



Construction Site Tours

Regardless how complex or simple a project is, and no matter what the stage of construction, a tour of an actual project in the process of construction is an exciting educational opportunity for students to learn how designs are transformed into bricks and mortar. Based on their experiences with taking students on job site tours, several ACE affiliates offer the following suggestions.

- ▶ If possible, arrange a construction site tour during a regular week-day meeting session for the team, as opposed to an irregular time such as on a Saturday. The likelihood of more students participating on the tour is greater this way.
- ▶ Before visiting a construction job, impress safety issues upon the students. Also remind them to wear hard-toe shoes.
- ▶ Prior to touring a particular construction project, mentors might brief students in advance about the project, suggest special features they should lookout for, and give them one or two pieces of printed materials about the project (e.g., brochure, newspaper article), if available.
- ▶ If someone other than a mentor conducts the tour of the construction job, an advance briefing of the tour leader about the ACE program, the topics students have covered up to the point of the tour, and perhaps the nature of the team's final project can help the tour leader more appropriately design his/her tour of the construction site.
- ▶ In addition to a general overview and walk-through of the construction site, tour leaders might usefully focus on one or two special features or challenges of the project and perhaps show students some of the construction drawings and schedules about the feature or challenge as well as show students the physical feature.
- ▶ Construction sites can effectively demonstrate the point that the building of a structure requires ongoing collaboration and team work among professionals from different fields or with different skills. Tour leaders might emphasize this point and show tangible examples.

- ▶ As a precaution, mentors should take on construction site tours emergency contact information about each student. (See sample permission form below.)
- ▶ Tours of construction jobs offer an opportunity to expose students to building industry professionals who are not usually represented on mentor teams – notably, construction manager and skilled trade workers. If possible, arrange for an individual representing one of these careers to explain them to students.

In addition to an introduction to and walk-through of a project, activities can be assigned to students. Two examples follow.

1. The Nashville affiliate suggests sending small teams of students on a scavenger hunt for a pre-selected list of building materials and other construction features. If students can be given digital cameras, they should photograph what they find and then download their photos to a laptop so that, at the construction site or during the next mentoring session, they can describe what they found and where. If digital cameras are not available, students can describe in journals or on a piece of paper what they located and where.
2. Construction sites offer unusual opportunities for students to practice sketching skills that are useful in the design process. In advance of a tour, mentors can assign students to sketch certain features of a structure and at the next mentoring session ask students to display and discuss what they sketched. To add an interesting dimension to this exercise, mentors might themselves sketch the same things and share their sketches with students.

As a prompt for students to observe as many aspects of a project under construction, a *Construction Site Tour Worksheet* can be distributed to them at the start of the tour. This companion worksheet can be found as a separate file Job Site Tours section under Mentor Resources.