



Through the Eyes of a Navajo: Nature Writing

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Introduction

Respect for one's identity in the Navajo culture begins with a verbal self-introduction in the Navajo language which includes one's clans. In English my self-introduction would be translated as, "Greetings or Hello. My name is Cheryl Singer. I am of the Near the Mountain Towering House clan and born for the Red Running into the Water People clan. My maternal grandfathers are of the Rock Gap clan and my paternal grandfathers are of the Mexican clan." This is how I identify myself as a Navajo woman. Our Navajo clanship explanation can best be described in the eloquent words of the Kayenta Unified School District's Navajo Language and Cultural Curriculum:

Navajo philosophy of education and concept of the universal law interconnect the practice of kinship. It is viewed as the foundation of life, the fundamental elements that acknowledges our self-identity: Name, Clans, Language, Culture, Shadow, and footprints. Kinship and clanship are a guiding principle for: future, history, present existence, nature and the universe. Knowing the awareness will help us sustain balance and beauty before, behind, beneath, all around us, above and from our mouth.¹

From the Navajo Language and Cultural Curriculum statement above the word "shadow" refers to a Navajo child of the Holy People. The Holy People are the ancestors and as a precious child, the individual carries with them a spiritual self-identity as a human being. The next term "footprints" refers to the Beauty Way path that one will follow into old age. The child is the one who makes the decision for the future and the type of legacy he/she wants to leave for others.

In the Navajo world, a Navajo child grows up with the teachings of the Navajo kinship and respect for self, others, nature, environment, animals, and the universe. If you noticed my clans are elements of the environment like a mountain, a towering house, water, rocks and another nationality, the Mexican clan. My first clan (Near the Mountain Towering House clan) was given to me by my mother, and my third clan (the Rock Gap clan) was given to me by my maternal grandfather whose clan was given to him by his mother. My second clan (Red Running into the Water People clan) was given to me by my father whose clan was given to him by his mother, and my fourth clan (the Mexican clan) was given to my paternal grandfather whose clan

was given to him by his mother. Because of these mothers' clans given to us through our four clans, it gives us our matrilineal heritage.

The two philosophy concepts of Walking in Beauty and having the Protection Way Teachings are referred to as our maternal and paternal teachings where the female side of us is referring to the Beauty Way concept, and the teachings of the Protection Way concept are the male side of us.

My maternal grandparents' teachings included the stories of these clans and the origin of where I come from through the stories shared with me. Family stories are shared with the Navajo children, so that they have a sense of belonging, and that there are family (e.g., people, animals, environment, plants and trees, and the universe) all around us. Therefore, a child knowing their kinship will Walk the Beauty Way Path of Life for the future and have the traditional knowledge of their Protection Way Teachings which are connected to their attitudes and behaviors.

In the curriculum unit I have prepared, students will gain this awareness and knowledge through direct instruction, worksheets, nature journaling and opportunities to sit and observe in nature, family conversations and storytelling, study of Navajo poetry, individual research, and an oral presentation. The larger aim will be to allow 'true internalization of knowledge,' in accord with Navajo understandings of learning.

By offering a view through the eyes of a Navajo person, the non-Navajo teacher can experience the healing that nature and the universe can give to others, especially their students. When a teacher is showing respect and gratitude to the environment, the students will benefit from the role modeling demonstrated by the teacher. By giving thanks and by taking care of Mother Earth the five-fingered ones can help to sustain life in the present moment and into the future.

When students are given Native American stories, Navajo stories, and Earth activities, they will learn about the interconnectedness we have for Mother Earth: she is our living organism. Stories and readings in this curriculum will broaden the student's awareness of our surroundings and enrich their cultural knowledge.

In Vangee Nez's dissertation on the "Dine Epistemology: Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhoon Teachings," she quotes Dr. Vincent Werito, an educator and scholar of the University of New Mexico on Navajo youth and the Navajo Philosophy:

Werito believes that Dine teachings brings a state of hozho, conscious awareness that brings harmony and peace. And it is "entirely up to you" to manifest the principles of thinking for yourself, to live life in a delicate manner with the universe; and lastly, to come into knowing who you are. These relational principles support Dine epistemology and SNBH through nurturing and sustaining the balance of life with the universe, earth, and all living things.²

School Description and Location

I teach at Monument Valley High School (MVHS) in Kayenta, Arizona. I am the only Foreign Language teacher who teaches the Navajo Language 1 and 2 courses at the high school level. These courses are offered to students in grades 9 - 12.

