

Native Law Seminar

Peacemaking

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Authors Note:

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The knowledge and wisdom shared by the Native Law Seminar colleagues is humbling and inspiring. I would like to give them credit and to our team leaders for their dedication and commitment in progressing culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum across the Navajo Nation and its border towns. I am proud to be engaged with them to further our sovereign ideals through education. I am also honored and privileged to work with Marianne October Nielsen, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Northern Arizona University. Thank you for your guidance, feedback and patience. And finally, to Angelina Elizabeth Castagno, the director of the Diné Institute of Navajo Nation Educators, thank you for your unmatched leadership. You are a shining example of promoting social justice, and equality and equity for all.

I can be reached at iaryan04@gmail.com with questions and information pertaining to the curriculum unit.

Introduction

The field of interest in which I plan to focus my research is “Peacemaking”. This will also be the basis of my lesson unit that I have created for the Kindergarten students in my classroom. This lesson unit has an underlying theme of cultural responsiveness to the Native American children that I serve. In compiling and gathering information to help me formulate my plan I have acquired resources that will assist me. I will also give an account of why I chose peacemaking and the process which the plan will entail. I will also explain the various approaches of pedagogy and strategies I will be using in my lesson delivery.

There are various types of methods teachers and schools as a whole employ to help students become problem solvers. Some of the methods are Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS), Character Counts, and Restorative Justice, just to name a few. The approach I wish to explore and implement in my classroom is the peace-keeping method.

There are three crucial pedagogies I will consider in creating a unit plan for my Kindergarten students. I am a certified bilingual teacher with a master’s degree in bilingual multi-cultural education. I teach the required content in the Diné (Navajo) language and instruct about various points of the culture. I will obtain and utilize resources to explore the history and origin of peace-keeping and how is it related to the Diné culture and the student population of my classroom. Some Diné and English language and vocabulary will be incorporated into the lesson unit, modeled continuously by the teacher on a daily basis.

I am also a trained and certified Montessori teacher and will implement some Montessori philosophy and materials into my classroom during the course of the unit. I will also investigate further the Montessori philosophy of the peacemaking concept in the classroom to understand and share the perceptions behind it.

Puente de Hozho Bilingual School where I teach, has applied to become an International Baccalaureate (IB) school. As a result, my colleagues and I have received extensive training and professional development in becoming an IB School and IB classrooms. The Kindergarten curriculum covers four Points of Interest (POI). They are: Who We Are, How the World Works, How We Express Ourselves and Sharing the Planet. The point of interest, Who We Are, is where I plan to teach the peace-keeping unit. To further elaborate on the POI, its purpose is to inquire into the following: Personal, mental, social, and spiritual health. The interdisciplinary themes of ‘Who We Are’ are an investigation into the nature of self; beliefs and values; personal, mental, social, spiritual health; human relationships including families, communities, and cultures; rights and responsibilities; and what it means to be human. The central idea of Who We Are is that individual behavior and choices impact culture. Each point of interest necessitates a unit that covers a period of a three to six weeks-time period; therefore, a six-week period will be the duration of my peace-keeping unit.

The peace-making unit will entail a series of lessons to cover about a six-week period. Although it will be designed to be a unit, peace-making process will be reinforced throughout the duration of the school year in the classroom, playground, and cafeteria. The purpose of the peace-making unit will help students foster a foundation of problem-solving abilities that they can eventually use independently and autonomously. It is also the hope that students will be able to use these skills and strategies in all facets of their lives as they grow and mature not just at school but at home and in their public lives.

Context

I will explain the background of my unit that I am constructing with the title “peacemaking.” I am a bilingual teacher at Puente de Hozhó Trilingual School (PDH) with the Flagstaff Unified School District. I teach Kindergarten in the Diné language, and instruct all content areas. My students are five and six years of age and they come from homes that have a parent or both parents registered with the Navajo Nation. Parents that are other than Navajo are White, Hispanic, Samoan, African American, and from other Indigenous Nations. Parents enroll their children at Puente de Hozhó Elementary School with the anticipation that they will learn the Diné language and obtain the necessary content expected of Kindergarten students, as outlined by the Arizona state standards.

