

Indigenous Literature as a Window into Social and Emotional Learning

Building Confidence by Building Identity and Agency through K'é

Irene Jones

Diné Institute for Navajo Nation Educators (DINÉ)

2022

Author's Note:

Irene Jones is a fourth-grade teacher at Kayenta Elementary School in Kayenta, AZ. She has been a part of the Yale National Initiative since 2014 and a part of the Diné Institute of the Navajo Nation Educators since it began. Most of units she created have been for fourth grade students. Correspondences regarding this curriculum unit can be addressed to Irene Jones, P.O. Box 2591, Kayenta, AZ 86033. Email contact: dineteacherinstitute@nau.edu.

Introduction

“LISTEN!” “SIT STILL!” “STOP IT!” “PAY ATTENTION!” “I ALREADY TOLD YOU!” The deafening commands could be heard vibrating through the elementary school hallways as a teacher tries to manage her students. It makes you wonder. What is going on? Why is the teacher yelling? Are the students not listening? Why are they not listening? Do the students know the expectations of the teachers? There seems to be a disconnection on how teachers and students interact in terms of students’ well-being and Social Emotional Learning.

Kayenta, Arizona was established around 1906 when John and Louisa Witherill and Clyde Colville moved to northeastern Arizona, about 30 miles from the Utah border on the Navajo Reservation. The Witherills and Clyde Colville moved to the town to establish a Trading Post. Currently, the town of Kayenta has a population of 5,189 people, according to the 2010 census. The population consists of 92.27% Native American, a majority are Navajos, and the remaining population include Whites, Blacks or African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, and other races. (Welcome to Kayenta Chapter Administration Website, n.d.) Kayenta is a small town, but one of the larger towns on the Navajo reservation. The small town is served by two different governments: Kayenta Chapter House, which is a division of the greater Navajo reservation government, and Kayenta Township, which is a municipal style government. It has several gas stations, churches, restaurants, and one shopping center, Bashas, to serve the community and all the surrounding communities. The town also has a hospital, and a police station. In addition, the town has several hotels and motels to serve visitors and tourists that pass through the town to get to Monument Valley or Navajo National Monument.

Two schools serve the community as well as all surrounding communities: Kayenta Unified School District and Kayenta Boarding School. Kayenta Boarding School is a K-8 school that is part of the Bureau of Indian Education, which serves both day students and dorm students. Kayenta Unified School District (KUSD #27) is a Preschool-12 public school that serves the Kayenta and communities within a 50 miles radius. KUSD includes four schools: ABC Pre-School, Kayenta Elementary School, Kayenta Middle School, and Monument Valley High School. Monument Valley High School is the only high school within a 50 miles radius, and often serves as a feeder school for other schools from the communities of Denehotso, Chilchinbeto, Rough Rock, Shonto, and Kayenta Boarding School. For the school year of 2021-2022, KUSD had over 1600 students actively enrolled: MVHS 607, KMS 491, KES 384, and Preschool-K 128, according to the June 15, 2022 Regular Governing Board Meeting. The Demographics of KUSD students are 94.64% Native Americans, 1.81% Hispanics, 3.09% and Multiple races according to 2019-2020 School year data on AZ School Report card from Arizona Department of Education. The data for the current school year have not been updated on the website due to Covid-19 pandemic cancelling most of the state assessments for the last two school years.

Kayenta Elementary School is a Title 1 school that serves students from preschool through 4th grade. According to the Arizona Department of Education’s School Report Card of the 472 students enrolled, 97% were registered as Native American, most of them were Navajo students. Ten percent of students receive special services, and 14% students are identified as English Learners. This past school year, there were seven total first grade classes. Two first-grade

classes offered remote learning, and 5 classes were offered in person. There was an average of 16 students in each in-person classes. I had 16 first grade students, 9 boys and 10 girls. Two students were identified as English Learners, and 5 students received special services. For the 2022/2023 school year, I will be looping with my students to second grade.

Rationale

There have been unimaginable changes in the school system since the Covid-19 pandemic for students and for teachers. Parents, teachers, and especially children were impacted due to the closure of schools, and the implementation of remote learning. Navajo Reservation schools struggled with limited internet access. Schools faced severe staff shortages, absenteeism and quarantine of students and staff, and they struggled with the mental health of students. The cumulative impact of students' academic achievement was significant, especially in English Language Arts and math. Stakeholders had to address learning loss that was a byproduct of COVID 19.