Navajo students applying to the Chief Manuelito Scholarship especially for those who are planning to attend a post-secondary institution after graduation are required to complete 1 credit of Navajo Language and a 0.5 credit of Navajo Government prior to their high school graduation. Each year, about five to fifteen students take the Navajo Language courses for this scholarship. Currently we have five students recognized for this award from Monument Valley High School of Kayenta, Arizona.

Kayenta (known in Navajo as To dineeshzhee', which is translated as "water" for To and dineeshzhee' for "fingers") is located in the northeastern corner of Arizona and is 26 miles south of one of the natural wonders of the world which is a sacred ground according to the Navajo people called Monument Valley (known to Navajos as Tse bii' ndziszgaii, translated as Tse which is "rock", bii' means "among" and ndziszgaii is "clearing or stretches of treeless areas"). There are three public schools under the Kayenta Unified School District, which are: Debbie Braff Elementary School (kindergarten to 4th grade), Baker Middle School (5th to 8th grades) and Monument Valley High School (9th to 12th grades). The Kayenta Community School is a boarding school serving dorm students and day students (kindergarten to 8th grades) under the Bureau of Indian Education.

The population of Kayenta is 5,227 according to the 2023 U.S. Census estimates. Kayenta is the only town on the Navajo Nation that has a municipal-style government which is called the Kayenta Township. It is managed by a five-member elected town board and a township manager. Kayenta Chapter is represented by some elected delegates who belong to the governing body of the Navajo Nation Council. Meetings are held with the chapter members to maintain interest in community planning. Kayenta Township serves as a local government, and it provides events for the community. Kayenta has six fast food places, three restaurants, one grocery store, one hardware store, a Navajo arts and crafts enterprise, a movie rental place, three hotels, ten churches, a bank, an auto parts store, and three gas stations.

Kayenta Unified School District's mission statement is as follows in English:

It is the individual's responsibility to attain a successful life. Thinking, planning, learning, and working together. This is what we want for you. Through guidance, we will get there together.³

The time spent during the Pandemic did not help with the district's reading scores. This is an area that schools across the Navajo Nation had to tackle and teachers had to do more work to rebuild their content and extra-curricular courses, especially in reading. Until the Navajo Nation received coronavirus (CARE) relief funds, internet access was very minimal, and students were unable to communicate with the school district. Teachers and district leaders had to create the means for communication with these students and during this period, students' scores in reading went down. Each school within the Kayenta district had to implement a program to revive the reading scores.

The high school in Kayenta during the 2022-2023 school year was given several professional growth training

lessons and implemented a program called Beyond Textbook Curriculum Framework, which is an online resource created by the Vail Unified School District to improve student achievement through proven teaching and learning frameworks. This program is one way that the high school is moving forward to improve their low reading scores and incorporate their writing skills.

Duality

How is Navajo duality different from that in the Westernized world? Wilson Aronilth, Jr. gives the appropriate meaning of duality:

The Dine philosophy is identified as Dine spiritual education about our life. It is the educational study of lina and livelihood. This is also identified as a male and female discipline of learning with equal values.⁴

In the Navajo perspective Sa’ah Naaghai Bik’eh Hozhoon is the Navajo foundation of learning and the “Alchi Sila” is the “duality” referring to the male and female aspects of nature and the environmental teachings, universal teachings, and teachings of objects that are utilized in the Navajo culture. Duality is the principle that extends from the Navajo foundation of learning and it contains the harmony and balance that we hear in the Navajo teachings of the male and female concepts. By understanding the duality concept, the Navajo child will internalize the cultural knowledge that has been shared through the oral storytelling of their elders and it is still being shared by some families. I mentioned the words of some families because the families who carry on these teachings come from a more traditional background teaching. Today, there are a variety of background family belief systems. The Navajo language was once an oral language, and the storytelling was the only means of communication in sharing cultural stories and knowledge being instilled in the children by their parents, grandparents and extended family members were being shared by the mother tongue.

