Civic Scholar Senior Project | Class of 2021

Redd Trunk Project

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The Red Trunk Project® is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that originated in New York in 2014. Their mission is to assist schools in the US in diversifying education and expanding cultural knowledge. Through this program, students experience a humanized, learning experience in the form of a 10-day curriculum on the culture in Oaxaca, Mexico, specifically revolving around children their age. This program is set up to enable students to make a strong connection to the culture, through those who live it daily! An engaging program such as this, allows students to recreate the feeling of learning something new and exciting in a virtual classroom! Normally, the classrooms involved in this program would be working with a physical trunk filled with 60 authentic artifacts straight from Oaxaca but due to COVID-19, the Red Trunk Project created the virtual Red Trunk.

We chose Red Trunk specifically because we are passionate about educational diversity. Every child should have an opportunity to experience and learn about other cultures, and increase their cultural competency, a vital NJ state standard.
For our senior project, we collaborated with The Red Trunk Project as well as Orange school district. We contacted Kevin Thompson, founder of Red Trunk, in hopes of bringing his curriculum into more schools in New Jersey, as the project had its roots in New York. With the assistance of our campus partner, Dr. Rosenbloom, as well as reaching out to teachers in the area, we were able to set up the Red Trunk curriculum in two Orange elementary schools. Our main objective through this project was to expose 2nd and 3rd grade children to global diversity and introduce them to cultures they may not be familiar with. As a result, we were able to teach the children what it means to “respect every difference” and carry this lesson with them through life. By teaching children about diversity and new cultures, they can share with others, which addresses the larger issue; lack of diversity education in the US. We hope our impact will be sustained through not only our students, but the teachers and administrators from Orange school district, as they continue to share the message of the Red Trunk Project.
In a professional setting, these skills are clearly relevant and applicable. The ability to public speak and conduct yourself properly in different situations and to different audiences is extremely important. As one is speaking or presenting to a group, one must be able to gauge their audience's reaction while presenting and change the message if it’s not resonating with the group. It’s critical, particularly in the pandemic, to have at least a basic knowledge of Zoom or other video conferencing sites; we worked with children which allowed us to practice using video conferencing with participants who didn’t have much knowledge when it comes to computers. Regardless of what occurs in life, adaptability is an excellent skill to have.