Puente de Hozhó is the only elementary school at FUSD that is a bilingual school. Families that live in Flagstaff, an urban town bordering the Navajo reservation, still have a connection with their language and their culture which they practice. Although, there are many parent(s) who do not speak the Diné language, they look to the teachers at PDH to teach the language and culture to their children. My students proceed to first grade through fifth grade Navajo language classes at PDH. Each grade has a teacher that specializes in the grades they teach. My Kindergarten class consists of 18 to 25 students in any given school year. I have taught for 15 years as a Diné language and culture teacher at Puente de Hozhó.

I am also trained in the Montessori curriculum where I have a certification from the North American Montessori Center. Puente de Hozhó Elementary School applied in December 2020 to become an International Baccalaureate program School. Both Montessori and IB curriculums complement the Diné language and culture programs. The curriculums interconnect well and support the philosophy of the others. This is especially perceptible with the peacemaking concept where all viewpoints intertwine.

The peacemaking unit will fit into the basis of the Diné culture curriculum. Peacemaking has long been a practice that the Diné people have incorporated into their lives, even before the western society’s disruption of their way of life. The use of the peacemaking method had been hindered by and replaced with the Western society’s laws and justice system. The western society’s way of discipline and justice is what my Kindergarten students are familiar with.

Rationale

My purpose for the peacemaking unit is to first understand and learn about the Diné Peacemaking system so that I can contextualize it for the unit I am creating, adaptable for my Kindergarten students. I would like my students to learn to use the Diné peacemaking process which is devoid of punishment but restores peace and harmony. This type of restorative justice embraces the ability of children to problem solve individually and with all parties affected, to restore harmony of any discord created. This process not only practices the aforementioned methods but also builds positive and life-long qualities and abilities in a person as young as a five years old child.

The timeline for implementation of the Peacemaking unit will start at the beginning of the school year and will last for about a six-week period, more if necessary. While this unit might be on a schedule, it is most befitting for it to be a year-long learning venture for the Kindergarten children. This is due in part to the incorporation of the Coyote tales. Coyote tales can only be

told in the Winter Season. Sharing views, respecting differing viewpoints, compromising, and problem solving are all qualities to be developed in the peacemaking unit. At the heart of it, is reparation of peace and harmony in a community with others. These qualities are not expected to be mastered within a single school year but rather are a lifelong practice as skills are reinforced by opportunities.

At the early-childhood level, many children for the very first time, experience large group interactions. It is a belief that children at the early childhood stage, ages 1-4, thrive better in small groups, for example in a day-care, pre-school, or at events such as birthday parties. The duration of activities is limited to a shorter amount of time and a small assembly. As students enter Kindergarten at age 5, the amount of interaction and length of time increase. When these unfamiliar changes take place, children might experience anxiety or stress produced by interactions that calls for a new way of relating and interfacing. During this time of transformation, children are finding and learning new ways of communicating and intermingling. The hope is that they will develop positive skills to interact and problem solve but this does not necessarily happen. This is when the teacher becomes the facilitator of developing positive behaviors and the classroom becomes a training place. Students are introduced to rules and how these guidelines will govern behavior, and classroom and school community interactions.

Content Objectives

The objective of this content is to convey the importance of developing social emotional skills in the field of resolving conflict for children 5 and 6 years of age. It is important for students to have a safe environment to problem solve and resolve conflicts when they occur. The idea is to get away from methods of punishment such as taking privileges away, shaming, and sending students to the principal's office or detention, in dealing with unwelcomed behaviors. The concept and title of the unit, "Peacemaking" will be reinforced throughout the school year in a Kindergarten classroom setting. The lessons will be immersed with culturally responsive activities relevant to members of the classroom community.

A Brief History of Diné Law

Diné law has been around for as long as the Diné (Navajo) people have been in existence. The Diné did not write their language or keep records. But much of their knowledge and teachings were passed down through the generations orally. Laws were not written but passed down by practice. Rules and laws were not formally taught but conveyed through everyday living and activities, such as interacting with siblings, cooking, caring for livestock, listening to stories, participating in ceremonies and maintaining relationships with the clan and community.

The white man's law was a legal system, developed over many centuries, written and codified, with set rules and punishment. The Navajo system was also developed over a long period of time and was basically a way of personal conduct designed to keep balance and order within their lives. Their rules and punishments had long been developed to meet the needs of their own culture and society (Acrey 1979).