Our methods of teaching had to change to accommodate the changes going around us and to make sure our students were "staying on track" with learning. States and schools have to determine which intervention and strategies to implement to mitigate the learning decline within the last two year. Despite the many obstacles we faced during the pandemic, one thing that we all learned is that social and emotional learning is a huge aspect of classroom culture. Before the pandemic, we recognized that a student's personal development and academic performance were important, but I don't recall calling it social and emotional learning.

Before the pandemic, our previous school administrators recognized that teachers struggled with classroom management and lacked positive school environment. At the time, they brought in "Capturing Kids' Hearts" (CKH) as our "social and emotional learning" program. The key indicators for CKH were: "fewer discipline referrals, improved attendance, higher student achievement, lower dropout rates, and higher teacher satisfaction." (Capturingkidshearts.org) The approach was for everyone in the school district from students, support staff, teachers, and administrators to be involved. It included building a meaningful productive relationship among students and staff, create a safe environment, developing self-management and high performing classrooms by using teach building skills and a social contract, and techniques for conflicts and resolutions.

I remember a selected number of teachers and administrators going to trainings and piloting it in the classroom. I was one of those teachers who was initially involved in the beginning implementation stages of CKH. We started the following school year training every staff member in the district for several days on how to implement CKH in our workspace, buildings, and classrooms.

Unfortunately, not everyone "bought into the program." Many "traditional" Navajo teachers felt that the approach and philosophy behind CKH created conflicts with their traditional beliefs and traditional teachings. Some arguments included the belief that students should "respect" teachers and adults, because that was what they were taught by their parents. Conflicts and discipline were managed by teachers raising voices (yelling) and lecturing students. You could feel the

stress and anxiety in every student, teacher, and classroom environment. I always wanted to use “traditional” Navajo teaching did not sound authentic. The disciplines and rules implemented in the classrooms stemmed from a long history of cultural trauma. For example, boarding schools created a lot of traumas for most Navajos. Most Navajo children were disciplined harshly, and they continue that same harsh discipline into the classrooms when they became teachers.

Personally, I learned a lot about myself from CKH. That was the first time that I started reflecting on how to create a better classroom environment, a classroom that did not instill fear and anxiety because my classroom rules are the Law. I always wondered how students developed anxiety and dreaded school. One thing I liked about CKH was the “Social Contract,” which held both adults and students accountable. A Social Contract replaced the traditional “rules” that were posted in the classrooms and became the centerpiece of the classroom culture. It had to be built around four questions:

1. How do you want to be treated by me?
2. How do you want to be treated by others?
3. How do you think I want to be treated by you?
4. How do you want to treat each other when there is a conflict?

Everyone contract had to include three basic ideas: effort, listening, and no put-downs. One thing I learned about myself from my students is that I tended to talk over them when I taught them. Another thing is that I did not give them enough think time or if they are working, I tend to interrupt too much.

Sadly, CKH fizzled out as soon as the previous administration was replaced by the current administration. I still used some aspects of CKH with fourth graders. However, I have never really tried creating a social contract with my first graders because they did not have in person learning experiences. I still find myself getting after my students and to start lecturing, which turned out to be a form of a put-downs.

In Navajo culture, children are considered precious gifts from the creators. According to the Navajos, we are the descendants of Sa’ah Naaghai Bik’eh Hozhoo, as descendants, we are gifted with minds, physical bodies, emotions, and placed on this earth, which subject us to the natural laws and orders of the physical world. Knowledge and skills need to be obtained to survive and understand our relationship to all other phenomena. Knowledge also needs to be obtained to provide the needs for the development of the mind, development of skills that will enable survival, understand, and appreciate positive relationships, and understand and relate to one’s home and environment. When Peace of mind, physical health, emotional health, and ecological awareness are met, it will bring balance. Imbalance and problems will arise if any one of the four areas of needs are not met.

Students come to school lacking some areas of needs will experience imbalance. For example, a child whose emotional needs are not met due to neglect or abuse may be insensitive or lack of care. He may need mental and spiritual guidance in order be successful. Families who do not meet a child’s emotional needs, will not instill the guiding principles for obtaining and maintaining a good life. Self-esteem will be affected. A child will experience problems and not become successful.

