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Four new virtual field trips bring Naper Settlement to online learners with virtual reality, 3D artifacts, and more

NAPERVILLE, IL — Naper Settlement, a nationally accredited outdoor history museum, launched a new Distance Learning Track with four new virtual field trips, designed for students in grades 3-8.

Prior to the Pandemic, over 32,000 elementary and middle school students from across Chicagoland visited Naper Settlement each year. As a result of the COVID pandemic, those visits came to a stop one year ago this month. In response to hearing a need from local teachers, the museum spent three months developing digital field trip programs that have now launched. A team of award-winning museum education specialists, curators, online experience developers, historians, and teachers collaborated on the project to create a remote environment to bring the field trip experience directly into the classroom.

Utilizing virtual reality tours, 3D artifacts, interactive learning videos, and online worksheets and activities, these digital programs bring the museum's most popular field trips — [Living History](#), [History Station \(formerly Schools for Tools\)](#), and [Voices of the Past: Northern Illinois and the Underground Railroad](#) — to online learners throughout Illinois.

In addition, a new field trip was developed as a response to our collective experience from the pandemic. "Illinois is a leader with established standards in social and emotional learning," said Jeanne Schultz Angel, director of learning experiences and historical resources at Naper Settlement. "We created an entirely new program for middle school students using historical examples of creative, resilient responses to challenges of severe weather, community health, and social crises to compliment what is being taught in the classroom." [Lessons in Resilience](#) provides students with ways to build a "resilience toolkit" to help navigate through community challenges.

Each of the four field trips meet a variety of learning standards, including: Illinois State Standards, social Common Core, and NextGen learning standards and programs to supplement school curriculum with historical resources. Administered through Google Classroom, the programs are designed to engage students with self-guided lessons, along with real-time lessons and visits instructed by museum educators. Teachers have the option to complete the digital field trip in one day or over multiple days within their registered week. Each session ranges from 25 to 50 minutes in length. These programs stand alone as remote experiences, and later, when schools return to field trips and other offsite activities, the programs can be used to provide a unique complementary experience to in-person learning.

"The field trips to Naper Settlement are a rite of passage for many. I meet people regularly who still recall churning butter, visiting the blacksmith, and hearing in first-person from the freedom seeker at our Underground Railroad program. It may be 25+ years later, but those memories are still a key part of their understanding of local and American history. It is important to allow today's students the same experience and "ah-ha" moments. We are committed to ensuring that this life-long memory and learning opportunity is not taken away by the pandemic. The virtual capabilities expand our reach by not confining us to traveling distance. The program is now available to every student state-wide," said Rena Tamayo-Calabrese, president and CEO of Naper Settlement. "We see our virtual learning experiences as a key part of engaging students well into the future. The advanced technology used allows students to get even closer to historical resources and spend even more time engaging with Naper Settlement and their interest in history."

To learn more about Naper Settlement's virtual field trips and to register, visit NaperSettlement.org/VirtualFieldTrips.

About Naper Settlement

Naper Settlement is a nationally accredited, award-winning outdoor living history museum set on 13 magnificent acres in the heart of Naperville. Located 30 miles from Chicago, the museum is home to thirty historical structures dating back as early as the 1830s. Featuring exhibits, special events, educational programming and more, Naper Settlement is where history comes alive and the community comes to connect. For more information, visit www.napersettlement.org or call (630) 420-6010.