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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2006 Volume IV: Native America: Understanding the Past through Things

Native American Art Traditions in the Middle School Arts Curriculum

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This curriculum was designed to help 7th and 8th grade middle school students in Santa Fe, New Mexico appreciate the Navajo and Pueblo crafts traditions. My plan was to develop study units which would give students an introduction to how native pottery, sandpainting, and weaving were created historically and how they are carried on in the present. A variety of presentation methods have been employed to accomplish this. Lectures, guest speakers, demonstrations, visiting artisans from the community, and a visit to the Museum Indian Art and Culture and Laboratory of Anthropology can help students make connections between their own lives and the lives of their native neighbors. A culminating visit to Bandelier National Monument rounds out the study of native arts.

The unit has been written with the hopes of addressing the issue of cultural sensitivity. It is hoped that students can begin to be more aware of other cultures around them, as well as become more aware of their own heritage. By exposing students to the rich Pueblo and Navajo folk traditions, I hope to increase awareness and appreciation of the artwork from these two very unique cultures. The students will be given a view of very old customs and traditions. Additionally, they will get a look at what is taking place with modern work created by native artists.

(Developed for Arts and Crafts, grades 7-8; recommended for Art and Social Studies, grades 7-8)

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