Four Principles of knowledge were placed on earth for the welfare of the Navajos. "They are an integral part of the cosmic order that addresses the basic composition of man." (Benally, 2019, p. 25) Knowledge associated with dawn, which is to the east, meets an individual's mental needs. Dawn represents "that which gives the direction of life." Knowledge associated with the blue twilight (south) meets one's physical needs. Blue twilight represents sustenance. To the west is the yellow evening twilight which represents the gathering of families. Knowledge associated with the west direction meets one's emotional needs. The north direction is associated with darkness or respect and reverence for all creations. Knowledge associated with darkness meets the needs of one's need for understanding and relating to one's physical home and environment. My goal for my unit is to create a curriculum, a social emotion learning unit that encompasses the Navajo philosophy of education and the philosophy of the Four Principles of knowledge. Children have emotional needs, but to find balance, all four guiding principles needs to be met: that which gives direction in life, sustenance, the gathering or importance of family, and rest and reverence for all creations. Although I have no control over what happens in the household, I can do something about the classroom environment. The unit will provide social emotional learning that create a balanced child, meaning meet the needs of a child so they can flourish and learn to regulate emotions. It will include Navajo teachings on self-identity. Identity is important, especially as a Navajo. I believe that if a child understands who they are and where they come from, they will also build confidence. Fortunately, clans can build that bridge between self-identity and confidence. They need confidence to not only learn, but also to ask questions, build relationships, and speak up for themselves. One reason I want students to build confidence is that most students start giving up their identity so they can "fit-in." Through research, if students understand their identity using clans, they will more likely be confident and have positive self-identity.

My unit, I want to distinguish between discipline in authentic Navajo teaching versus the harsh discipline that stems from historical trauma so that teachers who are reading my unit will inspire them to reflect on their classroom discipline and management.

The focus will be to do more research on Navajo traditional self-identity. Identify is often associated with clans. Certain characteristics and character traits are related to each clan. Do students behavior indicative of their behavior? Does it effect how they interact with other students? These character traits and abilities are associated with certain clans. It is common for elders to comment and predict which clan you belong to base on how you conduct yourself and your behavior. Unfortunately, students must rely on parents, grandparents, and other relatives to research the characteristics of their clans. Most grandparents and certain relatives rely on oral storytelling to relate the stories.

Content Objectives

Four Principle of Teaching

The Navajo clan system is the foundation of how Navajo children learn about self-image and self-identity. A person's true self can be determined by the values of his clan system. According to Wilson Aronilth Jr. (1991, p. 76), there are four primary principles of teaching within a clan.

First is identity of an individual Diné. Although we are identified as Navajos, it is more positive to identify yourself as Diné. This was the name given to us by the Holy People when we were created in the east. When Diné were created, they were given a pattern of life and identity through the clan system. When you introduce yourself as Diné, you are introducing yourself as a child of the Holy People. Our clan system also identifies us as Diné. If you know your clan system, you will understand yourself and other people because it means that you know yourself, you know your roots, and you know your foundations.

Wilson Aronilth, Jr. explains that the word Navajo has been mispronounced and mistranslated, some good and some bad by different tribes and societies (1994,1991, p. 77). The name was supposed to be pronounced as Naa Baa Hii Diné, which means warrior and hunter. This name was given to us when the Twin Warriors visited their father, Jóhonaa'éei (the Sun). Jóhonaa'éei identified the Warrior Twins as Naa Baa Hii Diné before he gave them sacred weapons. The name means that Diné were here to fulfill a purpose which includes: making positive commitment to ourselves, appreciate ourselves and enjoy life, have a plan, good mental and physical abilities, strong motivation and believe in ourselves, be happy with ourselves, self-stimulate and exercise our minds, analyze ourselves and change habits if we need to, work independently and have high standards, and understanding, forgiving and creative.

Self-image and self-identity are very precious because it means that you know yourself. Self-image and self-identity play an important role in controlling behavior, attitudes, personality, feelings, and thoughts, thinking, motivation, and intelligence. Furthermore, it plays a role in your emotional regulations, mental being, physical being, social being, and religious and spiritual being.

Navajo Philosophy on Clan Introduction

Introduction by clan is especially important because it encompasses the wealth and health of our Navajo people. Each clan comes from various sources and has unique histories. Navajos believe that identifying ourselves through a proper introduction characterizes awareness of “our true image, true abilities, our potential for growth and successes in life.” (Aronilth, 1994, p.19) In addition, identifying ourselves by our clans acknowledges “where we come from, where we are going, and how to get there.” (Aronilth, 1994, p.19) Clanship is “the roots and foundation of our life” (Aronilth, 1994, p.19) because clans create connections by establishing relationships with people you meet. It is vital to introduce yourself by clans as part of public-speaking events. When we introduce ourselves, the mother's clan comes first. According to Navajo Oral History, our mother's clan is represented first because Changing Woman became our mother when she came into this world. She created the first four clans using her own flesh and blood. The father's clan comes next because we are introducing who we are born for. The next clans are the maternal grandfather and paternal grandfather's clans.

