

Writing and the Specificity of Place

“You are not Done, Yet!”

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Context

Introduction

Conscientious professional educators believe that every child can achieve advancing progress in academic skills each year if they go through a well-planned engaging curriculum using systems of meaningful expectation when learning the content in the classroom. The role of teachers is to introduce, define, and to engage the students in a meaningful curriculum appropriate for grade level knowledge. Effective teachers with commitment find ways to help all students' progress academically despite all counter influences on learning and these effective teachers prepare inclusive or connected lessons regardless of the legal labelling that places children into categories such as SPED, ELL or Gifted. In the remote areas of the Navajo reservation, a common understanding of the widespread low academic performance includes the lack of community-wide reading resources such as access to computer centers where students would have opportunities to study. Some common difficulties for Native American children includes lack of preparedness from home to bridge learning at school, low income home environment where heads of households face daily income challenges, lack of adequate health care, and other factors that add to the deficiencies of minimal achievement. From my personal experience, I hear and visually observe grandparents prioritizing chores and life skills as a primary set or forms of education that closely resemble their own upbringing where they pass these values as guardians. In reflection, many reports and research articles say up to 80% of the Native American communities live with extreme poverty. Encouraging reading by nurturing community wide access to books for children is a daunting challenge in most Navajo communities. Limited access to books or libraries in the rural areas on the reservations is also a barrier to good reading habits. Children rely on school libraries with restrictions in duration of clock time for each book borrowed. They also have to depend on rarely donated books, limited hours in technology reading programs, subscribing to free web sites that have reading materials in science, current events, news articles, and interactive stories. Some educators assist students to make their own books for the family by constructing bond copies of old reading books.

Among stakeholders, the educational institutions have a strong conviction that children have an advantage to succeed and attain a high level of education if the parents are college-educated. If so, Native American children have little chance of success because there are few college-educated parents in the Native communities. In contrast to that thinking, a study by sociologist Mariah Evans at the University of Nevada reported in her research with supporting data that there were no significant differences in student performance between those raised in a home with college-educated parents or in a home with illiterate parents. The study showed that having books in the home equated to student success. The 20-year study showed having 500-book library in the home had a huge influence; this equated to 3.2 years on average gains and success in schools when children have access to books in the home.¹

Thinking about these challenges, I believe teachers can successfully improve some of the deficiencies in reading and writing, this curriculum-writing unit will target children who have little or no access to books at home. Subsequently, weeks prior to the unit, I will build a large amount of books in the classroom to introduce them to a wide variety of reading materials that will be of interest to the students. I will provide an overview of storytelling techniques and practice oral traditional readings. Reading aloud of storybooks has been part of the students' learning in their

first year of schooling; therefore, the students will be excited to hear self-picked interest related stories. Traditionally, young people learn to listen to elder's stories by sitting around the campfire. I will build on the idea of strength coming from the family in classroom circle stories. Native children need to hear and learn the language spoken as oral communication to put meaning and expectations into the curriculum objective. I will read some Navajo poems written by poets such as Rex Lee Jim, Luci Tapahonso, and Sherwin Bitsui.

Rex Lee Jim writes about language in Navajo words entitled Sa'ad "...sacred language I am, this I am, people think with me, people act with me, people pray with me, people sing with me, people speak with me, language I am, sacred language I am" (NAIS 2017). Jim emphasizes the importance of the beginning, the present, the continuation that maintains culture and the unique differences that make people who they are. Pertaining to the thoughts or writing perspective of students, it gives them an enchanting access to both Navajo/Diné and English words through poetry and writing that can come out in the "voice" of their writing.

To bridge the stories from their elders with their own experience, I will create this unit around the theme of horses. As they approach and create a poem or story, the students can reflect their knowledge, experience, and bonds they have with horses. Many of the students connect naturally with horses. You hear stories of most young Navajo children being put on a horse with his/her folks to create a connection of how horses heal. They are told to ride horses, listen to narrative of how horses bond them, and they evolve into a relationship together. Even if they don't have direct experience with horses, their family stories can provide that connection, as can books they may read for the class library. We can acknowledge and speak in a holistic perspective from the cultural sense and strengthen the power connected to horses in their heritage. Native elders and research also tells us the Navajo culture is losing their native language, so this is a good way of conversing in Navajo about horses and learning some terms about horses and listening to poets that write in the Diné language.

Storytelling as an oral tradition has been practiced for generations and has always been part of the Navajo cultural tradition. In today's classroom, stories read aloud end with inquiring questions. This is in contrast to the traditions of oral stories told by grandparents and the young children were discouraged to ask questions. Nevertheless, it was understood by all, that children would listen with undivided attention to understand the story and to connect the story to present life events surrounding the listener to build strength in life and success. In the unit, I will assess the success of assigned readings by asking students to produce reflective writings, summaries and reading lists. My belief is that exposure to this reading material will captivate student interest to build an extensive personal reading materials. The reading material in this unit would include fairytales, comic books, storybooks, magazines, newspapers, sports articles, chapter books, and novels about Native Americans and more. I will lead instructional workshops in successive order first in poetry writing styles, next in creative story format, and lastly in the narrative personal essay writing. At the end of each seventh day, students will produce a final written draft that been revised several times. Those students needing assistance will take part in a small writing workshop and/or intervention session to meet proficiency/unit goals.

