

Moral Courage

To Be or Not to Be (Bee adanoh'ee bikik'eh dagohii dahi)

Danelle Meade

Teacher Leadership Shiłgozhóó Institute (TLSI)

2022

Author Note:

Danelle Meade is a sixth-grade teacher at San Carlos Middle School. Correspondence about this curriculum unit can be addressed to Danelle Meade, P.O. Box 207 San Carlos, AZ 85550. Email contact: d.meade@sancarlos.k12.az.us

Introduction

This thematic unit focuses on moral virtues once demonstrated by the Apache people, which seems to have lost some of their importance or influence in the younger generations today. I am currently a sixth grade Humanities teacher on the San Carlos Apache reservation, in San Carlos, Arizona. I have observed the trauma several students have and are experiencing on the reservation. As a teacher, I have also observed and experienced several behavior issues within the middle school. Students demonstrate negative verbal usage and rebel and disrespect the authority of adults. Some students are even affiliated with gangs within the community. This unit reflects a hope to redirect and guide 6th grade students to adopt at least one of the several moral virtues of the Apache people. This thematic unit will refer to the following state standards, 6.SP1.4 Evaluate the significance of past events and their effect on students' lives and society; 6.SP2.1 Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed throughout different historical eras; 6.C4.2 Describe and apply civic virtues including deliberative processes that contribute to the common good and democratic principles in school, community, and government; 6.H1.1 Explain the cause and effects of interactions between cultures and civilizations.

Context

This unit will address the traditional moral virtues of the Apache tribe. It will serve as a foundation for looking at the connection between nature and the Apache people which will connect together thematic units in relation to agriculture, achievement, and beliefs of the San Carlos Apache People. The San Carlos Apache reservation was established on June 7, 1897 (The Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs, 1960). The tribe was organized under the constitution and by-laws which were approved on January 17, 1936 (The Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs, 1960). The unit would be for 6th grade students in humanities (social studies) at San Carlos Middle School, in San Carlos, Arizona. Most students attending school are of Apache tribe. There are 5 different class periods, with 22-25 students per class period. This curriculum fits into my general teaching schedule which will be at the beginning of the school year and will be reviewed mid-way through school year. It will be a part of the beginning school year to set the stage for students (prior knowledge) before introducing nine different ancient civilizations to compare and contrast as the school year progresses. I am a foreigner to this community. I was raised on a reservation in the northern Arizona region, on the Navajo Nation. I moved onto the San Carlos Apache reservation in 2017. I was first hired as a long-term sub. After receiving my masters in secondary education, I became a full time certified teacher with San Carlos Middle School. I have worked with 6th grade students for the past four years; in which time I have observed many negative behaviors among the students in the school and among the community. I have gained the knowledge that my students have experienced trauma at some point in their life which is a possible cause for the negative behaviors. San Carlos Unified School District has implemented several cultural resources for students to participate in to strengthen the connection to their cultural identity. Some examples include: Drum group, Apache History, Apache Language, Sewing Groups, and lesson plans that are culturally relevant have been constructed by teachers.

Rationale

I am creating this particular curriculum unit to give students some additional cultural background

and to strengthen their prior knowledge about Apache civilization (agriculture, achievements, and beliefs), beginning with moral value characteristics. I hope to expand this lesson further into the topics of livestock and farming, both of which were once a part of tribal economics. The most profitable tribal enterprises were registered Hereford stock. In a report for 1960, there were approximately 497 acres of land that were farmed by the tribe. Alfalfa was the basic crop. Twenty-five were in family gardens. (The Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs, 1960). I have taken a few classes with San Carlos Apache College to strengthen my knowledge and have an understanding of historical facts of the connection and respect Apache people once had with nature. As I mentioned in my essay which I submitted during applying for the Teacher Leadership Shilgozhóó Institute program, I would like to provide an opportunity for my students to learn about or/and strengthen their background knowledge of being independent and knowing the moral values in which their ancestral people followed. In connection for students to adapt as their own to strengthen their beliefs in themselves and gain the knowledge they too have the moral courage to stand out and proudly stand tall. As a history class, students should have knowledge of their historical culture. There have been historical individuals that have fought for the survival of the Apache people. The youth of the San Carlos Apache community should be given the opportunity to continue to fight for the survival of their traditional Apache culture and virtues and demonstrate their moral courage. With this curriculum, I hope to restore resilience within my students in hopes to prevent low self-esteem and encourage moral courage.

