Field Trip Reflection- Virtual Field Trip

My unit involved exploration of the 1800's Westward Expansion in the United States through the lens of immigration. In order to authenticate the student's learning experience and provide access to various learning styles, I searched for a field trip that would allow them to explore primary sources and artifacts from this time period. The PBA for the unit is to create a journal from the point of view of an immigrant who chose to explore the West in the 1800's; they have the option to create a picture or scrapbook journal thus exposure to various art forms will help them prepare by consuming and critiquing examples of this form of writing.

Despite the rich museum opportunities in the Washington DC area where I live, I could not find a physical museum site that included rich artifacts from this period of time and that met my criteria. During our technology course, we were introduced to the concept of virtual fieldtrips. Taking this knowledge, I created a center activity in lesson 5 that contains the components of a virtual fieldtrip. The lesson is designed to take several days and provides opportunities for the students to participate in centers that include a mix of primary and secondary source documents from the 1800's.

Lesson 6 of the unit, is a dedicated virtual fieldtrip where students participate in researching the life and art of a select artist. They are given research prompts and asked to compile and share their research through a group powerpoint presentation. The virtual fieldtrip enables students to explore and discover primary and secondary source artifacts with no incremental cost. It does require students to have access to technology and books; however, it is assumed that these are resources already available at the school. I would recommend engaging the students by structuring the morning as though they are on a fieldtrip. Perhaps ask to use a resource room such as the library or art room for the journey. They can bring bag lunch and have all the benefits of a change of scenery to help enhance the field trip and engage the students. I would recommend playing music, such as that used to introduce the field trip throughout the duration of the research. This will also add to the environment and multi-dimensional senses of the experience.

The preparation time for a virtual field trip is perhaps a bit more burdensome than an actual fieldtrip because the teacher must first compile all the resources and make sure they are available for students. It took me about 8-10 hours to prepare all the various materials for the centers. It was crucial to have access to Adobe software that allows you to create one PDF from multiple documents. The artist fieldtrip was less time consuming as the students will each choose their own images and artifacts from the websites and books provided.

I have not been able to experience this fieldtrip, so it is challenging for me to evaluate and provide reflection on the experience. I think the first time that I give this experience to my students will be a telling sign of how effective and engaging it is for their overall learning.