

What is the Dine Philosophy of Learning for K-3rd Grade?

Haash yi' t'éego éí Dine'k'e'ji na'nitin bi hwi'doo aal?

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Culturally Responsive Schooling with/in Indigenous Communities

Professional Development Program

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Introduction

Context

First, I would like to introduce myself and my family. I am of the Haashk'aan hozhoni (Yucca Fruit) clan people, I am born for the Tłizí laní (Manygoats) clan, my maternal clan is Tsinajinnie (Blackstreak clan) and my paternal clan is Tse'nijikinii(Towering Rock clan). I am married and I have four awesome sons. I live in Canyon Diabale, Arizona which is located Southwest of Leupp Arizona. Both my parents are non-English speakers and fluent speakers of the Navajo Language. I grew up in Canyon Diablo Arizona as a shepherd. During my school-age years, I attended the Leupp Boarding School, and Leupp Public School and went to Flagstaff Unified School District for High School. In 1982, I graduated from Flagstaff High School and later pursued higher education. I earned my Bachelor Associate in Education with Prescott Yavapai College and at Northern Arizona University I completed my Master's Degree in Special Education. I have been teaching for thirty years on the Navajo reservation and off the reservation.

I am currently working at Puente de Hozho Elementary School as a 3rd-grade Dine Teacher, here in Flagstaff Arizona. I have been teaching for more than 30 years, Navajo Reservations Schools and Public Schools. Puente de Hózhó Elementary School is a trilingual language school located in Flagstaff, Arizona, and is a part of the Flagstaff Unified School District. PdH has two dual-language programs consisting of a Navajo Immersion Language Program and a Spanish-English Bilingual Program. We serve students from Kindergarten through 5th grade, and a 6-12 International Baccalaureate Continuum is being established to complement PdH's programming. Featured in the Harvard Education Review for "best practices" for culturally sustaining and revitalizing teaching, and I love teaching the children at Puente de Hozho.

Rationale

The reason why I selected this topic, “What is the Dine Philosophy of Learning for Dine Elementary students? In Dine language, it said, “Haash yi’ t’éego éí Dine’k’e’ji na’nitin bi hwi’doo aal?” The topic reflects my Navajo beliefs and culture during my upbringing as a young girl. The traditional Navajo way of life or belief was embedded in me by my grandmothers and mother. Ever since I was growing up, I’ve lived in a hogan with twelve siblings and used only the Navajo language every day. I was always taught to endure life, the land, and overall harmony with others, and nature, and to understand the supernatural elements. All living things such as people, plants, animals, mountains, the Mother Earth/ Father Sky are considered relatives of one another and to always have respect for them. I believe that, through education, one will receive the foundation of life skills and tools to become a respectful individual in a global society.

In the research reading, Jack D. Forbes Indigenous Americans: Spirituality and Ecos 285 is that of gratitude, a feeling of overwhelming love and thankfulness for the gifts of the Creator and the earth/universe. As a young child, I was always reminded to pray in the morning dawn to the Holy People and that I would be protected and guided by the Holy Beings. Furthermore, I have to stay in balance with the natural cosmic order of the universe. I have sat in Blessingway Ceremonies to rejuvenate myself with the Creator’s blessings.

At age eight, my grandmother used to say to me,” Granddaughter it is up to you to learn and become an independent individual in life if you only understand your traditional teachings. In Navajo the term is called, T’aa hwi’a’ji’t’eego, it is up to you to become prosperous in life. I chose this topic because I am a prime example of being raised in the Navajo Philosophy of teachings from birth to today. Both of my parents only spoke to me in the Navajo language and back then our whole village spoke only in Navajo. Today, there is a huge difference and gap in learning the Navajo language because young generations have become accustomed to Western Society of living. Everything surrounding them has become quick accommodation provided by the Western Society and things aren’t sacred anymore. More mad more their children are influenced by these fast and quick modern lives. Such as Game Box, iPads, iPhones, and fast-food chains. As educators, we are fighting the battle of our children not using their language and so sad to see from the elders' point of view.

