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Reflections of Navajo Culture and Educational Philosophy in Two Fourth-Grade Art Education Classrooms in the Gallup-McKinley School System

Mara Pierce

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**REFLECTIONS OF NAVAJO CULTURE AND
EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY IN TWO FOURTH-GRADE
ART EDUCATION CLASSROOMS IN THE
GALLUP-MCKINLEY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

BY

MARA K. PIERCE

**AFA PRE-ART
BFA STUDIO ART**

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts
Art Education**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July 2010

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, friends, professors, and mentors who have been there for me each time I asked “why,” and then returned to ask it again. It is dedicated to those who were forced to attend a boarding school so far away from everything they knew that they lost part of who they were along the way. It is for the students who are today going through a public or community school that refuses to acknowledge their rightful heritage and honor it. But most of all, it is dedicated to the children and grandchildren who will be students tomorrow with the hopes that they will be the beneficiaries of a more intelligent, more culturally responsive, and more meaningful art education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take a moment to give thanks to all those who had a part in making this heartfelt quest for knowledge not only a challenge, but a step in the right direction.

When I began working at Navajo Technical College (formerly Crownpoint Institute of Technology) in 2004, I truly had no idea where it was going to take me. It is there where I found the richest resources in my co-workers, committee chairs, and students. While I was not formally conducting research at that time, little did I know they were answering questions that I had then and questions I would have once I did start formally engaging in research at the University of New Mexico. So, it is to the people who taught me to teach using the Dine Philosophy of Education and core Dine values that I extend a deep thank you: Dr. Lawrence Isaac, Raymond Redhouse, Dr. Eulynda Toledo, as well as each member of each committee I served on and taught with. Special thanks goes to all my students who, despite often giving me a hard time with the best of intentions, taught me how to be not only a teacher, but a learner in more ways. I would like to extend thanks to my mother-in-law for teaching me how to do beadwork.

My thesis would be bereft of its meat and bones if it were not for the participants in the study: the art teachers and the fourth-graders with whom I visited, watched, and learned from. Thank you for singing your songs and giving me hugs and drawings when I came to visit. Thank you for answering my endless prodding questions and being brave enough to tell the truth.

I would like to extend sincere appreciation to the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board, who assisted me in seeing where the research could potentially be of benefit and how to get it there, as well as the Historic Preservation Department for their allowing my project to move forward. The Navajo Nation Cultural Resource

Investigation Permit for this study is C0907-E. Gratitude is also given to the University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board for helping me recognize the value of following ethical protocol practices. I extend appreciation to the Vicki Breen, Director of the Humanities Bureau for the New Mexico Public Education Department, for her collaborative efforts and providing information when I was at a loss. I thank the Gallup-McKinley County Schools Board, the principals of the schools whose art rooms I explored, and the Director of Elementary Learning Tammy Hall for answering email after email with much patience. I extend my gratitude to the Eastern Navajo Agency whose sea of delegates voted 99 to 1 in favor that my research should move forward with their blessing if I agreed to return and share what I had learned with them. I promise I will be back to share with you what your children and teachers shared with me, and we *can* find a way to be effective together. I would also like to thank the organizations that funded this project: the Institute for American Indian Research, led by Dr. Beverly Singer from the University of New Mexico's Anthropology Department through the IfAIR Grant, and the Graduate and Professional Student Association through the Graduate Research and Development High Priority Grant.

My thesis committee members provided precious guidance and advice. In their unique and brilliant individuality, they served as a gracefully exciting team of scholars whose skill and contribution is priceless. Laurel Lampela's consistent challenge to take my graduate education and make it my own served to persuade what was an unextraordinary pile of assumptions become a work of passion. Mary Jiron-Belgarde taught me that it is perfectly acceptable to call the kettle black if it is so and to *fight* for the idea that it is not grey – it *is* black. Richard LoRe's contagious enthusiasm for the

field of Art Education and American Indians' right to a more equitable education encouraged me to recognize clarity, or the lack thereof, in my own writing. Finally, my thesis chair, Linney Wix has been essential to my graduate work and this thesis. Her expertise in meaning making of the self through art making helped lead this work to a more enlightened place. She is the sense of quietude amongst the disharmony of lost significance without which I do not believe this thesis would be the same.