If a child is raised with a strong emphasis on cultural values, morals, and teachings, they will understand the concepts of the duality principle. It would take a whole lifetime of learning for a Navajo person to learn the cultural values, morals, and teachings of the universe. The list below is only a few of the examples that will be shared with the students:

Male	Female
Sun (Johonaa’ei): Every morning we are blessed with the sun rays and offer our blessings to the east. The sun rays open our eyes, heart, and mind to our natural surroundings and to be thankful for all things and people.	Moon (Ti’eehonaa’ei): She is the one that provides us with the four seasons and twelve months of the year. She helps us to develop and to continue to grow.
The Sky is known as Father Sky (Yadilhil): As a Navajo person, we look upwards and acknowledge our purpose in the natural order of life.	The Earth is known as Mother Earth (Nahasdzaan): She is our mother, and she teaches us to walk in the beauty way path of life. As we walk upon her, she blesses us with the beauty of our natural surroundings.

<p>Dawn (Hayoolkaal) which is at the light of the light of the day. Also, referred to as the Early Dawn Spirit and he is our grandfather. When we greet him at dawn, we gain positive thinking and develop ourselves into a mature or wise individual.</p>	<p>Nihootsoi (Evening) which is when the sunset happens in the sky. Also, referred to as the Evening Twilight and she is our grandmother. Our goal is developed from birth to old age. She provides us with the understanding of clanship and kinship in learning to interact with others and nature.</p>
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The cultural teachings that students will be looking up can be read and shared through the following topic areas: the weather conditions, constellations, plants, hogans (e.g. male and female Navajo house dwellings), kinship and clanship storytelling, cardinal directions teachings, sacred mountain stories, the origin stories, songs, games, cooking, weaving and rug making, and many more areas.

Learning Objectives

The Beauty Way and Protection Way concepts are both under a pedagogy of a learning concept called Sa’ah Naaghai Bik’eh Hozhoon Teachings. Sa’ah Naaghai Bik’eh Hozhoon is a complex pedagogy for a non-Navajo individual; it is even difficult for Navajos that are beginning to learn about Navajo culture. The ones who understand this pedagogy are elders, traditional healers and women, educators studying the sacred knowledge, and scholars who are persistent and want to know this concept of learning. Introduce these concepts to students as explained by Herbert John Benally:

There are differences in how learning is perceived in Western and Native American traditions. Western tradition separates secular and sacred knowledge. Consequently, some learning is forgotten soon after program requirements are met. In this way, the notion of ‘true internalization of knowledge’ does not make the same sense to the Western mind as it does to Navajos, because this true internalization is not in the Western system of learning. But for Navajos, knowledge, learning, and life itself are sacred and interwoven parts of a whole. They are holistic principles that determine the quality of each other.⁵

At this time, it might be an innovative idea to ask the students some questions about this quoted statement by Herbert J. Benally on true internalization of knowledge. Here are some questions that could be asked of the students to share and to discuss: (1) What is the definition of internalization to you? (2) What do you think true internalization of knowledge means? (3) What are the three areas of holistic principles? (4) Can you provide your own definition for each of these three holistic principles? Or to give some examples? (5) How do you think holistic principles are interconnected to each other? (6) Can you give some examples of the three holistic principles?

Vangee Nez shared a cultural knowledge meaning about the Sa’ah Naaghai Bik’eh Hozhoon philosophy:

Sa’ah Naaghai Bik’eh Hozhoon is: Sa means “old age;”, ah mean “beyond;”, naa means “environment;” ghai means “movement;” bi means “to it;” k’eh means “according;” ho means “self” and that sense of an ever-presence of something greater; zhoon means “beauty;” nishloo means “I will be;” naashaa doo” means “may I walk”. “May I walk,” invokes a sense of the

omnipresent beauty created by the one that moves beyond old age.⁶

This curriculum unit will include reading and writing activities of cultural materials used in a Navajo Language class at the secondary level. This curriculum could also be adapted to the elementary and middle school levels using age-appropriate materials targeted for the appropriate age-level audience. Check the Navajo Language and Culture Standards to help locate some of the topics that pertain to nature writing at the various grade levels.

