Teaching Native American Youth: Collaborative Efforts

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Welcome to the webinar on “Teaching Native American Youth: Collaborative Efforts.” Today’s webinar is hosted by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, NCELA, located at the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at The George Washington University, funded through a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition.

NCELA's mission is to provide technical assistance information to state and local educational agencies on issues pertaining to English language learners.

My name is Kathia Flemens, Ph.D., a Research Scientist at NCELA and your webinar moderator.
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Teaching Native American Youth: Collaborative Efforts
Resources to promote culturally relevant curriculum

- “Could someone speak to the role of technology in promoting culturally relevant curriculum/ teaching/ learning?”

• Native American Public Telecommunications
  www.nativetelecom.org

• STAR School Media Arts Films. Middle school students conduct research, plan and produce films
  www.starschool.org/ multimedia/video

• KUYI Hopi Public Radio www.kuyi.net

• Featured podcasts include Farm Talk, Winter Storytelling, a day in Hopi
We promote the use of American Indian Interdisciplinary Thematic Units to our students, but we get a lot of push back when in the field because teachers are in schools that just don't support this type of transformation. Any advice?

Do you have any suggestions for getting Native families more involved in developing a culturally based curriculum?

- The Common Core Standards support the selection of texts within and across grade levels which have been selected around topics or themes that systematically develop the knowledge base of students. Work with the school districts to align their curriculum to CCS.

- Resources:
  
  
• Goal: to help English dominant Navajos learn to speak, read and write their parents’ and grandparents’ language.

• Programs were developed that brought parents into the school to show them that the bilingual program was theirs and that local language and knowledge could be taught effectively in the classroom.

• New genres and functions for oral and written Navajo were developed: lists, letters, notes, diaries, songbooks.

Dan McLaughlin

• I am reminded of our newspaper that we had in high school, it was created through a program called, “Applied Literacy Program.” This was a high school newspaper that was published by high school students in English and Navajo every quarter. We had to pick a topic, interview people and do our investigations and stories as well as editing. Within those literacy programs, the components were computers, Navajo and English Writing, and lastly the school had a small TV station where we actually went on air to do some reporting. We used the ALP classes as our resources because we didn’t have that many materials that were written in Navajo, which worked to our advantage because we made reading materials for the entire school as well as the community. Freshmen students all the way to seniors all contributed articles in Navajo or English to the newspaper for a grade.

Kathy McCray
Writing Instruction

- Other than allowing students to write about what they know, it is also important to know about the effects of culture on writing patterns. Traditional linear writing organization is not something that all cultural groups know. This is a consideration that has a major impact on the "success" of students in composition courses. Robert Kaplan's research on cultural discourse patterns is useful.
Resources

• Fienup-Riordan, Ann Kenekngamceci Qanrutamceci (We Talk to You Because We Love You)”: Yup'ik "Culturalism" at the Umkumiut Culture Camp.
• Riegelhaupt, Florencia Carrasco, Roberto “The Effects of Training in Linguistics on Teaching: K-12 Teachers in White Mountain Apache Schools” (unpublished manuscript).
White Mountain Apache Reservation

- Students speak a rule-governed dialect of English which differs from standard English.
- If 90% of the students in the Whiteriver Unified School District are limited English proficient students and they are not Apache speakers, then what actually is the language of these children?
- Attitudes of classroom teachers toward Apache English.
- I have been guilty, in the past, of thinking of “reservation English” as bad English. It had not occurred to me that reservation English could be of value, and that it has value as a form of communication.
- I have become aware of a very distinct “Rez” language. The students certainly have terms and experiences that are distinct to the community and to the school. “Dry” and “Cheap” are two examples that come to mind. They are not used in the definition of the word as I know it. It reminds me of an East Coast term I sometimes use, “wicked.”
- Role of the teacher.
- My job as an English teacher is not only about teaching right –vs.- wrong “standard” English, but about teaching my students different forms of appropriate English along with when, where, and how to use them. This allows me to still teach Standard English while it removes the negativity of don’t say/write that way because it’s wrong.
- When might you offer a webinar on how to get teacher education programs to accept, engage and implement the strategies of culturally based education?
Teacher Preparation

What kind of preparation do teachers need in order to meet the needs of children in Navajo language programs?
The Diné Dual Language Teachers Professional Development Project helps to meet the need for highly qualified teachers by providing coursework leading to a M. Ed. in Bilingual Multicultural Education and an Arizona Bilingual endorsement for 40 teachers in Diné dual language classrooms. The focus of this grant is to prepare teachers with a proficiency in Diné language and high academic achievement to teach in dual language programs. This focus furthers Diné Nation education policy, which states:

“The Diné language is an essential element of the life of students and culture and identity of the Diné people. The Diné Nation recognizes the importance of preserving and perpetuating that language for the survival of the Nation. Instruction in the Diné language shall be made available for all grade levels in all schools serving the Diné Nation.” (Navajo Tribe, 1988)
Place-Based Education

- Education is best when it reflects a sense of place.
- Education should be based on the philosophy and values of those being educated.
- Preparation of teachers should reflect the Diné perspective of education.
Rock Point Community School