Demographics

Kaibeto Boarding School is located in a remote rural area in northern Coconino County in Arizona. The nearest city is Page, Arizona, which is 38 miles west where most citizens of Kaibeto travel to shop for groceries and essential items. Page is a large town sustained by a significant tourism generated economy; these places include Antelope Canyon, Lake Powell recreation, and viewing the engineering marvel of Glen Canyon Dam. Kaibeto has approximately 1,600 Navajo people; there is a one-room convenient corner store with a gas station off Highway 160/Route 89 junction. The elevation is 5,610 feet with many red-colored mesas and stretches of plateau with 8" of annual rain so any type agricultural development is not feasible (Wikipedia 2017). The only significant employment opportunity is the small store and Kaibeto Boarding School (KBS), with a school enrollment of at least 210 students yearly in grades Kindergarten through eighth grades. The school's dormitory houses at least 30 students and the rest travel daily in buses within the local 9-mile radius and from local Navajo Housing Authority (NHA) areas. The seven-year-old school building is new and pleasant. The school has 100% Navajo students. Oddly, most of the students are not fluent in Navajo. The Navajo language is a required weekly special class presented by two language teachers. Based on research, young parents of today's students are themselves not fluent speakers, possibly stemming from suppressed language during their parents' boarding school days, and generations of Navajo language suppression by the dominant culture. To reverse the trend of losing the language, the Navajo Nation established an on-going initiative to provide instruction in the Navajo language and the tribal government mandated all bureau schools to integrate teaching the language into the curriculum.

Rationale

How can children find their voices if they are not certain of who they are and where they are coming from? The target population living in an isolated community have no access to common amenities like libraries, kids' clubs, or shopping plazas. The nearest public library is over forty miles away. It is a challenge to divert them from their only source of social enrichment rooted and engrained in values from social media, televisions, gaming software and phones. Thus, use of Facebook, twitter, Instagram on their phone is available to them in these community. The coded social media writing with multiple new words having meaning different to each generation. This media is influencing them to imagine how others live and what is valued. Missing are structured tools for creative writing, critical thinking, and the use of sensory language that involves characters, settings, events, climax, and conflicts. In contrast, I plan to help my students write not only from meaningful family lives but also from their own, and in their own voice.

As educators facilitate in the process, students become better listeners, better readers, better writers, and better communicators. Within the writing unit, I will stress the component *voice* from the six traits of writing, by viewing social media or grandparents' emphasis on present issues of importance. As professional educators, we can emulate the same concept by allowing our students of today to walk, explore, and shadow others' voices through social media to improve upon their own, whether it be identity, goals, or learning to communicate through different writing styles. Students still struggle with writing effectively just knowing *what* to write is a problem for students barely learning *how* to write in fourth grade. In the unit, as they read and immerse themselves in the selection of readings given as a daily reading, writing personal journals, or listening to beliefs and philosophy told to them by their grandparents, they will eventually have their own authentic voices as they participate in the curriculum unit. Reading regularly to children at a young age or

even before birth gives a great advantage or steppingstone to strengthening better readers as well as better writers. Storytelling has always been a key to living in harmony with values and morals within their culture. Within listening to grandparents, the narrative portrays knowledge in learning about the land, the culture, walking clockwise for balance. Stories are powerful as it also reveals earth stories, human stories, celestial stories, or animal stories. It is also a key to academic success in Western society where we meet the needs of the students within a school building today. To incorporate the educative themes of Navajo/Diné language, I am aware of the schism of the norms in the people one and two generations back when the language usage was all Navajo throughout the communities. The challenge is to seek meaningful ways to include the writing of their Native language and the richness of their past.

Teachers often feel challenged with how to encourage students to enjoy writing or how to impress proficiency in written communication. Scaffolding writing components are often ignored in school curriculum, additionally, the teachers feel unqualified. There are usually no set writing programs to follow or teachers feel uncomfortable teaching writing or teachers may feel they themselves are not good writers. Furthermore, school administrators fail to bring in professional development to advance teachers on how to teach foundational writing in the school systems. The emphasis is typically on math and reading/ELA on “how-to” but certainly not writing training. Moreover, given the opportunity teachers feel constrained in teaching a writing unit because it is beyond their frame of reference. They also attribute deficiencies to the time limitations for writing imposed upon them by state standards. Still others want to avoid adding writing to elementary curriculum because writing curriculum remains as a middle and high school instruction goals. One way to combat this would be center their attention on their culture. Thus, I will filter the lesson through the student’s knowledge and experiences with horses. This will ease them effortlessly into writing about horses in the three different genres as their assignment. Those students choosing to write their poems in Navajo will be afforded that opportunity.

