it the greatest invention since the skyscraper. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, the building was constructed from 1936 to 1939 and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976. In this lesson, participants will explore and research this innovative work environment and then create plans for a workspace of their own.

INTEGRATED SUBJECTS: Visual Arts, Social-Emotional Learning, Media Literacy

OBJECTIVES

MATERIALS | RESOURCES

Internet access for independent student research

Sketchbook

Graph paper

18" x 24" cardstock paper or foam core

Glue sticks

Push pins (small, short round head pins)

Scissors

A variety of magazines featuring architecture, home décor, furniture, wallpaper, etc.

Fabric samples

Paint color samples

1. Investigate the design of the S.C. Johnson Wax Administration Building by Frank Lloyd Wright.
2. Explore the ideas and innovations that create a healthy work environment.
3. Create a mood board and design a plan for your own workspace: a home office, dance studio, yoga space or recording studio.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the elements of the S.C. Johnson Wax Administration Building that make it unique?
2. What are the qualities of a work environment that may affect our work ethic, mood, or outlook?
3. How do interior designers organize their ideas and materials to create a mood board?

LESSON PROCEDURE

EXPLORE

Session One

- Introduce the work of Frank Lloyd Wright with particular focus on the S.C. Johnson Wax Administration Building. Resources include <https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/case-studies/a3081-johnson-wax-headquarters-by-f-l-wright-the-building-with-lily-pad-columns/>
- View two videos that focus on the S.C. Johnson Wax Building. The first video provides a history of the building, and the second video describes some design issues that occurred in the structure. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mj8qH3GGSYk> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3B1rL3GnjU>
- Challenge participants to research aspects of the building design and the location in Racine, Wisconsin. Ask students why Wright used glass tubing instead of windows to provide light. Ask students to hypothesize about the use of the “lily pad” columns.
- Explore mental health tips for working in an office or attending school or work at home. <https://we-workremotely.com/how-to-keep-your-mental-health-in-check-when-you-work-from-home>
- Display sample mood boards created by professional designers as well as do-it-yourselfers. (Tip: Show digital mood boards as well as ones created from magazine cutouts!)

ENGAGE

Session Two

- Ask students to research the area of Racine, Wisconsin and hypothesize about how this location influenced Wright’s design. Compare and contrast this location to Fallingwater, which was the home Wright had most recently completed at the time.
- Ask students to describe the ways in which Wright focused his design on the employees of S.C. Johnson. Have students consider: Was he successful in creating a healthy work environment?
- Ask students how they would begin to design their own workspace. Have students consider: Would this be a home office, a personal dance space, recording studio, or a small quiet space with pillows?

DESIGN

Session Three

- Introduce a variety of materials such as home décor magazines for students to work with to create a mood board.
- Encourage participants to pin or glue fabric swatches, magazine pictures, textures and colors that can be arranged and rearranged. Urge students to consider this a fluid board.
 - Differentiation: Some schools or students may have the capacity to work digitally using platforms like Pinterest.

CRITIQUE & INTERPRET

Session Three

- Encourage participants to share ideas and materials. Consider the mood boards as works in progress and allow time to pause and request feedback from classmates.
- Ask if participants are willing to share any tips for coping with remote school or work.
- Display boards and remind students they can change and rearrange their board at any time. Our moods change!