Students Document History

Somers Historical Society and Somers High School collaborate to create local Covid-19 archive.
Genesis/goals of project:

SHS Library Media Specialist (Christine Drysdale) saw opportunity to teach students about primary sources through creation of them.

Somers Historical Society (Grace Zimmermann) was looking for ways to reach into the community--especially the schools--to build local archive to document Covid-19 pandemic.
Our Collection Process:

➔ Modified questionnaire from APHNYS (Association of Public Historians of NY State) for high school student audience using Microsoft Forms

➔ Discussed privacy concerns
  ◆ Chose SHS Librarian as collection authority
  ◆ Sought approvals from Assistant Superintendent for Learning & Collections Committee of Somers Historical Society
  ◆ Collected only first name and grade of students.

➔ SHS Librarian built a web page as immediate repository for artifacts

➔ Somers Historical Society created link from its website to SHS Library page and other social media platforms

Image source: https://articles.bplans.com/how-to-write-a-business-plan-use-this-checklist-to-keep-yours
Successes so far:

➔ Project expanded districtwide to 4 schools
➔ Raised students’ awareness of role/value of:
  ◆ primary sources
  ◆ school librarians
  ◆ local historians/repositories.
➔ Received local media coverage.
➔ Built new relationships between Somers Historical Society, Somers High School Library & Somers Central School District
➔ Contributed local student/academic observations to permanent archives of Somers Historical Society for its’ Covid-19 Pandemic Collection.
➔ https://www.somerssschools.org/Page/12498
Next steps:

➔ Continue to seek more responses from students.
➔ Create teacher/faculty questionnaire.
Build related projects with interns, scouts.
Collect end-of-academic year artifacts (graduation).
➔ Plan formal presentation of contribution to Society’s Covid-19 Pandemic Archive & some type of exhibition in fall (tentative Oct. -- National Archive Month.)
➔ Society compile all submissions, digitize those not already done, for archives and consideration of submission to NY Heritage collections.
Lessons learned:

➔ Importance of frequent promotion:
  Ongoing communication directly to students and through weekly principal newsletter.

➔ Teachers wanted to be involved but didn’t have time due to curriculum demands.
  ◆ Need to find way to connect to curriculum/classes to increase student participation.

➔ Multiple challenges when quickly pivoting to online formats: Need to seek students/educators/individuals dedicated to collecting and/or creating digitally to maximize collecting.