In the unit, students will write three assignment, a poem, a short story, and an essay, with the overarching topic theme of “horse.” Examples of illustrations with words written in the Diné language and displaying things as livestock care, names of apparatuses used to manage horses, and descriptive names of horses can contribute to integrating the Diné language to maintain and fulfill the language and culture mandate from the Navajo Nation. In the Diné culture, the learning philosophy is rooted in understanding ourselves, we should understand who we are, and in our upbringing, we develop an awareness of our surroundings, and the four sacred directions within the four sacred mountains. Grandparents and uncles take time to instruct, direct, or train how to do things such as how to train young colts for riding, care for the livestock, saddling a horse, and many jobs on a ranch for sustainability in growing up. They are listening to their family stories indicating their early participation in storytelling traditions contrasted to traditions embedded in the regular classroom such as how horses contribute to cultural stories. My observation and growing up on the Navajo reservation, mostly all families have livestock of cattle, sheep, and horses on a range. Therefore, most stories the young children hear are of how horses have made differences in the livelihood of the Navajo culture. Based on this cultural philosophy, I want to utilize the knowledge and Navajo philosophy of living in harmony because it gives a different way of looking at their world either through nature or through balance.

Many research publications reflect that if a young child is encouraged to start scribbling, they can develop aptitude to use for paper and pencil. Specifically, children finger painting and making letters or words as they scribble, even tracing letters or words written in the dirt, will encourage holding or utilizing a writing tool and develop eye-hand movement important in reading and writing. In the classroom, we will model listening to stories as well as writing, which is the emphasis of oral stories as much as written parts.

In any writing curriculum, there are several important critical points: teachers need to support development of writing skills that students bring as writers, to learn the writing process, to develop critical and creative thinking skills, and to gain knowledge of language usages. These elements translate into other necessary aspects of life, including being an active citizen and becoming a lifelong learner.

To write effectively requires familiarity of language structure and convention. I will implement the writing process through a focused reading and writing school adopted program called *Step Up to Writing*. This systematized program has a format for writing processes; I will incorporate this methodology as a model to teach writing mechanisms. Building the foundation and motivation to write must begin early in the year, children should learn to journal in all subject areas using basic writing skills as a fundamental skill. Embedding vocabulary is important since students need to be learning vocabulary at all time, words such as equestrian, canter, stable, etc., relating to their topic of horse in the curriculum unit.

The school's adopted reading curriculum *Journey* has an ELA component of common core standards, the state standards and Navajo Nation standards will be used to demonstrate that students can engage themselves to write their stories or poems with ease and clarity. Journey from HBH series provides language skills that enable ELL to engage with core instruction. In 1984, the Navajo Nation mandated schools to implement Navajo language and culture instructions as part of the schools' curriculum; therefore, students could translate their written poems into the Navajo language to help fulfill this mandate. My curriculum unit will have playful and engaging lessons to help the students learn basic writing, because fourth graders are still struggling with techniques. For example, when writing a story, students could use character maps where they have to identify a setting, and characters in team grouping. As the students' progress, they improve in writing stories that are considerably more complex and they become better storytellers. This approach teaches children to dive deeper into content and introduces them to critical thought. They could also be developing interest by interviewing grandparents. The curriculum delivery will engage students to follow the brainstorm, draft, revise, edit and publish format along with the teaching of the six-trait writing model with a basic emphasis on voice. Engaging activity based on story reading and discussions, grandparents will participate as storytellers so students can relate to the stories and become comfortable themselves as readers, writers, and oral storytellers.

Content Objectives

The four-week writing curriculum unit is designed for fourth grade students with a goal to develop basic understanding of the writing process, storytelling, the six traits of writing with a focus on voice, and three specific styles of writing. As most teachers realize after being in the classroom for several years, writing is complex for children to do. The importance of writing is a common belief,

students need it for effective communication and the skill requires priority for our students at all school service levels.

Students become invested writers if they learn from where the written word comes. Cave paintings, petroglyphs or hieroglyphs used as a form of communication using pictorial signs. (History of Writing, 2017) The first practical application probably varied, created, as a tool in tracking bundles of straw or perhaps the petroglyphs were a tool to tell a story for the future or records of synthesized thoughts. Many historians agree thousands of years ago, these purposeful applied writing began in Mesopotamia, present day Iraq. Historians write the Sumerians developed writing around 5,500 BC and continued into Egypt around 3200 BC. There is also evidence by 1300 BC, there was writing systems appearing in Shang-dynasty China and in Mesoamerica between 900 and 600 BC.

The students will view video on the history of writing on a linked “YouTube” video as a class; the goal is to provide students an opportunity to gain a meaningful perspective on the origin of writing. Learning objectives should include how and why writing was developed including its evolution into common uses in today’s world. The pictographs evolve into development of phonograms. In the YouTube video from *Thoth’s Pill: An Animated History of Writing*, the narrator Jessica Rudder states, “Sauth, the Egyptian inventor, wanted to invent a writing system. His leader, King Sagnon, warned him that he would invent a drug that would allow people to lose touch of themselves.” (History of Writing, 2017). Thus, the need to use writing to communicate and drawings for practical reasons about specific subjects in their lives were something dear and near to their lives and livelihoods. Therefore, in this curriculum, the idea that the English language allows an opportunity into our own way of perception as the students developing an understanding of the English language as they write on the assigned topic “horse.” As Sherwin Bitsui also states writing is the “ability is empowering us to bring it into our field of understanding and expression” (2013). The educational goals and related objectives is to develop a good understanding of the knowledge of language structure and grammar usage. I will use the school’s approved language arts and reading program to cover English grammar of basic mechanics. Furthermore, I will use reliable texts from Scholastic News, Science Spin, science texts, or social studies articles. These primary texts will serve as a reading chunk for discussion as dependable examples of grammar usage and paragraph organization. For example, students will view a selected paragraph; look at the structure, indentation, topic and concluding sentence, and the four elements of a good paragraph by looking at unity, order, coherence, and completion. Through explicit teaching, in mini-lessons, students will see formation of written paragraphs, and bringing language to life. Lessons and discussions on understanding may include topic sentences; supporting sentences, concluding sentences, and transitional words. This would include how paragraphs come together as part of the learning sections each week.