We all have clans. Clans are to help us meet our needs. First, we need to know: who am I? When you ask who you are, you are asking for self-identification. It's important to learn about your identity through clanship because it is tied into “a matter of living, growing, developing, and surviving.” (Aronilth, 1994, p.20) Parents and grandparents are expected to teach their children about the value of identity. The next need is a need to answer, what clan am I? Everyone is

identified by the clans they belong to. Knowing our clans determine who we are related to and who we are not related to. Furthermore, we need to understand the classification of clans to determine which clans belong to the same group, therefore, related to each other.

The clans we belong to acknowledges our families and ancestors because families are the center and the heart of our beings. Our clans also provide us with wisdom and strength that establishes our identity in society. Our identity through clanship teaches us to respect one another. Clans are factors in understanding our own people, our race, and our nationality. In Navajo clan system, clans are classified to regulate which clans are related to your clans, and which clans are not related to you.

The original four clans are considered the pillars for the Navajos. However, clans were extended that included subclans or K'é tsósi to the original clans. The clans were named according to habits and talents that were observed of the people. K'é tsósi often included other Native peoples who were brought into the clans as slaves after a raid. "An example of an extended clan for Hasht'ishnii include Tótsohnii, Bitahnii, Tsédeeshgiizhnii, Hooghan Łání, Dzaanééz Łání, and Lók'aa' Diné." (Chisholm & Jackson, 2003, p. 316) There are many variations of extended clans and sub clans because they were designed and implemented based on regional knowledge.

Story of Diné Clan System

Navajos believe that everyone and everything in nature has an established clan system. The clan system allows "all creation that live by air, water, and sunlight on Earth" (Aronilth, Jr, 1994, p.28) to grow and continue to live from one generation to generation. Because of the established clan system in nature, everything grows in "harmony, in peace, and in balance." (Aronilth, Jr, 1994, p.28) The clan system began in the first world, or the Black World. The beings in the first world were related to one another through clanship. Some of the clanships established in the first world include: Early Dawn is related to Blue Twilight, Yellow Evening Twilight is related to Blue Twilight, Yellow Evening Twilight is related to Folding Darkness, Mother Earth is related to the four parts of the day, the four seasons are related to the 12 Diné months, the Sacred Mountains are related to the rain clouds, the rain is related to the rainbow and plants, and Father Sky is related to the stars. Furthermore, all animals, insects and birds have comparable beings in other countries, meaning that if an animal like a coyote or bear lives withing the Sacred Mountains, similar animals live in other countries. In the beginning, these animals were once created in one special place at one time. Although the comparable animals live in different countries, they "still communicate through clans" and the clans still identifies "where they came from, who they are, and how they live, and survive." (Aronilth, Jr, 1994, p.28)

According to Wilson Aronilth Jr. (Aronilth, Jr., 1994, page 37), Changing Woman created the first four original clans: To'ahani (Some believe it is Honagháahnii), Kinyaa'aanii, Todich'ii'nii, and Hasht'ishnii. She provided each clan with an animal as a protector. In addition, she gave them a sacred items and other means to help them survive. Furthermore, she gave them songs and prayers. Once the gifts were distributed, Changing Woman sent them on their way to Dinétah, which was her sacred corn field located between the sacred mountains.

When Changing Woman created a female and male Kinyaa'áanii (Towering House Clan) clans, she rubbed her chest and molding dirt from her body and blew the mold to the east. She blessed them with white shell gish (cane), which empowered the clan to become great leaders and the

ability to guide their people. The Kinyaa'áanii are often chosen to represent their people as leaders and headmen. In addition, they were given náshdóitsoh (mountain lion) as their protector. Another source believes the protector is shash. Kinyaa'áanii given the name because the pair appeared to be leaning against a high rock and appeared to be part of the sandstone wall. Changing Women created a female and male Tódich'íinii (Bitter Water Clan) by rubbing under her arm above the rib cage and blew the mold to the south. Turquoise (dootłizhii) shell gish was given to the Tódich'íinii Clan. The dootłizhii gish (turquoise cane) granted the clan with great wisdom and knowledge which enabled them to become philosophers, educators, and teachers. They were also granted Tłiishtsoh (Big Snake) as a protector. Tódich'íinii pair were asked to get water. As they came to a dry creek, they dug for water. The water they uncovered was bitter, so they were given the name Tódich'íinii.