Also, after reading Brayboy, B. M. J., Gough, H. R., Leonard, B., Roehl, R. F. II, & Solyom, J. A. (2012). Reclaiming scholarship: Critical indigenous research methodologies has motivated me as a Dine teacher that our young children need to practice their traditional belief.

Students using their self-identity through the use of clan is very critical.

In addition, the research studies Indigenous scholars have been calling for indigenous communities to (re) claim research and knowledge-making practices that are:

- driven by indigenous peoples, knowledge, beliefs, and practices;
- rooted in recognition of the impact of Eurocentric culture on the history, beliefs, and practices of indigenous peoples and communities;
- guided by the intention of promoting the anticolonial or emancipatory interests of indigenous communities. CIRM is a response to this call. A Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies (CIRM) perspective fundamentally begins as an emancipatory project rooted in relationships and is driven explicitly by community interests.

Topic Summary

My guide is basically through observing and evaluating our Dine children increasingly losing their language and traditional beliefs. We as Indigenous people across the Nation have begun the process of reclaiming and revitalizing our Native Languages. Our Native American children are headed into a future of uncertainty and challenges therefore we as Dine educators are responsible for sustaining their rich language and culture. McCarty, Teresa L., and Sheilah E. Nicholas. "Reclaiming Indigenous Languages: A Reconsideration of the Roles and Responsibilities of Schools." *Review of Research in Education*, vol. 38, 2014.

Another guide to my topic is the teaching methodologies and techniques. I am a true believer in gaining funds of knowledge from teachers or students and reverse. Students and families bring funds of knowledge to their classrooms or learning communities, and as educators, we need to recognize this and incorporate this knowledge and experience into classroom practice. In my class, I like to share my personal journey stories with my students and sing songs or dance in class. I encourage students to bring their community storytellers into the classroom or local artists. My teaching style can best be described as one that incorporates a diversity of teaching methodologies and techniques. The International Baccalaureate Program has been established to complement Puente de Hozho Elementary. We as teachers develop Dine theme units and classroom activities that grow out of and speak to children's interests and cultural backgrounds through units. Students are encouraged to research and document life learning relevant in their homes and communities. We use materials reflecting the cultural and ethnic diversity group. Incorporating popular Native culture (e.g., music, film, video, gaming, etc.) into the classroom curriculum brings unity into our classroom.

Summary

In summarizing my topic: What is the Dine Philosophy of Learning for K-3rd Grade? Haash yi' t'éego éí Dine'k'e'ji na'nitin bi hwi'doo aal? This is a very challenging question for parents and educators. It is challenging because our native language is decreasing rapidly due to young parents speaking English to their children 99% of the day. Connecting our culture and our language by utilizing the community's native speakers is another to revitalize our language. It is very important to connect school to home and the wealth of knowledge flowing in from the grassroots communities. Our elders in our communities are very knowledgeable and are full of resources of stories, songs, dances, art, and protectors of ceremonies. Our young children need to be guided and shown the way to save their native language because that is the key to being resilient in the global world. The global world is not safe anymore and it is full of negative temptations.

In the reading, Indigenous Knowledge Systems it also can generate new visions and practices of public education. We intentionally use the plural form of Knowledge to recognize the diversity and plurality of Indigenous Knowledge and to capture a “nuanced and holistic consideration of Indigenous Knowledge as entire systems” (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009, p. 4). Indigenous Knowledge is as diverse as Indigenous peoples themselves (Battiste, 2002; Brayboy & Castagno, 2008; Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012; Brayboy & Maughan, 2009). Moreover, Indigenous Knowledge is heterogeneous, not just across Indigenous communities but even within them:

Within any Indigenous nation or community, people vary greatly in what they know. There are not only differences between ordinary folks and experts, such as experienced knowledge keepers, healers, hunters, or ceremonialism, there are also major differences in experiences and professional opinions among the knowledge holders and workers, as we should expect of any living, dynamic knowledge system that is continually responding to new phenomena and fresh insights. (Battiste, 2002, p. 12)

I had an unusual experience in one of my lessons on the Native Corn Unit at Puente de Hozho last year. There was a child who had a question on the Black Corn. He says, “Mrs. Gorman, what is the black corn for because the white corn is for praying in the morning and the yellow corn in the evening?” I stopped. And I did not have an answer, so we invited a medicine man into our classroom, and we all asked the same question. The medicine man was from N.A.U. Cultural Center. Schools can reach out to universities for research and information that students want to learn. I thought that was an excellent resource we used at the time therefore now my students know about the representation of the Black Corn.