The curriculum unit will consist of studying the writing mode through whole-class power point presentations. The evaluation using a specific writing rubric as part of the state standard will combine with peer and teacher editing team. I will incorporate storytelling by reading within each writing mode by informally reading from the module of literature to present in the unit. The three specific styles of writing and the products in this unit will include one poem, one creative story, and one personal narrative essay.

The oral readings will mostly include Native American related poems and books based on cultural perspectives written by Native American authors followed by brief discussions. Storytelling will be accomplished through the readings of storybooks and on scheduled time by grandparents telling their traditional stories. This will build an appreciation of writing styles as well as perspective of their own backgrounds and an understanding that there are people of Native American descent who are, in fact, writers. In the first week, students will focus on poetry readings and analyze the different styles of poetry. The students will study first two types of poetry; the acrostic poetry and then quatrains, and then be able to write their poetry assignment using either preferred style. Culminating after 7/8 days with a written product, each day will include the introduction of creative poetry and its components. Some poets to include will be Rex Lee Jim, Luci Tapahonso, Arthur Sze, Maya Angelo, Shel Silverstein, Paul Goble, and Byrd Baylor as a few. The selected poets and writers is based on their description of natural living and use of language as important components of culture and identity.

Upon completion of poetry writing, I will include further studies of reading and viewings of creative stories including fairytales, picture books, non-fiction readings and stories from the school's curriculum reading series, "Horses." Books, articles, and poems on horses will be a compiled selection as they engross themselves to feel out and begin to synthesize or engage in conversation with friends or relatives to build ideas and thoughts for their pieces to create. Following that, continued instructions will be mini-lessons and writing workshop on creative stories and its components. Again, at the ending of the seventh or eighth day, students will have written pieces of their short creative stories. Research states that teacher modeling, systematic instruction, and consistent discussion is most effective (Dunn, 2011). A systematic approach helps students to begin a story, plan a stage, and the teacher to monitor progress to develop an effective intervention instructional practice. The completion of the story with analysis of writing stages is an integral part of the process. Systematic processing approach is thorough in the steps of generating ideas, general setting, and detailed events in the plot. Within the third or fourth week of the curriculum unit, students will again engage in reading several personal essays. Subsequently, students will take part in the teachings of how to write a personal narrative essay before their own attempt at creating one.

Anchor charts usage is critical for all the three styles of writing and teaching of the concepts or ideas needed for visual representation and reference points. Most state standardized assessment all utilized poetry, stories, and/or essay to prompt and elicit stimulus within the test outline. In lieu of added exposure to this type of writing, learning how to analyze, and synthesis of the texts will be appropriate practice.

From the six traits of writing that all grade-level students are to learn, I will focus on "voice" as a starting point of learning as this is usually a challenge for majority of writers. Oral speech is the writer coming through with words, we see the personality, we see the attitude, we see the heart or soul, and we see the tone and flavor of the piece. Fulwiler makes a comparison of whether an author has one authentic voice in a public form and/or a published voice. He concluded, "Authentic voices can best be found by looking at whole pieces of discourse, preferably more than one, and by looking at samples written to different audiences for different purposes." In the written pieces, students should have authentic voices by design towards public voice because of the strong determination and inspiration of a person's topic and attitude (1988. Fulwiler, T). The learning mechanisms of voice will integrate cultural aspects of the Navajo values of goal setting

development instilled by the concept to analyze self, using Nitsa'hakees (thinking.) Other goals are to learn publishing techniques of book making, typing and illustrating all three written pieces as they collaborate as writing teams. The objective would also include learning to communicate what they know, whom they are as a native people and how they appreciate a life of a horse living in the white and brown sandstones mesas and grand plateaus of their land.

Contents

Writing Process

Expectations in elementary schooling include writing with clarity by fourth grade at the age of eight or nine. Having traced the origins of writing from stone carving to words on clay, to “lights” and sound on a screen, these are facing challenges to articulate thoughts on paper thousands of years later. They must learn challenging rules in grammar or language usage and writing along the way. The rules include grammar, penmanship, spelling, speaking, listening, reading and writing using a standardized process. In composition, rules are set as foundational writing skills and to create a writing product that is smooth and understandable for readers. The six steps include prewriting, plan a rough draft, revise the draft, edit and proofread, and making a final copy for publication. This process takes a student through several steps. Beginning with a brainstorming session, where students make idea choices or ask prewriting questions to guide the process such as what is the purpose, what would I like to write about, what do I want to tell my readers, do I have information I need, etc. In a rough draft, thoughts and feelings are scribble as a verified piece, and in the revise step, the product is edited for better communication. The next step is to edit and proofread where the composition is checked for spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar, sentence structure and word usage using an editing chart. The last step would be to publish or share it with others in different forms like a play, display, and or bind into a book as a final piece.

