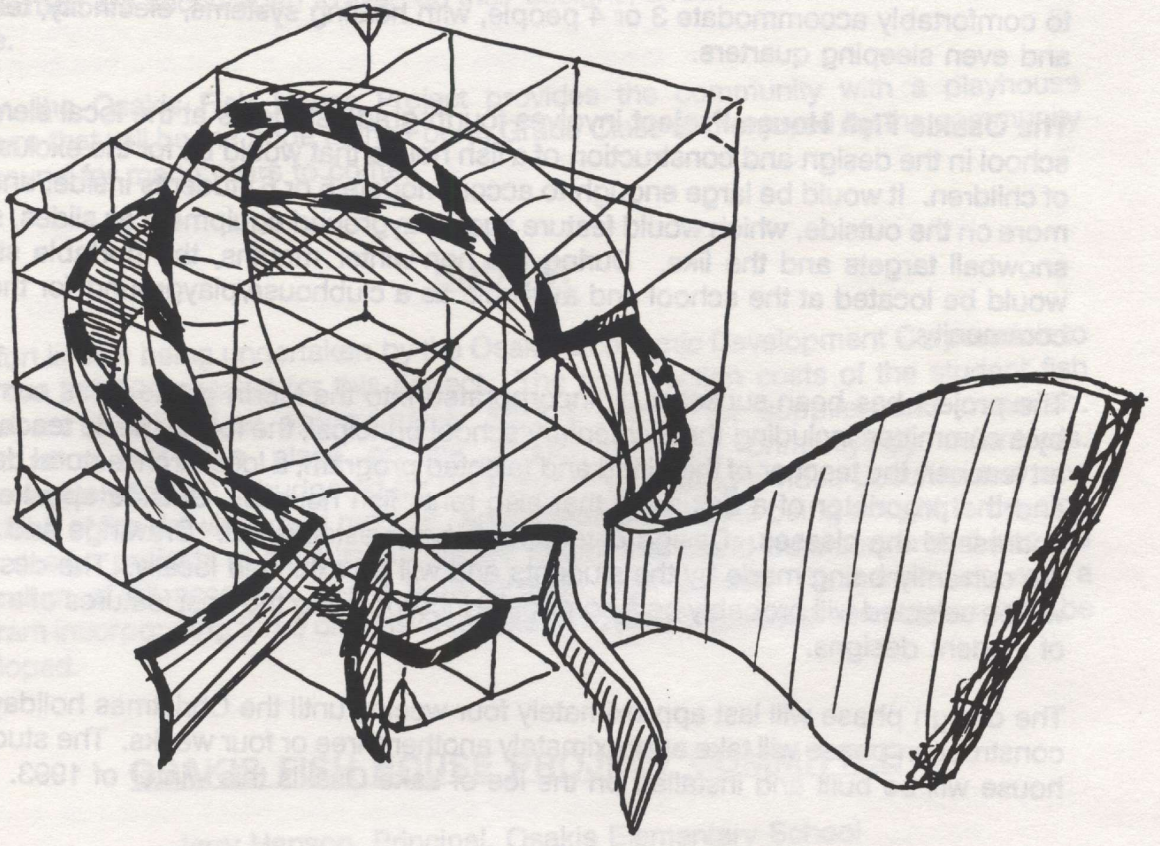


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STUDENT FISH HOUSE PROJECT OSAKIS, MINNESOTA

Jerry Harrison, Principal, Osakis Elementary School
 Gretchen Reedy, Elementary Art Teacher
 Sandra Hanson, Fourth Grade Teacher

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STUDENT FISH HOUSE PROJECT OSAKIS, MINNESOTA

One of the great local winter traditions is the appearance of hundreds of fish houses on the frozen surface of Lake Osakis. Many of these structures are elaborately designed to comfortably accommodate 3 or 4 people, with heating systems, electricity, television and even sleeping quarters.

The Osakis Fish House Project involves fourth grade students at the local elementary school in the design and construction of a fish house that would be for the exclusive use of children. It would be large enough to accommodate 5 or 6 students inside, and many more on the outside, which would feature such playground equipment as slides, swings, snowball targets and the like. During the non-winter months, the portable structure would be located at the school and available as a clubhouse/playground for the entire community.

The project has been successfully incorporated into the fourth grade class curriculum, by a committee including the elementary school principal, the fourth grade teachers, the art teacher, the teacher of the gifted and talented program, a local architectural designer, and the proprietor of a bait store that also rents fish houses. Outside speakers have addressed the classes. Design criteria have been established. Drawings and models are currently being made by the students and will be exhibited locally. The design that will be selected will probably be a composite incorporating the best features of a number of student designs.

