

Ringling College of Art and Design
Sharing the Art of Possibilities

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Background/Importance: In nearly 60% of schools in India, there are less than 2 teachers in grades 1 to 5 (All India Education Survey), a boiling example of the world's 'learning crisis' (WDR 2018). As a response, we are aiming towards a model that moves past the archaic formats of basic reading and writing; especially considering the rising population and employment uncertainty, and focusing on creative aspects such independent thinking to introduce transformational leaders. India, with over **1.3 Billion** people, is in need of a sustainable solution to this crisis with a community learning model through peace education. According to UNICEF, Peace Education is *"the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior change that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict, both overt and structural; to resolve violence peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level"*. Having been exposed to methods of active learning by attending UWC, our team has experienced the benefits of an educational program that encourages intuitive learning skills and incorporates community-based learning.

Within these "60%" in India, Rohini frequently resided in the rural setting of Chauddachuli, based in the District of Purba Medinipur, West Bengal. Growing up in Mumbai, she noticed a huge disparity between the standard of living, communication, skills and attitudes within the two places' populations. The Purba Medinipur District houses Khejuri block 2 and brings us to the small village of Chauddachuli, with less than 500 residents. Despite its rich past in arts, literature, culture and trade, the now tattered village trudges towards industrial development with access being paved for petroleum and chemical power field opportunities. Additionally, one underpaid teacher attends the school at his own leisure- sometimes less than once a week. Interacting with locals has provided us with insights regarding the obstacles of sea erosion, alcoholism, child marriage and increased pollution, which all point towards the number of disadvantaged households in this region whose means of living severely requires alternatives.

Objectives: Using land accessible to us, we intend to establish a workspace that serves not just as a classroom, but also as a creative learning environment. Introducing the 'workspace' through the format of a month-long curriculum that covers 3 kinds of learning foundational in promoting peace education:

1. **Resource Based Learning** – Bridging gaps between students and resources by funding books, access to technology and teaching productive uses of the internet for educational purposes, as well as ecological Art and crafts materials. We aim to build research and intuitive skill sets in this sector.
2. **Experiential Learning** – Bringing new perspectives/ideas to familiar activities to provoke multi-faced curiosity. Introducing platforms for communication and application of knowledge into new areas of interest supports our aim to build social, investigative and problem-solving skills in this sector.
3. **Facilitating Learning** – Establishing relationships with individuals that cultivate transformational leadership skills, leaving them in charge at the learning center after we facilitate workshops with them. Working with locals mediates between children and new- sometimes alien, ideas of learning, community and potential. Being an economically crippled district, we intend to financially compensate team members for their time and dedication towards the project. We aim to build community relationships/collaboration.

Details: Education polls in India show that children from grades 4-8 are most attentive and present in school (Kingdon, the progress of school education in India). We focus on this demographic after assessing the village youth. It seems as though older age groups become responsible for sustaining the household, having to leave school to work and make money. While younger age groups stand at an impressionable age where complex ideas of passions and skill building would be difficult without a foundational elementary education.

Additionally, we intend on creating and introducing an online platform through the Resource Based Session, a place where there can be continued communication and access to informational media even after the end of our project. This platform could then be used to have contact and create affiliations with other organizations that are in proximity to Chauddachuli.

Program Itinerary:

1. **The Workspace (Introduction/Integration)** – A class that extends through the course of the month, with each one addressing a new resource that we are providing to them.
2. **Field Trips** – With its illustrious history, Chauddachuli holds remains of the past amongst the rubble of the present. We want to provide at least two scheduled field trips where we are able to facilitate familiar and new activities which will then be assessed further through discussions and creative expression i.e. *Activities would be reflected upon in art classes and children would be given the opportunity to communicate experiences in ways other than reading and writing.*
3. **Lectures and Observation** – Locals from different professions demonstrate specific skill sets and knowledge about their passion and provide children with a hands-on experience to develop a sense of hope in realizing alternatives to the conventional means of living which are under threat.

Timeline: This project implementation encompasses 5 weeks.

Week 1: Resources acquired from Kolkata are transported to the workspace and a minimum of 3 sessions are held with pre-established team. Space setup and team briefing.

Week 2: Introducing the workshop. At least 3 sessions that include getting familiar with different media and discussing pre-existing relationships to aspects of technology. **Intended Learning Outcome** is for the children to have established a comfortable relationship with us that promotes eagerness to learn, participate and collaborate.

Week 3: Field Trip, continuing Workspace, and Facilitated workshop. Sessions covering reflection of the field trip through artistic media, introduce an online platform that could be accessed to share and read educational media as well as entertainment. **Intended Learning Outcome** exposure to the children of different perspectives, teaching how, perception differs from person to person. Promoting respect in formulating different opinions and being excited to share/collaborate those opinions and ideas with those around you.

Week 4: Facilitated Workshop and Workspace. Bringing in a local individual that will showcase a specific activity/skill set that the children would interact and participate in. **Intended Learning Outcome** is to invoke conversation of desires to pursue different interests in life in lieu of the facilitated workshops and teaching them how to use access to technology to empower those desires through research, communication and persistence.

Week 5: Field Trip, Workspace, Future Team. Working with the children for sessions of reflection of the overall program. Main focus to solidify transformational leaders team and finalize online platform and communication, hours of access to the workspace, maintenance and most importantly how they themselves want to take forward this space. **Intended Learning Outcome** would largely draw into reflection amongst the group and discussion on the direction they want to continue with the learning space. **Conclusion:** Ideally, this model can be applied to any space that can be assessed of its primary progress inhibiting factors and then integrated into the learning/educational system. Integrating awareness, new perspectives and possibilities help tackle the age-old philosophy of children being the agents of change. This is an attempt to enforce peace education and assess its effectiveness, allow it to be scalable and then provide a revised model that can be further applied and reapplied through sharing and initiating it in other communities and rural settings. This project aims to provide the children of Chauddachuli the access to realizing a brighter future,