Six + 1 Trait of Writing

It is essential that educators know the terminology of the six traits to give proper, concise, and evidence-based feedback on the learning layout. Many school districts plan writing as an essential subject to teach but fall short of definite integration, and generally writing is part of a reading series. Research shows there is a relationship between the reading ability and writing ability of students as they go between stories read to them or ones they have read in text when writing. In classrooms, writing assignments are from texts read in the basic class literature. Students have stories read to them, and then guided discussions lead to a format for building reading and writing connections as teachers integrate explicit strategies to assist students to write their own stories (Weih. 2005).

The six + one traits are; ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation. The first trait is ideas. Ideas is the content of the piece, the main theme, and written clearly with important details. The topic is usually narrowed with supporting details that provide information, and make it more unique. Organization as the second trait; the structure and sequence as it fits in around the central idea and how it is presented. This can be achieved through comparison and contrast, chronological order, and/or point by point analysis. The way it comes together needs to be strong where readers can see how it’s meaningful, bridges the ideas together, and all proceeds logically so readers go away feeling contentment yet thoughtful around the

resolution. Word choice as a third trait is always entertaining to learn because it involves rich, precise language that enlightens the readers. Writers choose the right words that will create a vivid colorful picture in the mind and students learn how to express their thoughts in this manner. The way word choice moves the readers is sensory, strong choices through use of figurative language include metaphors, simile, or personification. The next trait is Voice. You can recognize the writer's personality, the attitude, the tone and a feeling of being in a place is coming through the writer as if he is verbally voicing the thoughts. In voice, a writer is engaged by interests, enthusiasm, and builds a connection to the reader. Sentence fluency as the fourth trait, again, is just that, the sentences in the writing has a flow and readers follow the rhythm and movement of the written language. The sentences have structure, a beginning, a style, and the way words play in the ears. Sentences enhance the topic, have a smooth flow to show how ideas are related, transitions should show relationship, and the writing is easy to read. The next trait is Convention; meaning the mechanics of the piece contains editing; the correctness with the five elements of writing. The five elements are spelling, capitalization, punctuation, grammar usage, and paragraphing format. Students and teachers will use checklists to ensure precision of spacing, spelling, and proper use of grammar to aid in and add style to the writing. Presentation is the last trait as a plus one because it is not directly taught as a skill but considered to exist for once a written piece is complete, it needs a meaningful presentation form. According to research, even if the written piece is outstanding, there is a guideline to follow for presentation. This includes balance of white space within the written page of texts, neatness, font selection, borders, and appearances that readers and the environment will accept as the polished piece.

Poetry

Poetry is a form of writing that uses rhythm and lines connecting images and metaphors to convey thoughts and emotions. Poetry consists of parts, types, structures, and fundamentals of a poem with seven basic key terms for poetry. They are cadence-meaning patterning of rhythm, meter meaning the rhythmical patterns of stressed and unstressed syllable, and refrain meaning a phrase repeated throughout the poem. Rhyme is a repetitive syllable usually at end of a verse line, stanza is the group of lines that form the unit in a poem. Tone is simply the attitude the poet exudes toward the subject. Verse describes the arrangement of the metrical rhythm.

In this unit, students will write in two styles of poetry, acrostic and quatrain poetry. Acrostic poetry is the simplest to learn to write and easiest for young students based on its non-conventional style of writing. This poetry style uses the first letter of a word with each letter written vertically, and then related and associated phrases are written horizontally on each line. In this style, a keyword or words written vertically will be the topic. Quatrains is a four-line poem that has alternating rhyme in a four pattern of ABAB, AABA, AABB, and ABCB. The first and third lines would have the last word in that line rhyme making the pattern of A, B, A, B with any number of stanzas. Student may answer reflective question on their understanding of acrostic poetry and quatrain poetry as an understanding or evaluation.

Creative Writing – Story

The elements for a creative writing are characters, setting, problem, events, and resolution. The characters are people, animals, or things in the story that tell who or what the story is about. The characters think, feel, or act in specific ways in the story as they go through challenges or some

type of change the character faces in the story. The setting is when and where the story is taking place and may have more than one place in the story. The story will have events or plot, with a beginning, a middle with what is happening and an end the finish of the story. This is where most of the writing will take place. Last part of the story will be the resolution where the problem is resolved. In the creative writing, the students will create a problem where something does not go right and how the character has to learn something for a resolution to take place.