To'ahani (Near the Water) female and male were created and blown into the west when Changing Woman rubbed between her shoulder blades. Other sources believe the original clan was Honágháahnii (One Who Walks Around You). This original clan members were blessed with abalone (diichíí) gish (cane) by Changing Woman. The diichíí gish enabled the clan to help their people with healing. To'ahani were empowered the clans to become medicine men. They were given songs and prayers. The belief is that they also can manipulate the weather; "if they ask for rain it will rain, or if they ask for snow, it can snow." (Aronilth, Jr, 1994, p. 36) Their animal protector became shash (Bear). Other sources believe their animal protector was a mountain lion.

Hashtłishnii (Mud Clan) female and male were created when Changing Woman rubbed her under her left arm above the ribcage. She blessed with a gish made from Black Jet (bááshzhinii). The Black jet gish blessed the clan with the ability to be creative, skillful, talented, and naturally gifted. These attributes allowed the clans to "build and made things, such as rug weaving, cared for livestock, became farmers, and many more. Finally, she blessed the clan with Dahsání (porcupine). Hashtłishnii got their names when they journeyed east. They pair were instructed to find water, but all they found was muddy water. They earned the name Hashtłishnii because of the incident (Chisholm & Jackson, 2003, p. 317).

Changing Woman mixed the elements of the four direction which included: white shell, turquoise, abalone shell, sweat, pollen, heat, and wind in the process of molding the clan pairs. Sacred songs and prayers were sung as the molds were placed on a deer skin along with the elements. The molds did not originally come to life so Níłch'i Diyin Diné were assembled from all four directions to help the light and rainbow to breath life into the figurines. According to EH Begay (Chisholm & Jackson, 2003, p. 315), the white crystal became the brain and spinal cord. The shell became the bones, fingernails and toenails, and teeth. Any fluids in the body came from turquoise, and the abalone shell became the nerves and senses of the body. Obsidian became the eyes and hair on the body. Changing Woman provided the skin and pores from the sweat and molds.

Each clan were given different abilities and talents to contribute to the society. The abilities and talents given to each clan have equal value, and therefore, not once clan can exceed another by monopolizing all the talents and abilities. The clans represent the separation of power through k'é (clans), and checks and balances are maintained. The moral of the story is that a person must

appreciate who they are, dependent on their clan. A person should not attempt to copy or imitate someone they are not. A person gains knowledge and wisdom by being themselves.

Identity and Agency

“A person’s personal identity and sense of agency is the foundation of his or her emotional life.” (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p.19) Our lives are affected by how we see ourselves and our belief in our capacity in real-world situation. Our circumstances, our environment, the people around us, and the challenges we face can be influenced positively or negatively. The words and actions by the most influential people in a child’s life including parents and educators impact a child’s identity and agency intentionally or unintentionally. A student’s learning achievement is the foundation for a student’s identity and agency. It is beneficial for teachers to pay attention to the development of identity and agency. Confidence is the key to whether not a student takes intellectual risks. “Students with a diminished sense of agency can’t fathom that there is anything they can do to change the trajectory of their learning.” (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p. 19) It’s important to invest in a child’s identity and agency because it will pay off in academic success and accomplishments.

How we act or relate in this world depends on our beliefs in our self-concept and our beliefs in our abilities. “Identity is an understanding of who we are-our attributes, the way we see ourselves in relation to others, our perceived talents, and the awareness of our shortcomings.” (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p. 20) Identity is more fluid, it changes over time, and often redefined based on our experiences. Experience we have and how we interpret that experience can have a profound impact on our identity. Furthermore, identity is understood through our interactions with others. Our perception of our identity is constructed on how others “react to us and listen for the language they use to describe us.” (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p.19) Our experiences in school, as well as family and friends influence how we form our identity. A significant part of a student formation of identity depends on a teacher’s words and actions. Unintentional action can impact a child's identity negatively. A negative experience triggers a new identity and might damage a child’s relationship with her teacher and her peers. “Agency is necessarily tied to identity, as it describes a person’s capacity to take action and shape his or her destiny.” (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p. 21) Sense of agency is tied to social interactions with families, friends, school, and community. The small social network of a child that influences his or her sense of agency is called social capital. Social capital is important part of a child’s ability to take risks and try new things in the classroom, especially if they have strong social capital. “Students with a strong social capital gain a sense of autonomy because their network of relationships keeps them feeling emotionally and psychologically safe.” (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p. 21) Students with weak social capital feel insecure, and often resort to guessing, or give up easily because they feel alone and exposed. Other risky behaviors that a child might engage in to prevent progress include feeling angry, blame others, or lash out at others, especially when faced with a challenge in the classroom. Sense of safety is key to sense of agency. Some ways to build sense of agency is to figure out the triggers, as well as offer academic and emotional support.

