

The Contemporary Austin

Seeing Special Things Program

What it is:

The Contemporary Austin's year-long, multiple-visit program, **Seeing Special Things**, is the museum's longest-running educational initiative. Offered to public elementary schools in Austin, with a focus on Title 1 schools, this program is designed to integrate visual art into the classroom and enhance student literacy, critical thinking, observation, and communication skills through museum visits, classroom discussions, artist workshops, and art making.

Seeing Special Things introduces students to original works of contemporary art, a multitude of media and processes, and related vocabulary for the purpose of broadening students' understanding of artistic concepts, increasing comprehension of visual vocabulary, improving art-making skills, and building student self-confidence and communication skills.

How it works:

Over the course of a school year, the program brings students from Austin's public schools to a variety of exhibitions at the Jones Center and Laguna Gloria. Museum docents and staff visit classrooms prior to each of the tours, helping to establish children's familiarity with the museum, and bringing artistic ideas and creative thinking into the general classroom environment. The students then meet those docents and staff at the museum for interactive tours about artists' ideas, materials, and processes, then create their own art that reinforces the ideas they've explored. At their second visit to the museum, they will meet and create art with a local working artist. The year culminates with a full day spent visiting both sites, during which the students receive a commemorative sketchbook and certificate of completion.

How to participate:

Teachers from each school (grades 2-4) apply to participate in the program as a team. The art teacher is invited to join this grade level on all of their tours, for which the museum will pay a substitute reimbursement. The principal is asked to support the school's faculty by allowing them to embark on 3 tours per year. There is an application form on the museum's website, as well as a link to it here: <http://www.thecontemporaryaustin.org/explore/for-schools>. **The deadline for application to this exciting and educational program is June 30 for the upcoming school year.**