Lastly, I want to give special thanks the two people in my life to whom I am closest: my mom, for always wanting to fix what I think is broken, and my husband Michael Largo, for guidance and being a continuing fountain of cultural information without whom this thesis would not be possible. Both have taught me to be cautious in my exhilaration, mindful in my enthusiasm, and how to see dimly lit perspectives as tiny fragments of light in which I should find great meaning.

Ahe'hee (thank you) dóó (and) walk in beauty...

**REFLECTIONS OF NAVAJO CULTURE AND
EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY IN TWO FOURTH GRADE
ART EDUCATION CLASSROOMS IN THE GALLUP-
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By

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ABSTRACT

This project takes a look at the content and the context that is presented to children in two fourth grade public school art classrooms (Gallup-McKinley County Schools district) that primarily serve Dine children. The purpose of this study is to examine the existence and relevancy of the materials delivered in those classrooms, examining how they serve the best interest of those children with respect to their cultural learning philosophies, academic success, and self-awareness as members of the Dine Nation. The project also takes a look at how the children respond to the lessons delivered in those classrooms, particularly how the young Dine students utilize the current delivery methods to create their classroom artwork. Findings can be applied to the building of more effective curricula that speak to improving the educational materials in Navajo-serving public schools that are typically state-run.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	4
DPE: Navajo Philosophy of Life and Learning.....	4
Navajo Learning Style, Brain Function, and Learning Style in Correlation with DPE	7
Native Education and Education in Navajo Serving Schools	9
Navajo-Serving Education and Navajo Art.....	11
Art Education and Its Navajo Cultural Value.....	14
Art, Education, and Research	17
Philosophies, Theories and Art Education	20
CHAPTER 3 – STUDY METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS.....	24
CHAPTER 4 – DISCUSSION OF FIELD EXPERIENCES AND FINDINGS	31
Teacher Voice.....	31
Instructional Documentation	36
Classroom Observation	37
First Visits	
Art Classroom A	37
Art Classroom B	39
Second Visits	
Art Classroom A	41
Art Classroom B	44
Student Voice	50
Student Artwork.....	54
CHAPTER 5 – REFLECTIONS AND ANALYSES.....	57
CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS.....	61
Appendices.....	66
References.....	92

Reflections of Navajo Culture and Educational Philosophy in Two Fourth-Grade Art Education
Classrooms in the Gallup-McKinley School System

Long ago, the Holy People made the cradleboard,
Saying, "By this rainbow, we shall return.
Lie upon your mother, the earth.
The cross board is your father, the sun."
They covered us in blankets of yellow, blue, white, and black clouds.
Sheet lightning bolts crossed over.
Now your parents carry us. Rainbows watch us.
Sacred clouds and lightning bolts hold us.

- Luci Tapashonso, *a radiant curve*, p.53

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

For many years, researchers and educators have studied a variety of curricula-inclusive influences on the academic achievement of American Indian students. It has been established that while traditional Western schooling is the most broadly-accepted educational method across the United States, it may not be the most successful for particular populations, such as American Indian students, and, in fact, may be working against the very grain of traditional learning processes and philosophies. The Navajo, specifically, hold a very focused educational (and life) philosophy that has been passed down from the elders of their communities and includes ways to learn, live, and teach. A few researchers have explored the aspects of these ways of life and have found that these philosophies lend to the learning style of the Navajo student.

Investigators indicate that the current public educational system in which Navajo children participate offers little in the way of relevant content that would work toward a change in academic or self-focused achievements (LoRe, 1998). There is little balance in the current system and even less attention on teaching the whole student, with the exception of a handful of Indigenous educators who make learning resolute and perceptive in their Native serving

classrooms. It still remains that few studies connect Native-serving public education art classrooms and Native art making. This study will work to establish that relationship.