My goal as a teacher is to continue to instill a passion for learning within students while providing them with a safe culturally relevant environment that is encouraging and positive. Students will look back on their times with me as a teacher who genuinely cared for their well-being. I am eager to participate and contribute to the growth and development of my and community. I am a student, a mother, a teacher, a leader, and most proud to be a grandmother, today.

In addition, as a teacher, I explore to learn about the communities and be open to new opportunities. As educators, we need to learn more about sociolinguistics both in teacher preparation programs and in ongoing professional development. Developing this kind of knowledge may help to avoid linguistic racism or make the language less important. My deep-felt principle is the importance of recognizing the uniqueness of all cultures, languages, and communities. As a teacher and educator, I understand the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of our society and that we enter our classrooms with our own social identities and cultural biases. We see all classrooms as multicultural, and we work towards respecting, valuing, and celebrating our own and students' unique strengths in creating equitable classroom communities. I would like my students to preserve, protect, and speak their Dine Language when they enter the Global Society.

Student Engagement

Lesson: Four Sacred Mountains and their representations.

Grade Level: 3rd Readiness.

Objectives: Students will be able to understand the significance of the Four Sacred Mountains in their directions, clans, colors, seasons, and the four stages of growth: birth, maturing adult, and elder.

Cultural Concept: Students will gain cultural Dine Standards and recognize to build upon the independence of the natural and human global society. Students will regain cultural knowledge and traditional practices that once were stories from their elders.

1. Students will go into four groups and each group will be given a particle mountain that is sacred to Dine People.
2. Students will use a poster board, coloring pencils, and a laptop for research.

3. Students will illustrate the mountain and identify each mountain's representation.
4. Students will present their project verbally in Dine Language to the class/ parents.
5. Students will introduce themselves to the class and their four clans in Dine Language.
6. Non-native students will support and bring their cultural knowledge to the project.

Assessment

1. Students will present their Four Sacred Mountains project to the audience for 20 mins.
2. Students will speak in Dine Language during presentations.
3. Students will keep a journal of their work.
4. Students will interview knowledgeable elders in their community.
5. Students will be observed with clear verbal and listening skills.
6. Students will be asked questions and respond with clear feedback.

Responsive Assessment of Indigenous Schooling (CRAIS) Tool Principles

- Students feel welcomed in and with an Affirming Environment.
- Students are encouraged to have high expectations and rigorous instruction.
- Students understand inclusive curriculum learning with a clear assessment.
- Teachers participate in Ongoing Professional Learning to keep up with current trends.

Key features of culturally responsive teaching.

- Teachers are empathetic and caring;
- Students reflect on their beliefs about people from other cultures;
- Students are reflective about their cultural frames of reference;
- Students are knowledgeable about other cultures.

Resources

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

CALLA (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994 pp 60-64)

McFee, J., and R. Degge. 1997. *Art, Culture, and Environment: A Catalyst for Teaching*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth

Cummins, J., Brown, K., & Sayers, D. (2007). *Literacy, technology, and diversity: Teaching for success in changing times*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

"Challenges and supports for ELLs in bilingual programs" by María Brisk and C. Patrick Proctor

Dass, P., Castagno, A., Joseph, D., Keene, C., & Macias, C. (n.d.). *Enhancing stem education in Indigenous serving schools using culturally responsive pedagogy*.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Smith, L. T. T. R. (2000). *Kaupapa Maori research*. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision* (pp. 225–247). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

NAU Dine Traditional Practitioners.

Community Members of Leupp, Arizona: Flora Smith and Joe Smith

Appendix A

1.cultural triangle

Appendix B

Four Sacred Mountain/ Seasons Charts for visual learners.

Appendix C

Students Present to other grade-level classes when projects is completed.