Because the laws that govern young children to adulthood were not written, it was often considered by the settler-colonists and their descendants that the Diné people are lawless people in need of educating and assimilating, when in fact, laws were immensely intertwined into daily

family, clan, and community life. One of the common way issues and disputes traditionally were resolved is by a process called “peacemaking” (Williams & Keith, 2010).

Peacemaking, at its core, has a deeper meaning and purpose than just restoring harmony. In the Diné way of life there is one word that describes this very idea. The exemplifying and sacred word is Hózhó. According to Austin (2009, p. 54),

The Navajo concept of ‘hózhó’ refers to the state of affairs where everything is in its proper place and functioning in harmonious relationship to everything else.” (Witherspoon quoted in Austin, 2009, p. 54) and “In general, hózhó encompasses everything that Navajos consider positive and good; positive characteristics that Navajos believe contribute to living life to the fullest. These positive characteristics include beauty, harmony, goodness, happiness, right social relations, good health, and acquisition of knowledge.

The Purpose of Folklore Tales

The book, *Keepers of the Night, Native American Stories and Nocturnal Activities for Children* is specifically written for teachers so that they can use Native American stories to instruct children about nocturnal animals. The quote below by Caduto & Burchac, (1994, p. xi) sums up how folklore tales can be useful to inform children and adults alike in refining one’s character and knowledge.

In human cultures, tradition plays an important role in teaching values and responsibilities. Using the natural world as a classroom, *Keepers of the Night* and its strong use of Native American philosophies will serve well to interpret the sights, sounds, and smells of the world around us, and it will encourage children to become responsible stewards of all the inhabitants of our planet, including the long-misunderstood masters of the night skies

I recall when I was five years old our father told us animated coyote tales by the light of a small kerosene lamp, next to a roaring fire in a belly stove. During these winter nights we gathered around our father with our blankets for another coyote tale or two. The voice of coyote was always one that is beseeching and sometime desperate but would quickly turn indignant and imposing when coyote briefly gains control of a situation. But in the end, he runs away from a debacle he creates, gets hurt, or is banned all together by others. At the close of the story, the story teller always summarizes the significance of the story and communicates how not to behave, or else this undesirable end will happen to you.

These tales were communicated orally through the generations of the Diné existence to the present day. The stories can only be told in the winter season as the solstice changes, when the nights become long and cold. The coyote tales are meant to convey and instill a strong moral character in young children as these stories are told as examples through the vessel of a character, the coyote. Some examples of these oral tales now written down are: “The Coyote and Lizards,” “Coyote and Horned Toad,” and “Coyote and the Stars.” There is a saying amongst the Diné, when someone makes a mistake or a goof; the word is, “ma’iish nílee”! “Your character is becoming that of the coyote!”, or “Are you the coyote”? These words are uttered in a reprimanding tone by the observer.

The coyote tales that teach about developing good moral character are similar to Aesop's fables of the Greek story telling world. Much like Aesop's Fables, the characters in the tales are animals. These stories are also tales of animals conveying a moral message. Examples of these tales are: "The Boy who Cried Wolf," "The Tortoise and the Hare," and "The Ants and the Grasshopper." I will also utilize other children's books appropriate for the Kindergarten age group and the Diné culture. With these books I will introduce how and why rules are created for the benefit of safety for one's self and others and what happens when these guidelines are not adhered to.

Overview of Montessori Philosophy on Peacemaking

Similarly, the Montessori philosophy incorporates the peacemaking method in the classroom, introduced at an early age. It uses the peacemaking process as a basis to teach democracy to children and how to work inclusively with each other. This relates to the idea that all people should be treated equally. "Most people are trained in the traditional educational settings in which students are taught to follow the rules without challenge, to watch out for themselves, to do what they are told, and to consider their work as their individual responsibility" (Williams & Keith, 2010, 218). This statement is akin to the way the colonial American Indian education system enforced assimilation upon students, but "Montessori Education stipulates that living and working participatively require the learning of societal principles in a practical sense early so that living and working are learned together" (Williams & Keith, 2010, p. 219). This quote demonstrates a similar philosophy of the functioning of harmonious relationships as the Diné law suggests about "Hozhó"; therefore, it is obvious to me that the Montessori philosophy embraces the peace-making idea.