Art students with whom I worked at Navajo Technical College (NTC) used to tell me that what they learned in grade school had nothing to do with them as Navajo people. Others stated that their art teacher did not teach them art the way their family members did. In conjunction with remembering these comments and finding a lack of relevant literature, I felt a study needed to be created to attempt to “make sense of” the issue. I believed it was more than just answering the “why” inquiry. Eisner (1998) remarks that education studied through the eyes of a society dictates how the experience is seen because it is purely “linguistic in character” (p.28). To this end, I formulated a set of questions that would help me find answers and work to create a more salient art making environment for Navajo students who attend public schools in rural and semi-rural locations with a primarily Navajo student population (Appendix A). Looking more closely at these questions enabled me to design the study using both qualitative and quantitative research styles. After all “Asking and answering questions is an essential part of what it means to be human” (Bolin, 1996, p.7).

This thesis is constructed to carry the reader through the study as I experienced it. In Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework is the great mountain of literature I reviewed for the study, which in many cases required a weaving of texts together to arrive at answers only to find more gaps. Next, the reader will understand how I designed the study and collected the research data in Chapter 3 – Study Methods and Methodologies. Chapter 4 – Discussion of Field Experiences and Findings reveals what occurred during the data collection in the field and the responses elicited by the participants and me. After the assembly of the information, Chapter 5 – Reflections and Analysis reveals to the reader the step in which I broke down the data, recognized common

themes and organized them in such a way as to uncover salient answers to the research question. Finally, in Chapter 6 – Conclusions, the reader will come to understand that the information collected in this research thesis as it is brought to a close retouching on key tenets that drove the work, as well as where the work can take us as researchers and practitioners from this point of understanding and reflection.

CHAPTER 2 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This literature review includes works that contribute to a deeper understanding of the Diné Philosophy of Education (DPE), Native American and Navajo art perspectives, Navajo art practices, and in-school art education for young Diné students as it pertains to cultural identity and personal growth. Finally, it takes a look at applicable NAEA research agenda questions and germane educational theory. I present this first part of my thesis using a pyramidal structure. The literature is presented in such a way that it weaves together and examines the broadest of contributory literature first, and then focuses further with each subsection. The reader will find the following headings in this section in this order:

- DPE: Navajo Philosophy of Life and Learning
- Navajo Learning Style, Brain Function, and Learning Style in Correlation with DPE
- Native Education and Education in Navajo Serving Schools
- Navajo-Serving Education and Navajo Art
- Art Education and Its Navajo Cultural Value
- Art, Education, and Research
- Philosophies, Theories, and Art Education

Each section contributes to answering the question: In what ways does Navajo students' in-school art education incorporate DPE in the Gallup-McKinley County Schools (GMCS) system that exists on and near the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation?

DPE: Navajo Philosophy of Life and Learning

To begin, a portion of available published research focuses on the cultural life of the Navajo. The Diné Philosophy of Education is not simply a way to learn in school. *Diné* is the word used by the Navajo people to describe who they are as delineated from other Native

American tribes. It is Navajo for “the people” (Vachon, 2003). DPE is the four-step process of learning that inundates all Navajo life including ceremonials, teaching and art, and is characterized by each of the four directions, thus giving people their sense of complete harmony and balance (Cajete, 1994; Rhodes, 1988; Saville-Troike, 1984; Witherspoon, 1995).

Ethnographic and anthropological literature published within the last twenty years regarding Navajo ways of life primarily focuses on this holistic point of view held by a majority of the participants tested and interviewed (Cajete, 1994; LoRe, 1998; Rhodes, 1988; Rhodes, 1990; Ross, 1989; Saville-Troike, 1984; Stokrocki, 1992; Witherspoon, 1995). Holism is central to the family dynamic, called *k'e*, and the community structure. So when *k'e* is missing, people look outside the family organization for satisfying relationships in experiences beyond traditional lifestyles (Witherspoon, 1995). Such a search for harmony can be found in the compositional balance of Navajo aesthetics where the intersection of knowing and doing are exemplified and a humanistic viewpoint is part of the value system (Cajete, 1994; LoRe, 1998; Saville-Troike, 1984).