Narrative Writing – Personal Narrative Essay

The three types of narrative writing are imaginative narrative, nonfiction narrative, and personal narrative studied in this grade. All narrative writing has descriptive language, strong details, and dialogue to help readers see what is happening, and last it has a beginning, middle, and end. Personal writing is a true story about an experience that happened to the writer. A personal narrative essay includes an introduction, a conclusion, and is writing in first-person point of view. An explanation of a problem requiring solution or active reaction within the writing is in the introduction. A good essay includes vivid details, descriptions and possibly a message for the reader to understand and which might tie back in the conclusion. A personal narrative essay planning and organizing in events using the five senses. It should also demonstrate lessons learned, use time chronologically, and should include some reflection of the significance of the event. In this unit, students will write a personal narrative essay as they tell their story about an experience they had with a horse. An imaginative narrative is a fictional story that has made-up characters and events where a problem exists for solving and writing from any point of view. A nonfiction narrative is a story that has real people and events written from what really happened or from history written in third person.

Storytelling

Storytelling is an oral tradition passed from generation to generation. “The printed word was not present yet, so stories were told orally to preserve the history and culture” (Keller 2010). When used in a school setting, many elements are effective as an instructional strategy. It encourages listeners to acquire knowledge about past events, augments listening skills, teaches vocabulary understanding, promotes enjoyment, and strengthens reading or language arts skills. Storytelling is multipurpose including making it parallel to life-skill experience, fostering listening cohesion, providing holistic synopsis, encouraging active listeners, and instilling cultural values and morals “...presenting a story in a manner that reflects the interconnectedness of all aspects of life through time.” (Inglebret et al. 2008)

Cultural Diné Connection: Four Principles of Philosophy

In this unit, I will connect related Navajo language words specific to horses and how the culture honors horses in songs, stories, and ceremonies as told by the elders in the tribe. The Native American people embraced horses as spiritual bonds of beauty, energy, and healing power. Horses brought to the native land begin an unbreakable relationship and by 1700’s all tribes used horses as warfare help. The Navajo people embraced horses as strength and assets for the people. As students share stories of their horse tradition experiences, they begin to recognize parallels and differences, thus bringing them to an appreciation and acceptance (Hall, 2014).

Additionally, another cultural teaching to include will be the four principles of the Navajo philosophy of thinking, planning, living, and nurturing of man as idea of hope. Each has its own divine unique spiritual and physical significance. Each principle applied within the writing process and in creation of the writing pieces. The first principle the thinking, called Nitsa'hakees, is for logical thinking or understanding/critical thinking. Nitsa'hakees as a spirit of dawn is the self-discipline of being attentive, becoming prepared and thinking. This will include the students brainstorming, the pre-write, and the first method of a writing process. The second principle is the planning called Nahaatah. This understanding includes learning plans of knowledge or information where the planning of the draft will take place. The rough draft is writing with a plan in mind and getting a well- developed piece of writing set in place intended for readers. The third principle taught in the Navajo philosophy is *Ina* meaning life or living, therefore in the writing process the connection is voice. This is whereas human 'being,' knowledge of social learning, interpersonal relations, intelligence, and abilities to become culturally knowledgeable and being able to lead occurs. Voice builds the attitude necessary to be socially and intelligently aware of sensibly relating with the world around, hence understanding the purpose of "horse" in their lives, based on adherence to the philosophy of life or living as an *Ina* principle. The fourth principle is the nurturing of man or hope called Sihasin. This principle is complex in that any individual has potential to excel in their life journey and co-exist with the *Hozho*, meaning beauty and contentment (Navajo Wellness Model). Therefore, in this principle, the student is at a completion of his writing assignment satisfied and accomplished with the piece ready for publishing and grading.

Teaching Strategies

PowerPoint: Direct Instruction.

Power Point slides will be presented on meaningful topics; poetry, story, essay, horses, writing process all from the six-trait voice. The whole group instruction is to reinforce and strengthen student's understanding of the concepts with further discussion in small groups for focused skills. Other whole class direct instructions will include multiple modalities such as interactive notes, video demonstrations, picture books, foldable, etc., to frame the lesson. This is a time for the students to learn the specific topic or skills. I will engage students so there is enthusiasm, and provide a gateway for them to publish pieces of personal written work. Finally, they can assemble their pieces into a book to share.

Graphic Organizer.

The use of graphic organizer is an effective tool to provide visual diagram aid so students are able to read and understand difficult text. Furthermore, use of graphic organizers have always been an useful tool for the teaching as it helps students organize their thoughts, in smaller chunks, and improve vocabulary and comprehension skills. Students will work in teams to brainstorm ideas, organize plans, structure a writing project, map sequences of events, and guide decisions on the topic or writing genre presented. The graphic organizers will include KWL, story map, T-Chart, concept map, etc., as they form pictures and thus allowing the brain to see patterns and relationships.

Technology

Incorporating technology standards into the fourth grade classes for group projects serves as multi-purpose tool including the continuing development of technological skills. Teams of students may conduct research on specific concepts to enhance the understanding of familiar expectations or activities. These may include horses; how horses behave, what feed to give it, how to comb a horse, and history of horse usage. Other learning objectives is use of internet for topic research as a new opportunity to writing research reports or creating diagrams of a horse or timeline as interest-based team project. A mode of presentation may be to develop a PowerPoint slide show. As they work in teams, emphasis on conceptual understanding along with drawings, use of technology, and the familiarize self to understand their research study and present the findings.

