

Kids Connected

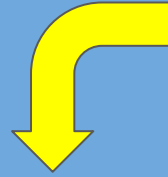
A program dedicated to giving children exposure to diversity and teaching them the value of empathy and acceptance

Kids Connected meets the first and third tuesday of the month. The first meeting includes a guest speaker, while the second meeting is an interactive field trip.

It is an engaging program that introduces various cultures, religions, career paths, and disabilities to children in an accepting and positive environment.



How it Works



Who can join?

There are 12 spots for kids (Ages 7-12). Additionally, the group will be accompanied by 2 Kids Connected Leaders during field trips and guest speaker spotlights to guide the kids through interactive and reflective activities

Guest Speakers may include:

- people of all cultures (From Venezuelan culture to Chinese)
- people of varying disabilities (amputees, members of deaf or blind community etc.)
- speakers of different career paths (Veterans, politicians, fire fighters)

What is the medium?

Engaging guest speakers of a variety of backgrounds paired with interactive field trips

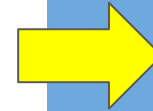


Examples of field trips could include:

- A Chinese New Year Parade
- A restaurant with Greek cuisine
- A history museum that illustrates the hardships of soldiers

How will it affect them?

The exposure to various cultures and ways of life will open their eyes to view the world in a different way. And in turn this will change the way they treat others and explore the world around them. The aim of the program is to connect kids together with different walks of life in order to teach them about empathy and acceptance.



In the long term, Kids Connected wants to give every child across the country the opportunity to be comfortable and open to the world around them.

Manifesto

By Addie Stonecipher

Oftentimes, parents with younger kids find themselves in embarrassing situations where their curious child has no filter over their words or volume. They may see a woman in a hijab and ask, “why is that lady wearing such a weird hat?” Or they could spot a disabled man and inquire, “How come that lazy man is always sitting in that chair?” When this happens, parents are quick to shush their kids, which makes the child believe that these differences they are observing are not to be spoken of or accepted. But in reality, answering a child’s questions in a patient and educational fashion is integral to raising a child who is comfortable around people of various cultures, disabilities, races etc.

In general, fostering curiosity and giving younger kids interactive experiences is a healthy way to expose them to different types of people. In the Kids Connected program, children will be encouraged to ask questions and expose themselves to diversity. The group of kids will meet at the beginning of the month to listen to a guest speaker do their “spotlight.” This is where the speaker explains where they come from, what makes them unique, and how they’ve been treated throughout their life. After the spotlight, kids are encouraged to ask the guest speaker questions, and write a short thank you note to the speaker, reflecting on how their lives differ from each other. This system of active listening and encouraging curiosity is an excellent way for the kids to recognize and accept the differences between themselves and the

lives of the speaker. It exposes them to the lives and daily struggles of others and helps to teach them to learn to empathize, instead of acting like those who differ from them do not exist.

Additionally, the Kids Connected program allows participants to experience the culture of the speaker through field trip activities such as museums, movies, restaurants etc. These field trip activities occur in the third week of the month, and are a more hands on way for the kids to be exposed to diversity in their community. The aim of these field trips is to allow kids to explore new ways of life, and hopefully find pieces of different cultures that they appreciate and want to continue to explore throughout their life.

The Kids Connected has the potential to change the world by guiding a generation to value others’ lives and take interest in the diverse world around them. However, the current limitations of the project are understood. The potential of the program cannot be fulfilled by a group of 12 kids in one town who meet twice a month. In order to change a generation, Kids Connected would need to expand across the country. This could be accomplished by implementing the program into elementary and middle schools. This is a feasible option, since kids ages 7-12 are already familiar with the idea of guest speakers and field trips in school.

However, the current goal of the program is to allow small groups of kids to learn to treat others with respect and empathy, and to find pieces of other cultures and ways of life that they enjoy and can incorporate into the rest of their lives. These kids will learn to flourish, because to understand is to flourish. Through the Kids Connected program, participants will form a better understanding of the people and world around them, and hopefully, it will inspire them to explore new avenues of life in the future.