One way to build student identity and agency is to figure out a child’s strength. As educators we tend to focus on weaknesses, gaps in learning, and deficits because we need to know where how

we can help the child. “And because we want students to understand that failure is an opportunity to learn, we tend to highlight errors that can guide them to new learning.” (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p. 23) However, positive identity development and agency require us to focus on highlighting student’s strength and mastery they have shown us. The best way to show a child their strength is through feedback.

There are four types of feedback: corrective feedback, feedback about the processing of the task, feedback about self-regulation, and feedback about the person. Corrective feedback is giving correction about a task. It is “effective when addressing mistakes in content learning, but not when the learner lacks knowledge or skill.” (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p. 25) Corrective feedback is especially ineffective for behavior correction. Feedback about the processing of the task focus on how a student approaches a task. This feedback is effective in identifying cognitive and metacognitive strategies a student is using or should be using. When a student knows strengths in effort, strategy choice, focus, perseverance, and progress, it can boost their sense of identity. Feedback about self-regulation helps students to self-assess their ability, actions, and knowledge. It helps them focus on managing their emotions and behaviors in any situation. It “acknowledges their actions, choices, and responses, it can boost their sense of agency.” (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p. 24) Finally, providing feedback about the person focuses on giving praises on individual’s character trait. However, this type of feedback is ineffective because it often vague. It often does not give provide task-specific information like what to do next or inform them on what they did successfully. All four types of feedback should be used in the classroom. If the feedback id used the right way, it will integrate social and emotional skills development into all content areas.

Another way to strengthen identity and agency is build self-confidence. To truly engage in learning, students need to believe in themselves. Teachers need to help students develop self-confidence. Self-confident students do what they believe is right, even if other students will tease you or criticize you for it. In addition, students can take reasonable risks and put in the effort to learn rather than staying in a comfort zone, avoiding risks, or fearing failure. Another attribute of self-confidence is admitting your mistakes and learning from them instead of covering up mistakes or quickly fixing mistakes before anyone else notices. Confident students wait to be congratulated on accomplishments and do not feel a need to tell others about their accomplishments. Finally, instead of dismissing compliments, confident students accept it graciously.

Self-confidence is associated with resiliency, but where does it come from? It could come from a person, but mostly, it is domain-specific, meaning that it depends on the task. One fact that does not build self-confidence is false praise. False praise is defined as praise that exceeds the level of accomplishment. What builds self-confidence is providing effective feedback and appropriate structured learning tasks. In addition, support from peers can lead to better self-confidence. Teachers are recommended to encourage students to participate in socially designed learning activities that allow them to share their ideas and grow their knowledge. In addition, teachers should plan activities that encourages them to explain their reasoning and discuss the evidence. All lessons should contain self-regulation and metacognition activities. Finally, always provide feedback with the students.

Self-efficacy is also a factor in building self-confidence, and often depends on one's skill set. Self-efficacy is defined as a measure of the belief in our ability to take actions, complete a task, and accomplish goals. The issue with self-efficacy is that it can be achieved two different ways, depending on what the child believes. A child can believe that they can achieve and be able to achieve. Performance informed belief is the second part of self-efficacy. It is the belief that they can achieve after they complete a task successfully. Performance informed belief can be promoted by using mastery learning and individual goal setting. One factor for building self-efficacy is to encourage students to believe that the task is within their capacity and watching someone like themselves complete the task.

At the basic level, mindset is the attitude that someone believes about a task. If someone has a negative mindset about a task, the task will still be completed but the person will not enjoy it. If someone has a positive mindset, they will tackle the task and enjoy themselves while they complete the task. "In the classroom, mindset is an expression of identity, agency, and self-efficacy as it applies to learning." (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p. 30) There are two types of mindsets: a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. People with a fixed mindset do not believe that their basic qualities, intelligence, and talent are changing. They rely on their talents to reach success, and they believe that they do not need to put in effort to master something new. They easily give up, especially if it requires effort, and often doubt and question success.