Teaching Strategies

The Instructional methods I will be utilizing are the elements of second language acquisition skills. I will build background for the children because they have limited concepts of and references to stories and tales of Navajo folklore. Since my students are attending an elementary school for the very first time, I will have to provide a reasonable amount of opportunity for them to learn how to retell a story and look for elements and parts of a story. When a story is told to students or when they are read to, a reliable amount of comprehension is expected and this is where the retelling or reenactment of a story is necessary.

Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing

The second language acquisition methods I will include are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Students will be given the opportunity to hear story books introduced with the Diné language and cultural perspectives. Students will then become familiar with some vocabulary words and terms in the Diné language related to the content of the unit. As the exposure to the language increases, students will be provided opportunities to use some of the vocabulary words and terms as the unit progresses, as well as throughout the year. Students will also be able to write about their understanding of the concepts taught, either by drawing or using actual writing (labeling or listing) in a journal. Students will be able to read or tell about the drawing or writing they produce, to each other, to their groups, or to the instructor.

Building Background

The International Baccalaureate curriculum also will provide some direction as to how the unit content will be delivered. The strategy will mainly involve the inquiry-based method. The inquiry-based method entails front-loading children with materials and resources that are related to the topic of peacemaking by making books available and reading stories to them that have to do with conflict resolution and restoration of harmony. The idea is to build background knowledge. Students will need to know something about the topic first before they can develop curiosity and begin asking questions, sometimes working on their own, with partners, or in a larger group setting, as students try to understand their connection to their environment.

Story Reenactment

This strategy invites students to reenact stories that they have heard told to them by the teacher. This involves the provision of props or pictures for the students to use in reenacting stories. Students are encouraged to use the book language and added creativity to retelling a story back to a teacher, a buddy, or a group. The story is to be retold in sequence. The step-by-step process entails: Reading the story, Retelling the Story, Gathering or making the props; Storing the Props, and Using the Props for retelling.

Classroom Activities

Parts of a Story

I am incorporating Diné Coyote Tales, and other Native American tribes' Folktales, as well as Aesop's Folklore Tales to build background for the Kindergarten students. Children at the early childhood age find stories that are animated with animal characters very appealing and are captivated by it. The elementary education format and setting are new to the children so I have to instruct about the Parts of a story and elements of a story.

The parts of a story are the beginning, middle and end. I will read a short story on a daily basis in the classroom and discuss what happened at the beginning of a story, what happened in the middle, and how the story ended. Students will be able to draw pictures of the three sections with me in the beginning and they will eventually, with repeated practice, do the activity on their own.

Story Elements

Story elements are characters, setting, problem, and solutions. Students will be listening for: characters in a story, the setting of a story, and what problem(s) was encountered and how it was resolved (resolution). The problem and resolution segments of a story embody the core purpose of my unit, identifying problems and resolving them. Students will be involved in physical action to remember the elements of a story. They will place a hand on the head to demonstrate character. They will place both hands over the head to mimic a roof to demonstrate setting. They will hold a thumb down to demonstrate a problem and a thumb up for resolution. When students have enough practice and begin to recognize the parts of a story and story elements, I will begin to introduce a series of the Diné Coyote tales. Coyote is a persona that always goes against the grain of instruction and consistently makes the wrong decisions that eventually put him in a dilemma. The problematic circumstance that Coyote finds himself in presents a great opportunity for students to discuss what better choice he could have made. His misfortune also lends itself to a discussion of why the choice he made was not wise or not a good one, and to come up with resolutions that would have prevented his downfall.

Using the Peace Corner

The Montessori philosophy of peacemaking method encourages the provision of a center in the classroom where students can go to resolve conflicts with facilitation provided by a caregiver in the beginning. This method necessitates proper guidance and training of students at the start of the school year for as long as an individual child requires. The children follow proper steps and rules to guide them. The goal is to eventually have students resolve discords independently but always with the teacher/caregiver within proximity to assist if needed.

The peace table is small and has two chairs opposite one another and is placed in a quiet corner of the classroom. Children sit together to solve their problems, or one child may go there to calm himself or herself. A teacher can invite them to go there, or they can invite each other to go. The children use a Peace Rose or a Talking Stick to help them take turns talking and listening.

