

Community Chicken Coops

School: Bertie Early College High School

City/State: Bertie County, NC

Grade(s): 9, 10, 11, 12

Format(s): Architecture

Subject(s): Mathematics, Science and Technology

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Bertie County is home to a Perdue chicken plant, which means many farmers raise broiler chickens (up to 250,000 at a time!) for the company. In this context, students were asked to design “the craziest chicken coop possible,” to house 6-12 backyard chickens as a counterpoint to the large scale industry. Starting with an action word from Richard Serra’s beautiful list of verbs, students first sketched, then modeled a coop inspired by words like “twist,” “fold,” and “hinge.” Then, learning MIG-welding and carpentry skills along the way, they brought the coops to life at full scale and donated them to families around Bertie County. The final three coops were all different and beautiful: one resembling a strand of DNA, one inspired by Buckminster Fuller’s geodesic dome, and one using the geometry of a pentagon to create a hinged facade.

Studio H is an in-school design/build class for 6th-12th-grade students. First launched in Bertie County, NC and now based at Realm Charter School in Berkeley, CA, Studio H students apply their core subject learning to design and build audacious and socially transformative projects. Students of Studio H have previously dreamed up, designed, and constructed a 2000-square-foot farmers market pavilion, their own school library, a pop-up park, laser-etched skateboards, sculptural concrete public furniture, roadside farm stands, tiny homes, and more. Through experimentation, non-stop production, tinkering, and a lot of dirt under their fingernails, students develop the creative capital, critical thinking, and citizenship necessary for their own success and for the future of their communities. The work of Studio H is the subject of the full-length documentary If You Build It.

Project H uses the power of creativity, design, and hands-on building to amplify the raw brilliance of youth, transform communities, and improve K-12 public education from within. Programs teach rigorous design iteration, tinkering, applied arts and sciences, and vocational building skills to give young people the creative, technical, and leadership tools necessary to make positive, long-lasting change in their lives and their communities.

HOW THIS PROJECT CAN BE USEFUL:

- This project is beautifully crafted in conception and execution. Students took the issue of large-scale factory farming and highlighted a counterpoint with community-based architecture.
- This is a wonderful example of students contributing valuable work with an incredibly beautiful aesthetic in service of an authentic audience.

- This complex project empowers students to use math, engineering, and architectural design to create a useful, practical product.

Relevant Resources

Chicken Coop Project Video

Windsor Farmers Market Project

Farmstands Project