The design phase will last approximately four weeks, until the Christmas holidays. The construction phase will take approximately another three or four weeks. The student fish house will be built and installed on the ice of Lake Osakis this winter of 1993.

GOALS

The Osakis Fish House Project has five goals. First, it introduces to the students the concept of design, while working in conjunction with the regular elementary school curriculum. Design skills will be increasingly called upon as our country is economically retooling itself for a more competitive 21st Century.

Second, by incorporating a real project, such as a fish house, the students' lessons are brought from the abstract, academic world to the concrete, tangible world - a far more successful way of teaching. Also, by calling upon a wide range of skills, the students will learn the value of an interdisciplinary approach to education.

Third, the recreational nature of the project provides an opportunity for families and generations to work together. This is a fun project for everyone. The parent fisherman,

or carpenter, or designer is now called in as an expert to help work on the project. This will encourage parents and the community to get more involved with the school.

Fourth, it is hoped that the project will achieve an indirect economic development benefit. Fishing and the resort business are a mainstay of the Osakis economy. To the extent that this student-designed fish house will be interesting and unusual, it may inspire others to put more creative effort into their fish houses. If over a period of time, dozens of fishermen are encouraged to liven up their designs, a real winter tourist attraction will evolve.

Finally, the Osakis Fish House Project provides the community with a playhouse structure that will be the pride of the Fourth Grade Class and enjoyed by the community year round for many years to come.

BUDGET

An effort is now being undertaken by the Osakis Economic Development Corporation to raise the \$10,000 needed for this project. The construction costs of the student fish house are budgeted at approximately \$6,000, mostly for supplies and materials. Construction will take place on the school grounds, primarily by volunteers. Approximately \$1,000 is budgeted for the purpose of making a video documentary and an exhibit of the drawings and models. An additional \$3,000 is being sought to develop other design projects of a similar innovative nature that could be incorporated into the curriculum at all academic levels right through high school. Text materials and a program incorporating three dimensional objects in a multi-media presentation would be developed.

OSAKIS FISH HOUSE PROJECT COMMITTEE

Jerry Hanson, Principal, Osakis Elementary School

Gretchen Resley, Elementary Art Teacher

Sandi Benson, Fourth Grade Teacher

Ivy Nomeland, Fourth Grade Teacher

Julia Hanson, Elementary Gifted and Talented Teacher

Bruce Dehkes, Owner, Bruce's Bait and Tackle Shop

Brian McMahon, President, ABC Design and Associated with

MEI, Architects and Engineers, St. Paul

Contact Person:

Jerry Hanson, Principal

Osakis Elementary School

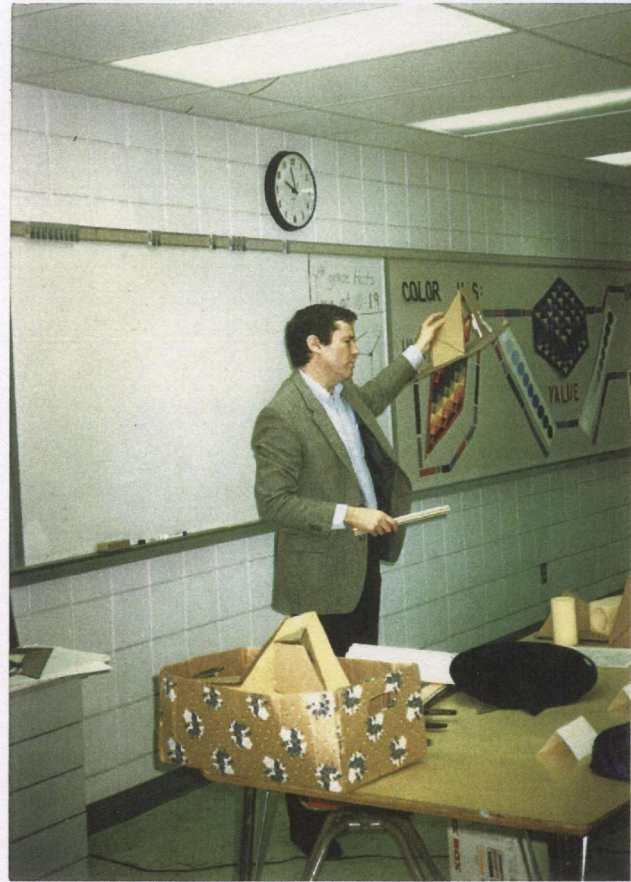
P.O. Box X

Osakis, MN 56360-0624

Phone: (612) 859-2193

FISH HOUSE DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. The fish house shall be distinctive, unusual and FUN!
2. It shall have an enclosed inside area that comfortably holds no less than 5 people at one time, providing all necessary fishing requirements.
3. It shall contain at least two recognizable geometric shapes (circle, square, triangle...) or forms (sphere, cube, pyramid, prism, cone, dome), at least one free form organic shape and one diagonal element.
4. It shall have a minimum of eight faces or planes (flat sides).
5. Part of the structure should stick up a minimum of 3' above the remaining structure.
6. Part of the structure should be unenclosed and open to walk through or see through.
7. It shall contain a surface coloring of no fewer than three different colors.
8. It should have one component or part which is movable through the use of some natural force: wind, light, temperature, fish power.
9. It should have one component that you can move by hand.
10. It should contain one component which makes a pleasant noise.
11. It should have a designated place to hang a typical fisherman's sign about "the one that got away."
12. In addition, it should have at least one additional component humorous enough to provoke a smile at temperatures 20° below zero and colder.
13. It should contain a place to leave messages.
14. It shall contain at least one play component on the exterior or outside such as a swing or playslide.
15. It should have at least one large window.
16. The perimeter or outer boundary of the inside area should not be more than 36'. (When you measure the width of the inside walls and add them all together, the total should be less than 36'.)
17. The door to the inside area and any part of the structure that is open to walk through should be handicap-accessible.





Rural Life

Gov. writes Osakis a letter on "Thinking About Fishhouses"

The exhibit "Thinking About Fishhouses" concluded a three day stint at the Osakis Heritage Center on Sunday, March 28. It was organized by local architect Brian McMahon and Osakis art teacher Gretchen Resley, and sponsored by the Comprehensive Arts Planning Program (C.A.P.P.).

The display featured models by local elementary students as well as drawings and models by architects from the Minnesota Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Some models traveled from as far as South Dakota for the exhibit. A fishhouse in the shape of a whale, designed and constructed by Jeff Jenior from Lake Minnetonka was on display in the parking lot over the weekend.

The highlight of the exhibit was the selection of first place winner David Schultz and second place winner Darren Drum in the student fishhouse design competition. The students received prizes donated by the First National Bank of Osakis and Gillis Drug and General Store for their efforts. In addition, 50 other students received coupons for ice

cream cones from McDonalds of Alexandria.

The exhibit was prominently featured in the weekend news reports of local television stations KSAX and KCCO and radio station KBHL.

McMahon described the "Thinking About Fishhouses" in this way, "The exhibit examined fishhouses as artistic objects fitting within the rich tradition of American vernacular architecture. It (a fishhouse) is part residence, part factory, and part recreational hall. For the designer of the fishhouse, it may be the only work of architecture ever undertaken."

Letters of support were received from Sen. Paul Wellstone, Rep. Colin Peterson and Gov. Arne Carlson. Carlson wrote, "Having finished reading the newspaper accounts of your student fishhouse project, I want to congratulate each of you on some very impressive work. Your creativity has added an entirely new - and eye-catching! - dimension to a great Minnesota tradition and I thank you for a significant contribution to our state's winter landscape."



"Thinking About Fishhouse" was held at the Heritage Center the weekend of March 26-28. The Osakis Mayor, C. J. Mohror stands with Jeff Jenior and his sons Ryan and Justin Kolstad. Jenior made the whale and drove it up from Lake Minnetonka.

Young architects learn from a master

By Lisa Harden

While architects are busy designing skyscrapers and condominiums for the adult world, another group of designers are building structures better suited for the younger set's needs.

Two classes of first-grade students at Sheridan Hills Elementary School in Richfield have designed a Playhouse City. They built multi-colored models of the playhouses as part of a school project on shelter.

Then they took the 18-inch-high models to the University of Minnesota last week for review by famed architect Frank Gehry.

The students' private audience with Gehry at Northrop Auditorium was set up by parent Brian McMahon. McMahon, an architect, spoke to Janet Thomson's and Diane Bell's classes about the design process. Using slides and models, he explained how architects use the same forms over and over to create a design.

"I was amazed at how quickly they picked up on terms like 'scale' and 'symmetry,'" he said.

The kids were so enthused they decided to make their own

models. With cardboard supplied by McMahon, they assembled miniature playhouses.

The houses feature several rectangular and triangular shapes with lots of openings for a rousing game of hide-and-seek. Other uses for the structures include in-line skating, swinging, playing ball and swimming.

The students' work is reminiscent of that of another architect.

"When I was working with the kids and saw the things they were doing, it reminded me of the whimsical style Gehry is noted for," McMahon said. Gehry did the glass fish in the sculpture garden at the Walker Art Center.

McMahon knew Gehry was going to be in town for groundbreaking at the new University Art Museum. So he wrote Gehry at his architectural office in California and asked for an audience for the children.