Cooperative learning

To learn in a cooperative group is important to any student population based on opportunities to see many different perspectives. This strategy allows students to gain more when working collaboratively and taking on other roles in the strategy such as facilitator or recorder to complete assigned tasks. Strategically grouping students is necessary to enhance the learning process of each individual student, specifically in collaborative setting. Peer editing requires extra time for students to edit correctly and have frequent and immediate feedback, redirection, and an abundance of positive reinforcement.

Chair-Share-Retell-Write

This strategy affords the students the opportunity to share a story they are thinking of writing on in an assignment. In partners of two, they sit facing each other. The first student tells a story orally while second person listens without interruption. Then the listener retells his partner the story he just told as accurately as he remembers, and may ask for clarification on parts as needed. Then the role is reversed. The listener is now the storyteller while the first student is the listener, and ask for clarification or adds praises as needed. After both have told their stories and have explored unclear parts, they will both will write the story they shared with their partner.

Classroom Activities

I will build upon the resources of the households and family stories and experiences. The majority of the students come from large families with extended relatives living in their household. Based on this understanding and the fact that they love oral stories and picture books because they are still struggling with reading, I must have some practical strategies to help those who are having difficulty in the transition of free rein at home to structured format in school to accomplishing a task at school. Many children's family relationship includes artists, different craftsmanship within the extended family; they are exposed and taken part in crafting art works. They have first-hand seen talents such as horsemanship, artists, singers, weavers, bead makers, fruit canners, pottery makers, and cooks, etc. Those struggling with literacy can find benefits of engagement and motivation in building stories through drawing and writing. Simply by recall of products being completed at home as grandma finishes her rug to sell, students will see the value of their writing production. The strategies should assist them as visual learners thinking with the right side of the brain. I will encourage students to retain a three-ring binder to keep ideas for writing projects.

1. Daily Creative Writing Captions Center Activity: This is a paired writing activity to encourage quick writing, confidence, and to build 'write daily' experience. Create several folders with collections of pictures, photos, magazine cutout, landscape pictures, animal pictures, or images from internet. Daily on set schedule (limit 20 minutes) students will select a picture from the folder and write one to two paragraphs about the image they had chosen. They will assist each other with vocabulary, paragraph, description, spelling, etc. This also introduces freedom to write, writing time is available on whatever interests them in a relaxing and fun mode of writing.
2. Reading and Response Writing Center: Three books "The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses" by Paul Goble, and "The Gift of the Sacred Dog" by Paul Goble, and "Every Cowgirl Needs a Horse" by Rebecca Janni & Lynne Arvil will be placed in the Reading and Response Writing Center for one week (you may place your own selection of readings). Activity: The tasks will be similar for all the three readings at different time throughout the two weeks. In teams of three, students will first read the selected book together. Second, discuss and answer comprehension questions based on the assignment. Third, brainstorm words or ideas they may need to use for their story or poem based on the reading. A Frayer model will accompany task for vocabulary building which each student will complete independently when the activity is completed as an exit ticket.
3. Storyboard: Storyboard is a hands-on drawing as an effective thinking tool. This has been used in making of many movies and films for centuries, now effective in the classrooms. This tool will show the process of outlining and telling their story from beginning to middle to end. Activity: Student are given a storyboard frame to draw or sketch consecutive frames, making it easy to write out the dialogue or details. They will number the frames, and draw a storyboard that breaks down the action of their story into panels as they draw series of activities happening in each frame from beginning to end. Students will sequence the story as they engage in the drawing making this an excellent tool for our native visual learners. Next, they will write their story using the frames. For struggling writer, an alternative may be listen to a story and then draw a few frames of the main events in order until they become familiar with the idea and then should be able to work on their own story. Teachers may allow any length of squares and frames, and used for any tasks in any subject area. In this curriculum, students may work in teams to start a story using pictures they drew for their horse story.
4. Student Research: Activity: Given an animal research report form, students in teams will conduct a short research report on horse. Provided instructions will include blank research report forms to fill spaces as internet search. Upon taking notes, the teams will write out introductory paragraphs, and write at least five paragraphs that clearly describes related activities in everyday life. Lastly, include one interesting fact about this animal.
5. The Name is Right! The Price is Right! Activity Objective: In the Navajo language, I will read aloud the Navajo names of an equestrian item. In the Navajo language, I will write and read the price or cost of the equestrian item. Procedure: 1. In partnerships, the have a hint sheet about equestrian item (picture and Navajo words –picture of saddle and word-*lii bigheel*) to study and review prior to the activity. After five minutes of studying return all hint sheets. 2. Introduce the instruction of the game; a) select a picture item card. b) Read and say the item in Navajo (if picture of a saddle, then say "lii bigheel" in Navajo; if no picture but the Navajo words "lii bigheel," then say "saddle." Correct or assist each other as needed. 3. Next students will make a guess on the price of the item. (Example:

saddle worth \$200.00) and write it on a post it. In pairs, one student will look up the item on the hint sheet that shows possible prices and read the cost (number) in the Navajo language. This is a second attempt at using the Diné language, first in reading the name of the item and second in reading a number in Navajo. Assist each other in practicing the words before stitching roles and second partner will do the reading of his equestrian item card. The partners that guesses the price closest to the original price of the item gets a point. Materials: Hint sheets, Equestrian Picture Item Cards. (E.g. nylon halter - \$10.00; flyguard - \$15.00; exercise saddle - \$70.00, etc) Suggestions: For "The Name is Right! The Price is Right!" game, to continue another set of cards can be created where students have to identify the parts of the horse, like "leg" in the Diné language that the students are to become familiar with for their Navajo language classes.