Assessment

Learning Goals	Assessments	Assessment format
Student will use Total Physical Response to demonstrate the story elements.	Informal	Teacher observation
Student will identify character, settings, and major events in a story	Formal	Kindergarten Development Assessment. Graphic organizer.
Student will tell about story events in order of occurrence: Beginning, middle, and ending.	Formal	Kindergarten Development Assessment. Graphic organizer
Student will negotiate conflict constructively	Informal	Teacher observation. Kindergarten Development Assessment

Alignment with Standards

Arizona Education Standards:

K.RL.3 With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

K.W.3 With guidance and support from adults, use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

These first two Arizona state standards will be fulfilled by the storytelling portion of the curriculum. Storytelling is a major part of my kindergarten curriculum. Students are learning to comprehend stories through retelling, sequences, and elements of a story.

Social Emotional Learning Standards:

Relationship skills include the tools needed to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships, and to effectively navigate settings with differing social norms and demands. They involve communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking help when it is needed.

This SEL Arizona state standard encompasses the ideas, qualities, and concepts that students need to develop while learning to use the peacemaking skills and process.

Diné Character Building Standards:

PO 1. I will listen and observe cultural teachings.

PO 4. I will demonstrate self-discipline by following the Diné teachings.

These two standards were developed by the Department of Diné Education for Diné students and teachers. They also weave very well into the cultural teaching aspects of the unit.

Resources

Acrey, B. P. (1979). *Navajo History: The Land and the People*. Shiprock, NM: Rio Grande Press. Reprinted 1982 by the Department of Curriculum Materials Development, Central Consolidated School District No. 22.

This book is a complete history of the Navajo Nation and its people. It gives a chronological progression of the changes that the Navajo Nation lived through, with dates and examples.

Austin, R. D. (2009). *Navajo courts and Navajo common law: A tradition of tribal self-government*. University of Minnesota Press.

This book is written by a Navajo author with first-hand knowledge of the Navajo court system and the common law the Diné have practiced for centuries. It is written from the traditional perspective of the Diné teachings and knowledge.

Caduto, M. J., Bruchac, J. (1994). *Keepers of the Night*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Pub.

This book is specifically designed for educators that provides Native American stories and nocturnal activities for children. It provides an explanation of the morals behind the stories and significance of an animal to the various tribes.

Browne, V., & Whitethorne, B. (1993). *Monster Birds: A Navajo Folktale* (1st ed.). Flagstaff, AZ.: Northland Pub.

The hero twins go on a journey to find their father and encounter a problem with the monster birds. They eventually find a solution to overcome their foe and continue on their trek.

Mose D. Jr. (2004). *Ma'ii dóó tsék'i na'azólii* [Coyote and the lizards]. Heritage Language Resource Center.

This is a Navajo coyote tale that illustrates the decisions coyote makes and provides a perfect opportunity for a class discussion of his character and finding positive solutions. It provides illustrations that hold the attention of the children. It is also written in English as *Coyote and the Lizards*.

Williams, N., & Keith, R. (2010). Democracy and Montessori Education. *Peace Review*, 12 (2), 217-222.

This article provides detailed information on the Montessori Philosophy of peacemaking in the classroom and demonstrates how it is a foundation for creating a democratic society in the classroom, in a community and globally.

Zolbrod, P. (1984). *Dine Bahane': The Navajo Creation Story*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

This book progresses through the creation story of multiple worlds. There are some Diné words that will only be of benefit to a reader that can understand the language. The abstractness of some of the stories may require some clarification by a person knowledgeable of the Diné creation story.

Appendix: Classroom Materials

STORY ELEMENTS ORGANIZER

The organizer is enclosed in a dashed border and contains four distinct sections for student input:

- Characters:** A large oval shape with two small circles on the sides representing ears, intended for drawing or writing about the story's characters.
- Setting:** A house-shaped outline consisting of a triangle for the roof and a rectangle for the main body, intended for describing the story's location.
- Problem:** A large rounded rectangular box intended for describing the central conflict or problem of the story.
- Solution:** A large rounded rectangular box intended for describing how the problem is resolved.

Name: _____

Title of Book: _____

Beginning

Middle

End