Culturally knowledgeable students will feel a sense of understanding of how a Navajo sees the elements on earth and in the universe to the five-fingered ones (people). Therefore, some of the reading and writing Navajo teaching materials will include history, cultural values, attitudes, beliefs and philosophy, daily life skills or chores (e.g., chopping wood, hauling water, etc.), and taboos.

The teacher will be introducing and modeling the Culturally Relevant Teaching Approach for this curriculum, so that the students will be motivated and inspired to build new vocabulary terms in the Navajo and English languages, to appreciate the joy of the words in print that relates to their cultural background and teachings, and to write with the understanding of meaning and bringing their thoughts and ideas to life.

Content Objectives

Navajo Duality Awareness

In this curriculum students will be able to investigate and explain the male and female concepts of duality of the Navajo culture from reading children's literature and various genres written by Navajo authors and scholars who have studied the Navajo culture on duality.

Some suggestions for motivating Native American students to learn about cultural knowledge from their own tribal affiliation are shared by Melanie Brice in her article on "Honoring Indigenous Children's Ways of Knowing." The article includes the following helpful ideas for a teacher who wants to promote real-life experiences: to be respectful of the student's cultural background and family knowledge, to be accepting of the family value system and philosophy, and to create a positive learning environment.

Journal Nature Writing

Students will create and organize a journal for their Journal Nature Writing experiences by using the book entitled *Put on Your Owl Eyes* by Devin Franklin as a resource guide for the teacher to share with the students. For four weeks, students will take their journal outdoors with them, to locate a sit spot and to draw a living element from the environment into their journal. The next step will be to write information about their observation using their senses to formulate their writing. Then, to bring their journal back into the classroom and to investigate from various resources or media the duality concept of the living element. Can the student answer the following questions for the living element: Is it a female concept? Is it a male concept? Or is it a duality concept? And why is it female, male or both?

Poetry and Cultural Storyteller

A Navajo poet, Luci Tapahonso, will be introduced to the students about her personal background, her writing style, and a poem. The poem will be examined by the students with a highlighter and to write side notes in the poetry worksheet and to interpret the meaning or connections of the poem to the natural environment. Students will also search for any duality connections with the poem. A classroom discussion will follow the assignment.

Content-Based Learning: Oral Presentation

Students will give a power point presentation using the Content-Based Learning approach to the classroom about Navajo dualities. Prior cultural knowledge of dualities will be included in the group presentations. Students will be creative and choose their own means of media, resources, or family home life teaching to be used in the presentation. A Power Point presentation of ten minutes will be given by the students that will include a proper self-introduction in the Navajo language (to demonstrate the Navajo kinship concept) by each student prior to giving their power point presentation.

Teaching Strategies

Culturally Relevant Teaching Approach

The style of learning for this curriculum will be the Culturally Relevant Teaching approach where the teacher will select a variety of Navajo authors with various genres for students to read and to incorporate prior cultural knowledge that will tie into the writing using nature to capture the interest of the students.

Within the classroom some ideas that I would like to implement towards the usage of the Culturally Relevant Teaching Approach will be: including the importance of the self-identity (through clans) and its strong connection to nature and the universe; to be culturally sensitive and open to the Navajo teachings being read or being told by the student's families and the teacher; having open discussions, sharing and listening to each other in a positive learning environment; to have an understanding or sense of belonging between humans, nature and the universe; sharing family stories, media and resources to empower the student's level of Navajo teachings, history and language; creating a vocabulary dictionary with the new terms that are being used with this curriculum; supporting the background cultural teachings from the various regional areas of the Navajo reservation because the dialect and teachings from the different areas of the Navajo reservation are not the same; and inviting local elders or family to come in to the classroom as guest speakers that live in the Navajo environment.

