



Summary: This project teaches students to appreciate memorial public art and how public art can tell the story of the struggles of the people who came before.

“War Memorial Walk”

Nebraskans for Civic Reform (NCR) writes and implements programs for elementary students that are comprehensive. War Memorial Walk is a program with several objectives in keeping with our comprehensive approach and NCR’s embedded practices. In this program students will:

- Learn first hand the experiences and sacrifices of Americans at war
- View and analyze public art
- Draw a picture of what they see
- Create a narrative suggested by the art
- Participate in a Health and Wellness walk
- Be made aware of careers in the military and others relevant to the experience

The venue for this field experience is Heartland of America Park in Omaha, NE. This park has a 10 acre lake with resident geese, ducks, and swans. It has a large fountain, an overlook of the Missouri River, multiple places to sit, and a gondola. However, it is also home to the WWII 50th Anniversary Heartland Memorial statues, and the Airborne Monument. The walk around the lake will take students approximately 30-40 minutes without stops.

Students will be split into 2 groups of around 15 students and each group will go a different way around the lake. Students will have a clipboard, paper and writing/drawing materials. Each group will make two stops (minimum). One will be to sit and draw what

they are seeing. Students will have been given direct instruction on sketching prior to the trip. A professional artist will be on site to give advice and answer questions on the creation of art. The artist will also address careers in the arts.

The second stop is at the two memorials. The WWII memorial is a grouping that includes a soldier hugging a small child, an older child with a wagon of scrap metal, a young woman, and two additional figures. At this site, students will talk with volunteer veterans. NCR has done extensive work with veteran groups and has an established network. There will be 4-6 veterans on site to talk with the students about what the memorials represent. The purpose for this event is to humanize the experience of soldiers and their families, and to connect a real life narrative to public art. Both the Airborne and WWII exhibits suggest a story, which the veterans will elaborate upon based on their own experiences. NCR has an embedded practice of discussing career options every time students interact with the adult world. So NCR will also ask the veterans to talk about careers in the military. This objective can be reinforced by NCR providers after the experience as well. Additional careers may include the people working in nearby office buildings and any grounds or landscaping employees in the area, or any other working adults.

The artist, then, will provide information and instruction on the creation of art. The veterans will discuss the context of the art.

Another NCR embedded practice in every project is Health and Wellness. All Sherman Elementary students will be very aware of the need to move during their day. They will know the number of steps that they should take daily, and will wear a pedometer to count their steps on this trip.

Finally, NCR also has a literacy embedded practice. A written reflection described in the final item of this proposal describes this strategy.

Students will go to Kaneko after their walk with their draft drawing of some aspect of the park. There, students will get instruction on turning a draft into a final work of art. On site will be the professional artist to give advice on drawing. Students may also begin to discuss their response to the art in a narrative. This narrative will include the stories related by the on-site veterans. Students will be encouraged to record their narrative responses on video.

With their after school provider, the students will relate and write down reactions to talking with the veterans. Students will be directed to explain the Memorial statues context – what the people represent, what their lives might have been like. These narratives will be compiled in a book that will include all of the drawings interspersed with comments from the veteran conversations. The book can be printed and given to participating students to take home, or it can be donated to the library.

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