Student Assessment Plan

Formative assessments are a good daily tool used as needed and an on-going process of the curriculum unit to determine whether the method is meeting the objective learning goals. The completion of daily activities will serve as the daily formative assessment. Opportunities to self-assess their performance in the form of completion assignments, project-based learning activities, formative Quick Write, and the completion product is the reference. Upon completion of the poem, the creative story, and the personal narrative essay is use as final assessments utilizing a writing rubric. Students will have had plenty of time to reflect on their understanding of their center assignment at the end of the day as exit ticket (may be simple answers like "I am able to indent my paragraphs" etc.) as a goal. During the project, students will also create a vocabulary worksheet in the form of Frayer model to learn terminology specific to horses and to the writing mode of study. At end of each week, they will earn points for attempts made on the centers available and reviewing of their writing binder. Most Quick-Writes will be on responses based on writing discussion where they give a short-written response to an open-ended prompt used as critical thinking exercise and or to assess their thinking. Other assessment could be short formative quizzes to assess understanding, as well as an end of curriculum unit summative assessment on writing modes.

Arizona State Standards and the Common Core State Standards:

The Native specific learning curriculum unit meets the Arizona State Standards, the Common Core State Standards and incorporation of the Navajo Nation Language Standards in all components of reading, listening and speaking, and writing.

The Common Core State Standards uses Reading, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening aligned with Arizona State standards. The standards include research and evidence based on vigorous content and the application of knowledge through higher-order thinking skills. Writing uses effective writing on how student's express personal knowledge, journal writing, in speaking and listening, and collaborative engagement opportunities in small groups and to conduct research. Additionally, students will be assessed on author's voice; mini-lessons that focuses on understanding attitude and audience in writing. Finally, command of grammar and usage conventions are included within the writing assignments given. The curriculum unit will cover the standards with whole group direct instruction, strategies to incorporate new

vocabulary on writing, group assignments to assist in conducting research, and to demonstrate proficiency of content area knowledge.

CCSS.LITERACY-ELA.RL.4.3 Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions)

ELA.RL.4.5 Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.4.4.B Read grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings.

CCSS.LITERACY.ELA.4.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

ELA.4.W.3.a Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

ELA.4.W.3.b Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations

ELA.4.W.3.c Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.

ELA.4.W.3.d Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

ELA.4.W.3.e Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

CCSS.LITERACY.ELA.4.W.4.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above).

ELA.4.W.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grade 4).

ELA.4.W.6 With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to complete a writing task.

CCSS.LITERACY.ELA.W.4.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

CCSS.LITERACY.ELA.W.4.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes, categorize information, and provide a list of sources.

CCSS.LITERACY.ELA.W.4.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

ELA.4.W.9.b Apply grade 4 Reading standards to informational texts.

CCSS.LITERACY.ELA.W.4.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.4.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

Navajo Nation Diné Standard Alignments

The Navajo Nation Standards would encompass the Department of Diné Education that states that they ensured curriculum units be strong in Diné language, history, culture, and values. Based on students' upbringing with horses and sacred stories related, I will include stories that horse have autonomy and speaks to us of different things, thus are connected to the four sacred mountains of the Navajo. Along with the colors of the four mountains we are also taught the horse is related and connected to the mountains as the horse exude the same color of the mountains. In the east is the white shell mountain, along with that is the white shell colored horse. In the east is the turquoise mountain and a horse that is colored turquoise. In the west is abalone mountain and an abalone colored horse that can be beige, or pinto colored. In the north is black jet mountain and black horse represent this mountain. Therefore, the curriculum unit will include Character Building standards; Concept 1; I will develop and apply critical thinking to establish relationship with the environment. I will develop personal goals to express relationships. I will demonstrate appropriate generosity. Concept 2: I will maintain the sacredness of self-identity. I will develop wise things in my personal life. Concept 3: I will have self-respect. I will speak words that reflect my good character. I will show respect and cooperate with my peers. Concept 4: I will express gratitude in everything. I will demonstrate thankfulness for my extended family, my values, and the teachings from my relatives and practice life skills from my relatives. The standards will include Culture Standards: Concept 1: I will develop an understanding of Diné way of life. I will develop my cultural knowledge to build self-worth. I will explain the significance of my cultural possessions. The standards also include Diné Language Standards where the Diné language is utilizing to listen, communicate, observe and understand appropriately. Concept 1: I will listen to and understand the basic Diné language. I will listen to a speaker, restate the main points, and seek for specific information. I will identify and name various objects in and around mu home. I will research a topic and give an oral report. I will recite a poem in front of an audience. I will listen, understand and ask questions about language and cultural events in my immediate community. The teacher will collaborate and advocate inclusive of traditional Native American role models and speakers to talk with students about traditional storytelling or family stories, how to model good character, show respect by taking care of oneself and interpersonal communication of the cultural teachings such as the teaching of how horses are of value to the culture including vocabulary words.

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