To everyone's delighted surprise, Gehry agreed and spent about half an hour talking with the students. He even drew a sketch of their model.

Gehry was reportedly impressed by the children's

work and talked about the design process. He even shared some interesting facts about himself.

Gehry's introduction to architecture came at a young age when he would arrange wood blocks near the stove in his kitchen, he said.

The Sheridan students' introduction to architecture is part of the standard curriculum at the school. That is, the discussion part is standard. Building the models and meeting Gehry were unplanned extras.

Thomson and Bell originally planned to include only three speakers for the project: a contractor, an engineer and McMahon. But after McMahon's discussion about shapes, the project "kept getting bigger," Thomson said.

Both teachers were pleased with the results. The Playhouse City project had elements of math, art, social studies and writing.

"It was real meaningful for the kids to see life things," Thomson said.

The kids' model may be transformed into a life-size playhouse, but details haven't been worked out yet, McMahon said.



Sheridan Hills Elementary School students crowded around architect Frank Gehry who spoke to the class about the design process.

26%

OF ALL RICHFIELD STUDENTS LIVE WITH ONE PARENT

THEY DON'T NEED A PERSONAL LIFE LIKE YOU WITH THEIR FEELINGS

**Combine your house & car
& save 20% on auto insurance.**

It's our Auto & Home Premium



EDUCATION...

The ABCs of Building an Architect

By Sharon F. Miller
Writer/Editor

A new generation of architects is budding right here in Richfield. Not in the high school or the junior high, mind you, but in two first-grade classes at Sheridan Hills Elementary School.

Most first-graders don't spend a lot of time studying architecture, let alone creating their own models. But thanks to architect and parent Brian McMahon, students in Janet Thomson's and Diane Bell's first-grade classes at Sheridan Hills recently did just that.

It all started when Bell invited McMahon to speak to the first-graders as part of a unit on housing. He talked about what an architect does; gave a brief historical survey of "the house"; discussed shapes, concepts, symmetry and scale; and presented a slide show. What really captured the imagination of the students, though, were the models McMahon showed the children. And it didn't take them long to decide that they wanted to design and build a model Play City, using cardboard.

Best of all, they didn't just study architecture, they actually created it, and then traveled with their large multi-colored models to the University of Minnesota to have them reviewed by internationally known, California architect Frank Gehry. In town for groundbreaking of the new U of M Art Museum, which he designed, Gehry agreed to meet with the students at the request of McMahon. Long an admirer of Gehry's work, McMahon felt the student's work resembled the famed architect's and wrote to him about it.

"This project clearly demonstrates how a collaborative effort between students, teachers, parents and the community can enrich the classroom learning experience for children," said Principal Judith Anderson. "Our parents and community are such valuable resources!"



Holding a giant thank you card from Sheridan Hills students, internationally acclaimed architect Frank Gehry met with them at U of M groundbreaking for the new museum he designed. On the table behind Gehry are the Play City models created by the students. (Photo by Warren Bruland)

"We started working with triangles," said McMahon. "When I first brought out a model, there were gasps from the kids. ... This is not a conventional kind of architecture. One of the boys said to me, 'You mean you want me to design a house like you've never seen before?'"

McMahon noted that they worked with geometric shapes for fun, on design and on the manipulation of objects. "I was amazed at how quickly the kids picked up on this," he said. "Design is so important in so many areas. It's elemental—almost as important as language skills. It's used by chemists, mathematicians, scientists, artists and people in almost every field."

Bell agreed, explaining that the project tied in nicely with their curriculum in a number of areas—math, geometry, organization, design,

cultural history, manipulative skills and more. "The kids were really excited about the project. It was wonderful because it was so motivating for them. We gave them choices, but they took the initiative themselves. It was fun to see them develop the shape and design," she said.

"The teachers have done a phenomenal job, and the positive reaction of the students is terrific."

**Brian McMahon
Parent/Architect**

Watching the students work on the project in the classroom, it was easy to see they thoroughly enjoyed it. They cut out sections, painted them, and enthusiastically experimented with where and how to place them. One young architect conferred with her class-

mate though. He's already arranged for a September exhibit of the students' work at the main offices of Richfield Bank and Trust. The actual models will be displayed along with step-by-step photos of the creation process, the trip to meet Frank Gehry at the University of Minnesota, and an original drawing of the model by Gehry. Maybe you'll even get to see McMahon's oversize Thank You Book, lovingly handmade with original drawings by the children he's been helping—a thoughtful remembrance for his many volunteer efforts.

The ultimate goal, however, is to see part of the model Play City transformed into reality in a city park. "We're still working on that dream," said McMahon.