People with growth mindset believe that their abilities can be established through hard work, dedication, and effort. They persevere even after failed attempts but work hard to overcome any obstacles. However, everyone has both growth mindset and fixed mindset depending on topic, content area, experience, past success, and environmental factors. One thing to keep in mind is that there are studies that suggest that "general mindset interventions are not especially effective for many students." (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p. 33) It yields detrimental effect when mindset intervention is used in isolation and applied to all students. It is "recommended that teachers reexamine the use of mindset interventions to more precisely target those students who are at significant risk for failure and live in poverty" (Frey & Fisher & Smith, 2019, p. 33).

The internal construct that describes to stick with a challenge and not give up is called perseverance. Grit is showing persistence towards a goal by demonstrating a commitment that requires giving up a lot of other things to reach a goal. Perseverance and grit are more apparent when children, especially adolescents invest in long term goals like playing musical instruments, engaging in sports, or excelling in academic subjects that hold their interests. There are many opportunities in school curriculums to encourage students to employ persistence and grit. Student's passion and interest are great ways to activate student's perseverance and grit. Sometimes using an award system is a great way to motivate students to keep moving forward. Identity and agency also depend on resiliency. Resiliency is the ability to overcome challenges from academic challenges or overcoming trauma they have witnessed or experience. Those who bounce back from setbacks come out as stronger or wiser because of the experience. In a classroom, students face many challenges and may include the following: child abuse, living in foster care, facing food insecurity, stressing over school, or dealing with the death of a parent.

Teaching Strategies

Daily Check-in

Starting the day by acknowledging student's feelings is a great way to make personal connections. The school has adopted a strategy called Morning Circle. It is a simple procedure to greet students and have them share their feelings. In the circle, the only person who is allowed to talk is the person who holding Elliot. Elliot is a stuffed wooly mammoth. Not every person has to share their feelings. The other part is the students are given a prompt if they just want to talk about something that will create a connection, what their day was like, what is one thing they want us to know about them, what is one rule that they like to change and why, and so on.

Build Community with Teams

The first week, I allowed students to sit where they want to sit. As expected, they sat with friends and family members. I want all students to become a community so one thing to consider is alternative seating. Alternative seating could be homogenized by ability level so they could work together to or in mixed groups. Mixed groups would include different ability levels. Each time a team is developed they have to create an original name, motto, and flag. This is a great way for students to feel a sense of belonging, and it encourages collaboration and cooperation.

Teach Mindfulness

Students feel a lot of stress and anxiety for many reasons, could be about school or families. One strategy develops their social and emotional awareness by teaching them to practice mindfulness. One of the best ways to teach mindfulness is to use books geared towards first graders that teach them about calming down racing thoughts, using nature to focus on relaxation, tune in to sensorial cues and how such fluctuations can impact one's mood. In addition, the selections of books would include books about Native Americans or Native American theme. This strategy would use books to cope with challenging situations through by teaching students breathing exercises, journaling, and other activities.

Classroom Activities

Using Navajo Clanship

Greeting students in Navajo, especially using clanship, K'é, is a powerful tool to create personal connections with the students. One of the first steps is to teach the students to say their clanship. The second step is to teach them how clans relation works. Each community has two to three dominate clans, so most likely, there would be some "brothers" and "sisters" in the classroom. One the activities that would help students understand relationships through K'é is by color coding or using animals. The Navajo clan sheet often group clans together into groups. These groups could be used to color code. Students who have the same color would have relationships. Students get excited when you greet them in the morning and throughout the day as family.

Introduction in Navajo using the Four Clans

According to Wilson Aronilth, Jr., introducing yourself using your four clans is knowing who you are, and where you come from, and can also project where you are going in life. In addition, k'é can be expanded when you know the classification of clans. Classification group clans together so that a person know which clans are also related to you. This also describes identity and agency.

For this activity, students will identify themselves by introducing themselves in Navajo using the four clans. Using clans is a great way to teach students that we are all related to each other. One teaching about clans is that it is used to teach respect for each other.

Research Clan Attributes and Characteristics

When you encounter an elderly Navajo, they often will study the behavior and conduct of an individual, and they would predict the clans of that individual. Often, they are correct in their assessment of that person. Each clan has their own origin stories. The clans represent different and different characters. Unfortunately, not all attributes and characters of each clan is written down. Furthermore, attributes and characters differ from region to region, but still there are some similarities.

In this activity, students will go home and interview parents about the origin of their first clan (mother's clan) and second clan (father's clan.) Since clans are the foundation of identity and agency, I want students to learn more about themselves by researching the clans. Do they exhibit any of the attributes that describe their maternal clan? What about their paternal clan? Students will use a Venn Diagram to list the attributes and characteristic of their clans.