The idea for this curriculum unit was developed based on observations of four different groups of 6th grade students for the past four years. During this time, I have heard and witnessed a large number of students demonstrating that they have low self-esteem and believe themselves to be incapable of accomplishing great things. It seems to continue as they proceed onto the higher grade level, including 7th grade and into the 8th grade. This is a continuous perspective as each new school year begins and the worry is that this will stay with them as they move into high school and beyond. A study was conducted on the White Mountain Apache reservation in which an original curriculum was created, with the assistance of several elders in the community, for the youth to connect with their heritage, traditions, and culture. At the end of the study, teachers observed students demonstrating more respect and consideration to one another. Students were even behaving better. (Cwik, et al., 2019) The youth generation within the San Carlos Apache community, as in some other Indigenous communities throughout Arizona, do not have adequate prior knowledge of their traditional Apache culture. There does seem to be a generational disconnection between elders and the youth today. A possible factor causing such a disconnection is the depletion of the Apache language. Youths, today, are communicating using the English language which is influenced by watching televisions, movies, and music (Nevins, 2004). As demonstrated in the article “Apache Parents and Vocational Choice”, by Louis C. Bernardoni, it is not surprising there is also a disconnection between parents and students. The term “parent” mentioned in this article, refers to an individual who assumes responsibility for providing food, shelter, clothing, money and parental guidance to the student, whether they are the biological parent, a relative, or the legal guardian (Bernardoni, 1963). Students in the study did not share their vocational plans with their parents when given the opportunity. Students possibly felt they would disappoint their parents or make their parents feel they were rejecting (abandoning) them. All parents did prefer their students to leave the reservation due to the lack of employment opportunities. The study found that Apache parents play a minimal role in the process of vocational choice. Some parents had hesitated to initiate discussion on vocational

topics with their students. (Bernardoni, 1963). The lack of involvement and support from parents for students is a concerning issue encountered in San Carlos Middle School. Students are also being raised by relatives instead of their biological parents. This, too, could be a factor in the lessening of San Carlos students' moral resilience and confidence. Teaching this curriculum unit will be a start for students to be able to overcome some of the obstacles that stand in the way of their success, both as students and members of the community.

Content Objectives

This unit covers the concept of self-identity through virtues with the aim of assisting and encouraging moral courage and a positive self-image of 6th grade students at San Carlos Middle School in San Carlos, Arizona. From a teacher's perspective and observations, I have seen and heard how several students struggle with finding a positive perspective regarding themselves. Instead, students are engaging in self-destructive behavior or do not feel the self-worth necessary to do and be their best. Some even struggle to accomplish modest goals or even make it through their adolescent years because they have low-self-esteem. As long as I have been a 6th grade teacher at San Carlos Middle School, I have seen students self-mutilate, use drugs (e.g., marijuana), lack respect for themselves and others, engage in conflict, and lack motivation in their education. Many students also experience trauma which factors into their self-image and self-esteem. I once had a student who was distraught over losing a family member due to suicide. A student has shared with me that they are a "runner" for their parents. When asked what a "runner" is, I was told it's running to get drugs or alcohol for their parents or relatives. Students are demonstrating the idiom "monkey see, monkey do" (The Free Dictionary by Farlex, 2003-2022). We do as we see, especially when it comes to others who are older, for we see them as role models. We each can be influenced for many reasons: for acceptance, for love, to be noticed, to be respected and appreciated.

The seminar "Moral Courage" has presented perspectives of self-identity and virtues I would like to teach my 6th grade students. Several concepts which would be excellent to incorporate into the lesson and present to my students is Aristotle's notion of happiness and how it can be achieved (*Nicomachean Ethics*), the Function Argument regarding an excellent human being (Piering, *The Virtues*, 2022), Moral and Intellectual Virtues (Piering, *The Virtues*, 2022), Acquiring the Virtues (Piering, *The Virtues*, 2022), Humanity (Piering, *The Virtues*, Part II, 2022), the Role of the Community (Piering, *The Virtues*, Part III, 2022), and the concept of friendship (Piering, *Virtue, Friendship, and the Good Life*, 2022). I also found the concepts from Existentialism interesting, which I personally learned from this seminar. One concept I would like to share with my students could help them gain an important perspective: the environment into which we are born does exist but does not, and should not, define who they are to be or become. This is the concept of "optimistic toughness" (Piering, *Existentialism and Ethics*, 2022). Dr. Julie Piering presented the concept of choice, that we as beings have choice (Piering, *Fail Better- Moral Striving & Human Frailty*, 2022). Choices we make can either lead to success or failure. If we fail, we should not be defeated by that failure but rather fight against it without giving up (Piering, *Fail Better- Moral Striving & Human Frailty*, 2022).