Reading and Storytelling

As Donna J Eder wrote in her researched journal article about Navajo storytelling:

To many of the Dine who embrace traditional values, storytelling is a core practice by which to teach children the important principles necessary to live well. For these people, living well is grounded in the concept of "sa'a naghai bik'e hozho." This is a key Navajo philosophy, one that is

very difficult to accurately translate into English. Farella (1984), a non-Navajo who spent three years among Navajos, uses several phrases that by themselves are incomplete but that together approach a fuller translation of “sa’a naghai bik’e hozho”: wholeness, continuity of generations; one’s relationship to the beginning, to the past, and to the universe; responsibility to future generations; life force; and completeness. Of all the purposes of Navajo storytelling, I will focus on storytelling to children. The telling of stories to children reflects the cyclic nature of Navajo thinking. Stories are told to teach children how to live well, which means understanding the Navajo worldview, which in turn means understanding one’s purpose in life, which further learn to—part of that purpose—continuing to tell stories of children.⁷

Journal Nature Writing with Navajo Cultural Dualities

During Journal Nature Writing time, it will be a quiet and peaceful time with nature. It is a time to observe the natural surroundings and to select some living thing that can be illustrated into the journal, followed by writing a personal reflection of the living thing.

Supplies: pencil, pen, markers, watercolors, colored pencils, watercolor brushes, notebook, or blank papers and a “sit spot”.

Sit Spot: a place to sit comfortably outdoors in nature and to observe the world. It could be under a tree, on a park bench, on the grass, on a boulder or rock, just a place to spend some time viewing the world.

Additional suggestions: a rug to use to sit on, a pair of binoculars, a cellphone to take pictures, a watch to keep track of time, a bottle of water or a water container, a hat, umbrella, sunscreen lotion, light-weight backpack, or tote bag, and/or a folding chair.

Journal Entry should include: (a) the name of the animal, nature, plant, tree, rock, clouds, etc., (b) the entry date of the observation, (c) the drawing/illustration, and (d) the journal writing of the senses.

Students will select a place to sit comfortably and to enjoy the time observing the world around them. Draw something from nature that you can put into your journal page or take a photo of it and draw in the details later like the colors, shapes, etc. Students will use their senses to write what they see, hear, smell, and feel.

Every time the students have a Nature Journal Entry Day, they will follow the steps above and draw something new each time---creating a journal of new connection to something in the world as they observe the outdoors.

Nature writing can be therapeutic and healthy; it can bring out creativity in a person; it is time to slow down and to listen to nature, and to draw freely. The Journal Nature Writing can help to make connections between the individual and nature, which is part of the learning and understanding of the Navajo philosophy and dualities.

Nature-Based Writing

In Kiri L. Manookin’s qualitative research paper on Nature Writing, she shares what she learned about the benefits of nature-based writing:

Linguistically and affectively, ELL students clearly benefit from nature-based writing. Their

engagement and sense of place provide powerful motivation and a relevancy to utilize the language skills they have and develop them further to say whether that includes using vocabulary from the content or finding ways to say in English what they already know in their L1. Students report feeling less stressed and more inspired by the experience, but their writing also shows them taking more risks in language by using more poetic language and structures, which indicates a more flexible, investigative, and sometimes even playful approach to using language.⁸

Poetry - Cultural Storyteller

Luci Tapahonso is the Navajo Nation's First Poet Laureate, who shares her poetry from a cultural storyteller style of writing; she conveys her cultural connection to nature, animals and the universe in her writing and you can feel through her words the emotions one would encounter as a Native American storyteller. Through her poetry she shares with others her sense of identity, her connection to people and the world, and passing down her legacy through her words.

Classroom Activities

Assignment #1: Navajo Duality Awareness Worksheet

Introduction of Dualities from my own family experience: My Navajo clans as told to me by my maternal grandparents, Sagani Begay #1 and Tillie Begay, are important in keeping our family tree line strong and to have a cultural heritage that we are proud of and that is proudly shown through our Navajo traditional clothing wear and attire, our jewelry, our sash belt, our Navajo hair bun, in our traditional foods, visual arts, our hogan, being shepherders and livestock owners, in planting corn, through the gatherings of certain Navajo celebrations like the Baby's First Laugh and a female Puberty Ceremony called a Kinaalda, Winter storytelling and games, our healing ceremonies, and so much more. Many of these are still to this day a part of the Navajo lifestyle that we live within on the Navajo reservation between the four sacred mountains and its cardinal directions (Blanca Peak to the east, Mount Taylor to the south, San Francisco Peak to the west, and Hesperus Mountain to the north). Therefore, clans are tied into our livelihood and our surrounding environment of people, land, animals, plants, and habitats. From the cultural heritage knowledge, our family shares with us the storytelling and teachings of the Beauty Way and Protection Way concepts, which is where we learn the meaning of the term "duality" referring to the male and female aspects of our livelihood.

