

The Contemporary Austin

Seeing Special Things Program

What it is:

The Contemporary Austin's yearlong, multiple-visit program **Seeing Special Things** is the museum's longest-running educational initiative, celebrating its 40th year this school year. Offered to public elementary schools in Austin at no cost to campuses, with a focus on schools with greater need, this program is designed to integrate visual art into the classroom and enhance student literacy, social emotional learning, cultural awareness, critical thinking, observation, and communication skills through museum visits, classroom discussions, artist workshops, art making, and a student art show.

Seeing Special Things introduces students to original works of contemporary art and a multitude of innovative media and processes through looking and making experiences in the galleries, on the grounds, and in the studios. Through each facet of the program, students grow as artists and observers of the world, building self-confidence in sharing their unique ideas. Additionally, classes and teachers make new memories together while away from campus in order to experience something exciting and dynamic: the art of our time made by living artists from around the world.

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 on Congress Avenue and Laguna Gloria on Lake Austin. Museum docents and staff visit classrooms prior to each of the museum 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, and 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. This artwork will be presented at each participating campus during a student art show. The year culminates with a full day spent visiting both sites, during which the students receive a commemorative sketchbook. Each student will also receive a free family pass, a ticket that never expires, for their whole family to visit both locations for free.

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 or administrator 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 August 14, 2020, for the upcoming school year, 2020–2021.** Any questions? Please contact Emily Cayton, education@thecontemporaryaustin.org