The limited resources for moral values among the San Carlos Apache tribe to support this curriculum has been an eye-opening experience. In order to gain an understanding of the Apache

culture of self-identity, I choose to find historical information of traditional beliefs and the roles of each person within a local community. This is important information to share with my students since not many students have prior knowledge of Apache history. When asked about their prior knowledge, most students would refer to Geronimo, a well-known Chiricahua Apache—Eastern Apache tribe. None know much about Western Apache which San Carlos Apache are categorized as. The Sunrise Dance and Apache Crown dancers were the only traditional ceremony most students were familiar with. The article “Let our Apache Heritage and Culture Live on Forever and Teach the Young Ones”: Development of the Elders’ Resilience Curriculum, an Upstream Suicide Prevention Approach for American Indian Youth” by Mary Cwik et al., demonstrates the struggle indigenous students face and the importance of heritage to strengthen indigenous cultural beliefs and practices which can improve health and wellness (Cwik, et al., 2019). There is a disconnection between adults and the youth. The article “Apache Parents and Vocational Choice” demonstrated this disconnection in which parents are not aware of their student’s plans after they graduate from high school. Students are not open with their parents whether they plan to go to college or even leave the reservation for employment. Parents prefer their students to leave the reservation. Some parents have shared with researchers they have confidence that their student has the ability to complete college level work. There is a lack of discussion occurring between parents and their students. Another study showed students agreed with their teachers more than their parents (Hutchison, 1979). Many other resources found and included in this curriculum have created an important foundation to build on. Given these sources of disconnection, adding moral virtues to our curricula can help assuage some of these conditions. The following moral virtues will be taught: discipline, respect, honesty/truthfulness, self-respect, harmony, patience, courage, and humbleness.

Teaching Strategies

The teaching strategies I plan to use in this curriculum are think-pair-share, peer research, class discussions/reflections, and independent reflection. Therefore, students will be assigned activities which will be completed in groups and independently.

Classroom Activities

Group activities will consist of reading, group discussion, and peer research. Students will be put into 6 different groups randomly. Each group will be given a moral virtue to be researched in order to obtain knowledge on given virtue. Students will discuss a given scenario that pertains to their researched moral virtue—“What would you do?” assignment. As a class, we will read *Indian Shoes* and *Ancestor Approve Intertribal Stories for Kids* by Cynthia Leitich Smith. Students will identify moral virtues demonstrated in these two readings. Independent activity students will be assigned are completing a survey on moral virtues, write about one of the moral values to adapt as their own, a pre-self-image (drawings) in modern day and in pre-reservation time, and a post-self-image (drawings) in modern day and in pre-reservation time.

Student Assessment Plan

The assessment plan to determine whether students have met the learning objective; explaining and evaluating moral virtues to better understand one’s self-identity. Students will be assessed on

their prior knowledge of moral virtues by completing a survey. Students are to illustrate a pre-self-image and a post-self-image drawing of themselves in modern day reflecting their undertaking and implementation of one moral value of their choice. In addition to their illustration, students will write a 25–50-word short summary of the importance of the representation of the chosen moral virtue.

Alignment with State Standards

6.SP1.4 Evaluate the significance of past events and their effect on students’ lives and society.

6.SP2.1 Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed throughout different historical eras.

6.H1.1 Explain the cause and effects of interactions between cultures and civilizations.

Culturally Responsive Principles:

Relationality, relationships, and communities

1. Encourages students to understand themselves within broader communities
2. Encourages students to build and sustain relationships
3. Traditional and/or cultural knowledge is included
4. Norms, values, traditions, interests of local/regional Indigenous community are leveraged for learning opportunities

These standards will be taught in combination with one another and one after the other. Lesson will begin with the state standard 6.SP1.4-Evaluate the significance of past events and their effect on students’ lives and society and standard 6.H1.1 Explain the cause and effects of interactions between cultures and civilizations, to set the background foundation for students to gain the perspective of the moral values in a social organization structure. As a whole group, we will discuss the social organization of the Western Apache, using the article by Keith Basso, “History: In Pursuit of the Apache”. This section of the lesson will provide and/or strengthen students’ historical knowledge about the Western Apache in preparation of their traditional self-image. States standards, 6.SP2.1- Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed throughout different historical eras will be used as a class discussion (formative assessment) and summative assessment in which students will complete a 200–500-word essay explaining their perspective of how and why people change their perspective throughout history.