The teacher-made worksheet will model the male and female duality concepts in the universe with Navajo cultural knowledge and teachings. Students will read the duality concepts (e.g., female, and male rain, female and male stars, female and male plants, etc.) and write about their own learning and express their thoughts and ideas down onto the worksheets. The following is an example of a duality reading selection about two stars: In astronomy the Big Dipper/Ursa Major is called the Male Revolving One and the Female Revolving One is called Cassiopeia. The Big Dipper is the male warrior, the grandfather, the father, and the protector while Cassiopeia is the mother, the grandmother, the nurturer which is the one that provides for the family. Students will continue reading more information from the classroom textbooks and resources from *Sharing the Skies: Navajo Astronomy* by Dr. Nancy C. Maryboy and Dr. David Begay.

Students will continue reading another five more teacher-made worksheets about duality. Navajos have

culturally significant songs, folk tales, prayers, ceremonies, and anecdotes in Navajo culture connected to the teachings of the environment, plants, animals, universe, songs, stories, etc.

The following is a sample template of the teacher-made worksheet:

Male concept (Student drawing of the Big Dipper)	Female concept (Student drawing of Cassiopeia)
(Cultural knowledge reading information about the male concept)	(Cultural knowledge reading information about the female concept)
Write a summary of how these two stories about duality are seen or observed at home?	

Assignment #2: Journal Nature Writing with Navajo Cultural Dualities

Two days per week for four weeks, students will complete the following tasks and then to share their findings with another group on Day Three of each week.

What to do on Day One? Students will be given previous instructions for this assignment. Once students have been prompted and they have their necessary supplies, teacher and students will walk to an area outdoors, preferably to a place where there is a natural environment to observe the outdoors, whether its bugs, animals, plants, trees, rocks, a river, etc. Everyone will find a comfortable location and to sit down for 20 minutes and draw their selected object. Then, to write or jot down some notes using their senses to help with this writing area for another 15-20 minutes.

Day Two: The next day of class, students will locate reading information about their object and if that object has a male or female concept or if it has both the male and female concept (duality). Use media resources, books, or go to the school library to locate information about the object.

Assignment #3: Poetry and Cultural Storyteller

Before reading a Native American poem, the teacher will model the various types of figures of speech in poetry with the students. Students will review and practice the types by looking at some that are in youtube.com and by searching the internet.

Students will then read the Luci Tapahonso poem “They Were Alone in the Winter” from her book entitled: *The Women Are Singing*. Students will identify the poetry areas where it could be a personification, metaphor, or Tapahonso’s own writing style that indicates nature and the individual as connected.

For example: “Each night, I braid my daughter’s hair. My fingers slip through the thick silkiness, weaving the strands into a single black stream.” (1998 L. Tapahonso)

In the Indigenous cultures, braiding the hair has the symbolic meaning of tribal and self-identity, resilience, wisdom, honoring their ancestors, healing, demonstrating cultural pride, feeling connection with the creator through prayers, honoring the earth that one walks upon, love, being humble, thinking positive thoughts and being spiritually connected to all living things.

The Navajos are known for their weaving skills whether it is weaving a braid or weaving a rug. Navajos know how to weave the hair with a tightness to keep the hair organized and the person gathering the strands of hair has the skill to make a single braid. The poetry writer is comparing a black stream color to the color of the

hair as well as the usage of the term silkiness meaning that the hair has a shine and softness to it. The bond between the mother and daughter is strong and slowing down to take a moment in time to have a hair braiding moment can become a memorable moment for both of them.

In Navajo culture, hair holds an important part of our body; it contains our thoughts and memories. By cutting your hair, you are taking away your knowledge. A Navajo hair style that you will see on the Navajo reservation is the hair tied up into a bun called a tsiyeel. By having another family member help to tie up the hair into a bun with a hair tie made of yarn represents the act of love. The bonding moment between the one having their hair tied and the one fixing the hair bun is a sign of showing respect and love. When a Navajo is seen wearing their hair bun, you will see the Navajo male or female wearing their traditional clothing and their jewelry as a sign of pride and respect for their identity as a Dine person.