Student Assessment Plan

Clans

According to David E. Wilkins (1987), k'é principle describes the ideal relationship among everyone, and the idea that everyone is related; therefore, must aspire to treat each other with respect. The principle of K'ée is the concept of clan kinship. Navajos use clan kinship to refer to specific relationships among relatives, and it is used as a matter of family etiquette. Each clan represents a specific origin, and a specific attributes and behavior, which is used to guide interaction between and among clans.

Students will be able to say their four clans in Navajo. In addition, students will be able to meet and greet classmates using k'é. They will be able to greet three classmates using k'é principle. Using k'é principle in the classroom will allow students to realize that they are all related to each other, and should respect each other, just like their own families.

Identity using Storytelling

Navajos do not have a written language, so they rely on storytelling to pass down history. Native Americans including Navajos engage in storytelling to teach morality, origin stories, and maintain culture. Oral tradition and oral stories explain human existence, reinforce values, and

beliefs. Today, storytelling is used to reclaim history, myths, philosophy, and narratives to exchange information. One's identity is often developed through oral language used in storytelling.

Students will research and explore characteristics and character traits associated with their clans. Students will research their maternal and paternal clans by asking their parents, grandparents, and other family members. Did the students acquire the same characteristics associated with their clans?

Alignment with Standards

Pre-K-3rd Diné Standards Concept 2 PO2, I will use appropriate kinship terms. This standard covers how students will address each other in terms of using their clans as a tool to find relationships.

SEL Competencies and Framework was adopted by the Arizona department of Education. It uses CASEL's five core competencies of what Social and Emotional Learning will look like in practice. My unit will focus on all five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness.

Resources

Jingle Dancer by Cynthia Leitich Smith is a great resource for any classroom but would be great to teach student about social emotional learning. It is about a Native American girl who comes from generations of jingle dress dancers. She hopes to dance at the next powwow when she gets anxious when the powwow approaches, but the dress does not have any "jingle". This would be a great book to teach students about dealing with anxiety and how to ask for help when needed to deal with problems.

Navajo Girl/Navajo Boy by Maureen Mink is a great book to teach students about respecting the land, animals, and other humans. It teaches students about the value of the nature and the importance of taking care of it.

Fry Bread a Native American Family Story by Kevin Noble Maillard is about families and the importance of family get together. Fry bread and other foods play in an important role in family relationships. This book would be great to explain relationships with family and like forming relationships with friends. Classrooms and classmates are family members too. This would be great book to introduce how clanships work.

Bibliography

Aronilth, W. (1991). *Foundation of Navajo Culture*. Navajo Community College.

Aronilth, W. (1994). *Diné Bi Bee Óhoo'áh bá silá: an introduction to Navajo philosophy*. Center for Diné Studies, Navajo Community College.

- Benally, H. (2019, October 9). *Navajo philosophy of learning and pedagogy* -. Navajo Philosophy of Learning. Retrieved June 9, 2022, from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Herbert-Benally/publication/234664440_Navajo_Philosophy_of_Learning_and_Pedagogy/links/5d9e0f2b458515df0ae88ecd/Navajo-Philosophy-of-Learning-and-Pedagogy.pdf
- Chisholm, A., & Jackson, S. (2003). *Diné culture-based curriculum*. Office of Diné Culture, Language & Community Service.
- Flippen, Flip. "Capturing Kid's Hearts." College Station, TX: 1199 Haywood Drive, n.d.
- Frey, N., Fisher, D. & Smith, D. (2019). *All learning is social and emotional: Helping students develop essential skills for the classroom and beyond*. ASCD.
- Mose, D. (2001). *Navajo Clan Legends*. San Juan School District.
- Office of Navajo Government Development. (1998). *Navajo Nation Government*.
- Parsons-Yazzie, E., Yazzie, B., McConnell, T., Whitethorne, B., & Speas, M. (2008). *Diné Bizaad bináhoo'aah: rediscovering the Navajo language: An introduction to the Navajo language: Correlated workbook*. Salina Bookshelf.
- Smith, L. (1991). *Kayenta's Early Days, a history of Kayenta, Arizona from 1910 - 1990*Kayenta District #27 Print Shop K.U.S.D. #27.
- Wilkins, David E. *Diné Beehaz'áanii: a Handbook of Navajo Government*. Navajo Community College Press, 1987