State standard, 6.H1.1 Explain the cause and effects of interactions between cultures and civilizations will be taught throughout the school year. Students will be introduced to several different ancient civilizations: Ancient Egypt, Ancient India, Ancient China, Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, and Mesopotamia. Students will review the cause and effect of interactions between the ancient civilizations. Students will compare and contrast the interaction of each of the different ancient civilizations to the interaction among the Western Apache. The culturally responsive principles will be taught alongside each state standards. In reviewing the article “Western Apache”, students will be encourage to gain an understanding of their traditional and/or cultural knowledge and the norms, values, traditions, and the interests of local/regional Indigenous community that are leveraged for learning opportunities. In constructing their self-images, students will gain an understanding of themselves within broader communities.

Resources

Teacher Background Reading

Basso, D. K. (1977). History: In Pursuit of the Apaches. *Arizona Highways*, 2-9; 39-48.

Bernardoni, L. C. (1963). Apache Parents and Vocational Choice. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 1-8.

Cwik, M., Goklish, N., Masten, K., Lee, A., Suttle, R., Alchesay, M., . . .Barlow, A. (2019). "Let our Apache Heritage and Culture Live on Forever and Teach the Young Ones": Development of The Elders' Resilience Curriculum, an Upstream Suicide Prevention Approach for American Indian Youth. *American Journal Community Psychology*, 64(137), pp. 137-145.
doi:10.1002/ajcp.12351

Goodwill, G. (n.d.). Family and Local Group. In G. Goodwill, *The Social Organization of the Western Apache* (pp. 123-192). University of Arizona Press.

Hindman, J. E. (1993, December). "I think of That Mountain as My Maternal Grandmother" : Constructing Self and Other through Landscape. 2-8.

Hutchison, J. E. (1979, October). Study on the Fort Apache Perception of an Educational Environment. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 19(1), pp. 12-18. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24397541>

Minthorn, R. Z.-t.-h.-a. (2018). Indigenous Motherhood in the Academy, Building Our Children to Be Good Relatives. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 33(2), pp. 62-75. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/wicazosareview.33.2.0062>

Nevins, M. E. (2004). Learning to Listen: Confronting Two Meaning of Language Loss in the Contemporary White Mountain Apache Speech Community. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 269-288.

The Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs. (1960). *San Carlos Apache Reservation*. Phoenix.

Student Reading

Basso, D. K. (1977). History: In Pursuit of the Apaches. *Arizona Highways*, 2-9; 39-48.

Smith, C. L. (2002). *Indian Shoes*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.

Materials for Classroom Use

Person Outline #1 <http://clipart-library.com/clipart/6cr5Ery9i.htm>

Person Outline #2 <http://clipart-library.com/clipart/6cr5Ery9i.htm>

Color Pencils, Markers, Books: A. *Indian Shoes*. C. L. Smith (2002), Chrome books (for research)

Teacher Resource

1. This is an article found in the *Arizona Highway* magazine. Written by Keith Basso, who wrote several books related to the Western Apache tribe based on observational information.
2. This journal article addresses the relationship between parent/guardians and their high school students in the White Mountain Apache community. Focuses on the vocational plan of the high school students.
3. This journal article focuses on the building of a curriculum for students, in collaboration with elders from the White Mountain Apache community.
4. This book section describes the structure of families and communities of the Western Apache.
5. This article addresses the perspective that places have identifications which are in connection to the social hierarchy that give moral messages of living healthy and positive.
6. This article explores and examines the feelings and perceptions of parents, students, and teachers on the school environment in their community.
7. This article addresses the skills of relationships. Focuses on the impact of historical trauma on motherhood.
8. This article addresses the controversy of the language maintenance on the White Mountain Apache Reservation.
9. This document is a report constructed by the Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs, reporting the collaboration of the Commission with Tribal Councils, legislators, and different federal and state departments.

Students' Resource

1. This is an article found in the *Arizona Highway* magazine. Written by Keith Basso, who wrote several books related to the Western Apache tribe based on observational information.
2. This book shares the story of the strong and compassionate relationship between a grandfather and a grandson.