Pack Your Trunk for a Trip on the Oregon Trail

This project helps students understand the realities of a pioneer traveling the Oregon Trail.

Curriculum/State Standards
MN Social Studies Standards: Students will understand how families lived in earlier times and compare those times to today. Students will demonstrate knowledge of exploration and settlement of the United States.

MN Language Arts Standards: Students will use descriptive, narrative, and informative writing to express meaning.

Overview
After learning about the Oregon Trail and the lives of the pioneers on the trail students will construct their own trunk packing it with only ten items they feel they will need most. Students will then write journal entries explaining their choices. By having to make choices regarding the items they would take on the trail, students need to evaluate their priorities and understand the needs of the pioneers. I feel this project was very effective as it encouraged the students to research, evaluate, and think about their wants vs. needs.

Objectives
The students will research pioneer life, specifically life in a covered wagon, to learn about the items pioneers needed to survive the journey on the Oregon Trail. The students will evaluate information gained through their research to choose items to pack in their own trunks for an imaginary trip on the Oregon Trail. The students will discover some of the struggles early pioneers experienced while planning a trip on the Oregon Trail. The students will analyze and describe their choices by writing paragraphs describing each item chosen and the necessity for that item while on the Oregon Trail. The students will compare this experience to their own lives.

Materials
books and CD Rom of information regarding covered wagons, pioneer life, and the Oregon Trail
cardboard templates of a trunk for each student
cardstock for students to use in constructing items for trunk.
markers, crayons, scissors, and glue
diary sheet for each student

Readiness Activity
Students will hear and read stories, complete Internet web quests, and view multimedia to learn about the pioneers traveling the Oregon Trail before constructing and packing their trunks.

Strategies/Activities
1. Students will construct and decorate their own trunks using a purchased template.
2. As a class, students will brainstorm a list of items pioneers may have packed in trunks for their Oregon Trail journeys.
3. Students will choose only ten items from the list to include in their own trunks.
4. Students will use cardstock to construct these items and place them in the trunks. Students will have to be realistic as to what could fit in real trunks. Representations can be two or three dimensional depending on the abilities of the students.
5. For a final assessment students will

GRADE LEVEL
ARTS
LANGUAGE
MATH
Misc
SCIENCE
HISTORY
SOCIAL STUDIES
PERIODS
$200

TOTAL BUDGET

THIS WINNING PROJECT IDEA SUBMITTED BY:

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write three paragraph essays. They will describe the rationale behind each item being included, describe their feelings related to items they could not pack, and compare this experience to packing for a trip today.

Culminating Activity
Students will gather in small groups to share what they packed and reasons for packing each item.

Evaluation Method
Students will complete written assignments describing the items they have chosen to place in their trunks for their imaginary journeys on the Oregon Trail. The students’ choices and descriptions of items will be evaluated to determine whether they have understood the lifestyle and needs of the pioneers who traveled the Oregon Trail. The option of an oral presentation will be available for students with written language disabilities.