- Rock Point Community School, a PL 93-638 contract school, implements a coordinated Diné education program which recognizes both the Diné and English language as equals and emphasizes maintenance and developmental aspects of both cultures. Rock Point Community School has exemplified community involvement in education. Rock Point School has developed and implemented culturally and linguistically authentic Diné curriculum units that are representative of local traditions such as clan affiliations. Rock Point Community School serves 419 students in grades K-12. 385 students are LEP.
The Chinle Unified School District serves 3,702 students in grades K-12 (ADOE 2011). The US Census reported that the Chinle Unified School District has the highest percent of families below poverty level: 47% of any school district in the U.S. with a population of 20,000 or more (2000 census). In 2007 this poverty rate increased to 49.96% (2007 Poverty data by LEA).
The Window Rock Unified School District

- The Window Rock Unified School District serves 2,907 AIAN students in grades K-12, 99% of the total enrollment (ADOE 2/9/09). The poverty rate is 30% (2007 Census). The district implements a Diné Language Immersion Program that serves 300 students a year. In this program students receive content area instruction in the Diné language and are required to communicate only in the Diné language. Parents sign a contract to reinforce the use of Diné language in the home.
The Kayenta Unified School District enrolls 2,446 AIAN students in grades K-12, 99% of the total enrollment (ADOE 2/9/09). The district is recognized for innovation in technology-based instruction and has implemented a "learning on demand" interactive curriculum allowing students to use their prior knowledge as a springboard for further investigation into community issues.
The Tuba City Unified School District implements a Diné culturally integrated curriculum based on the Diné Philosophy of Learning/Beauty Way which has four components: respect for nature, standards (positive attributes) for life, social competence, and making a living.

The district is engaged in a successful partnership with local businesses and employers through its school-to-work program. It enrolls 2,307 AIAN students, 96.8% of the total enrollment (ADOE 2/9/09). The poverty rate is 30.90 % (2007 Census).
Ganado Unified School District

- The Ganado Unified School district serves 1,965 AIAN students in grades K-12, 99.2% of the total enrollment (ADOE 2/9/09). Ganado Primary School received national recognition for its innovative educational program where students create and learn on their own with guidance from their teachers, parents, and community citizens. For example, children publish their own newsletters, operate a post office, write letters to each other and to the principal, and have produced a video bulletin board using puppets. Ganado Primary School offers Diné Language and culture as a part of the school curriculum.
Little Singer Community School

- Little Singer Community School is operated as a community-controlled school in grant status with an enrollment in grades K-8 of 92 students. 77 students are LEP. Little Singer Community School implements a successful Parent Model Program, which allows 25-30 parents to work in classrooms assisting with instruction. Parents attend training workshops and conferences. This program has increased parental support for learning.
Flagstaff Unified School District

- The Flagstaff Unified School District serves 2,815 American Indian students in grades K-12, or 27% of the total enrollment. In 2001, the district created a Puente de Hozho Tri-lingual School, which includes a Diné Language Immersion Program that currently serves 128 students a year. In this program students receive content area instruction in the Diné language for 85% of the day in kindergarten, 75% of the day in 1st grade, and 50% of the day in grades 2-5 Math.

- Students in the Diné immersion program at Puente de Hozho outperformed their Native American peers who were taught in English only schools.
  - On the Spring 2009 AIMS Reading test
    - 4th grade (80% passing compared to 56% passing)
    - 5th grade (63% passing compared to 55% passing)
    - 6th grade (67% passing compared to 59% passing)
  - On the 2009 AIMS Math test
    - 5th grade (63% passing compared to 54% passing)
    - 6th grade (67% passing compared to 53% passing)

- English language learners in the Diné immersion program also outperformed their peers in English only programs in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades in Reading and in 5th and 6th grades in Math
We are the experts

• We have a caring staff at our school who know that offering the best education to Navajo students is up to us....We are the experts.
QUESTIONS

• How do we begin?
Reflection

• Many times it seems we ponder on the negative and forget about some wonderful things that are happening in our schools, but we also have the power to make changes, even though they are small ones. I like the teacher program you mentioned. Sometimes there are openings in a dark cloud.
• We, as native language teachers, may not always see the immediate results of our students’ reading and writing, but we are confident that as our students progress in life they will take some of our unique language and culture teachings and apply them to their lives. We feel hope which is not passive, but an active attitude.

Louise Kerley
Tuba City Middle School
• I have always wanted to write a paper about a Diné Language Immersion School, which would include science and math to be taught in Navajo. As we were doing module II as a group, we thought it would be a perfect way to explain the process of change. It would also be about teaching and how students learn best using their culture and language.
Third American Indian Teacher Education Conference

Donna Deyhle  
*Listening to Lives: Lessons Learned from American Indian Youth*

Ray Barnhardt  
*The Re-emergence of Indigenous Knowledge in Alaska*

Jennie de Groat  
*Why Oral Language Immersion? The Process, Principles and Strategies for Oral Language Practice and Development with Indigenous Language Instruction*

- [http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/AIE/conf.html](http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~jar/AIE/conf.html)

- July 13, 14 2012
QUESTIONS
References

• Beaulieu, D. & Figueria, A (2006) (Eds.) The Power of Native Teachers Language and Culture in the Classroom Tempe, AZ: The Center for Indian Education Arizona State University.
References Continued


References Continued

Thank you for participating in today’s webinar on “Teaching Native American Youth: Collaborative Efforts.” presented by Trinidad Torres-Carrion, and Dr. Louise Lockard, hosted by National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, NCELA, located at the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at The George Washington University.

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