In my classroom we study the weather conditions which includes the female and male rain. The Navajos view the long cascading hair to be like the female rain when the rain is sprinkling and providing light showers. The cascading hair is connected to the environmental element of rain.

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Appendix on Implementing District Standards

Arizona State Standards: World and Native Language Standards

Interpretive Reading (IR)

Understand, interpret, and analyze what is read or viewed on a variety of topics. The student can:

Intermediate/Mid: 1. Understand the main idea of texts related to everyday life, personal interests, and studies

Intermediate/High: 2. Sometimes follow stories and descriptions about events and experiences in various time frames.

Presentational Speaking (PS)

Present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of readers or viewers. The student can:

Intermediate/Mid: 1. Write and share material about a variety of familiar topics using connected sentences.

Cultural Competencies: Cultures (CUL)

Use the target language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices, products, and perspectives of cultures studied. The student can:

Advanced: 1. Analyze and evaluate practices, products, and perspectives of the culture studied and describe how they are interrelated to topics of philosophy, social issues, regionalisms, history, and traditions of their own culture.

Connections (CON)

Build, reinforce, and expand knowledge of other content areas and evaluate information and diverse perspectives while using the target language to develop critical thinking and creative problem solving. The student can:

Advanced: 1. Analyze and synthesize information gathered in the target language to think critically and solve problems in other content areas and real world situations in the culture(s) studied and in one's own culture.

Comparisons (COMP)

Use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of language and the concept of culture through comparisons of the target language and cultures studied to one's own. The student can:

Advanced: 1. Analyze and compare features of different registers of language, cultural perspectives as reflected in a variety of genres, and regional varieties (e.g., differences in pronunciation, intonation, stress, dialects, vocabulary, grammar).

Navajo Nation Standards

9th – 12th Oral Dine Language Standards

Standard III: Utilizing the Navajo language and culture, I will listen, communicate, observe, and understand appropriately.

Concept 1: I will listen and communicate effectively with logical Dine language structure appropriate to various situations.

PO 3. I will demonstrate my understandings of oral narratives and other authentic stories.

PO 4. I will identify the vocabulary used in different contexts.

Concept 2: I will listen and communicate effectively with logical Dine language structure appropriate to various situations.

9th – 12th Dine Culture Standards

Standards: I will develop an understanding of Dine way of life.

Concept 2: I will apply and practice the Dine way of life with confidence.

PO 3. I will practice respect of nature in my daily life.

9th – 12th Dine History Standards

Standards: I will understand historical/factual events, people and symbols that influence my family.

Concept 1: I will present how Dine people and events have influenced the development of Dine communities and culture to the present day.

PO 4. I will research and analyze changes in cultural practices.

9th – 12th Dine Character Building Standards

Standard: I will develop and apply critical thinking to establish relationships with the environment.

Concept 1: I will use my critical thinking to establish relationships with the environment.

PO 2. I will coordinate a plan to show respect of the environment.

Notes

1 "Kayenta Unified School District." Home. Accessed July 15, 2023.
<https://www.kayenta.k12.az.us/page/home/>.

2 Nez, Vangee. "Dine Epistemology: Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhoon Teachings." Doctoral Degree, University of New Mexico, 2018.

3 "Kayenta Unified School District." Home. Accessed July 15, 2023.
<https://www.kayenta.k12.az.us/page/home/>.

4 Aronilth, Wilson Jr. 1994. Dine Bi Bee Ohoo'aah Ba Sila: An Introduction to Navajo Philosophy. Tsaille: Dine College Library-Unpublished Manuscript.

5 Benally, Herbert. "Navajo Philosophy of Learning and Pedagogy." *Journal of Navajo Education* XII, no. 1 (1994): 23.

6 Nez, Vangee. "Dine Epistemology: Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhoon Teachings." Doctoral Degree, University of New Mexico, 2018.

7 Eder, Donna. "Bringing Navajo Storytelling Practices into Schools: The Importance of Maintaining Cultural Integrity." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (2007): 280. Accessed July 15, 2023.

8 Manookin, Kiri. "The Benefits of Nature-based Writing for English Language Learners." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2018, p. 20, <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0801.03>.

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