In Navajo tradition, the holistic way and philosophy of life is the central point to the cultural composition and explains creativity and sense of relationship. Among Navajo people, a holistic “lattice-like” viewpoint is necessary in experiencing this philosophy in order to grasp both the emotional and rational poles as one. Most Navajo parents, grandparents, and guardians teach their children that they are connected to the earth and their own environment through life tasks and keen observation. The earth is their mother, keeper, and provider (Collier, 1988; Hucko, 1996; LoRe, 1998; Moore, 2003). It is said that when she is ill, both she and the people who dwell upon her are “out of balance” with each other (Hucko, 1996). No one person is more important than another in this unified relationship and this tenet extends into all forms of life,

communications, and experiences (Grigsby, 1977; Witherspoon, 1977). Because of this relationship, "...creative and learning models cannot be separated. They come from the same whole and emanate from the same center" (LoRe, 1998, p.400).

Contemporary researchers also note that DPE is a system that serves as the cornerstone to a complete community life where members serve as contributors to the educational system, thereby again reinforcing the Diné relationship of the part to the whole, as well as a sense of constant renewal. Elders are as much teachers in all senses of the word as those formally labeled as "teacher" in scholastic settings. Differentiating this view from that of the dominant Western culture, Cajete (1994) states, "Traditionally, Indians view life through a different cultural metaphor than main stream America" (p.19). The DPE system grows from a unique and more innate set of roots where the process is allowed to unfold naturally for the young person and her/his Native social group, and where relationships create themselves based on reciprocation and cycles (Cajete, 1994; Moore, 2003).

Within the Diné Philosophy of Education, symbols become a part of everyday experience, thus making art is not a specialized happening, but an expression of the person or people as a fraction of the whole. Indeed, there is not even a word for "art" in the Navajo language (Cajete, 1994; Hucko, 1996). The language itself is built upon visualization and metaphor. It is more important to describe the object or movement than to tell its name – another denotation of the DPE organism as well as the viewpoint of the Navajo Nation Office of Diné Culture, Language, and Community Service (ODCLC, 2005). Life lessons are based in metaphor allowing the unknown and unseen to penetrate the imagination and fulfill its destiny in the physical (Hucko, 1996; Moore, 2003). Animals such as the coyote are used to teach children to strengthen their power to *see* in their minds' eye allegorical action, and consequences to more

than just themselves. Symbols have meaning beyond purely aesthetic that reference more metaphoric ranges. Items created are objects of the culture and ultimately of the life learning philosophy. As Richard LoRe (1998) experienced in his personal communication with a Navajo artist, “To become a weaver for example, requires a depth of understanding, a commitment, and a deep



Navajo basket, c. 1904. Courtesy: National Museum of the American Indian

study of culture” (p.200). Case in point: the Navajo basket. While this object is considered by many Navajo to be ceremonial utilitarian, it is truly a collection of symbols and metaphors meant to guide a person through life events. It represents growth and development through its shapes, colors, and architecture (Tso, 2002).

The DPE on some level or another permeates the whole of the Navajo culture, including each and every individual who maintains that she/he is Navajo and experiences the Diné life. DPE translates into cycle, reciprocity, creativity, and image. While rarely documented, it continues to be at the forefront of traditional Navajo learning ways. However, as Euro-Western educational systems and standards inundate the education of students who have alternate ways of viewing life, DPE may be a fading star unless reconsidered by those who “make the rules.”

Navajo Learning Style, Brain Function, and Learning Style in Correlation with DPE

Research shows that the learning style of Navajo students is a product of DPE, which in turn is a product of the brain function make-up characterized by a majority of the Navajo

students tested. LoRe (1998) connects Native American learning process, culture, and purpose when he states that Natives view learning as a "pragmatic effort that looks to learning as being a 'grounds up necessity' where transformation occurs and insights are born" (p.106). Many researchers have found that the primary neurological activity of Navajo students centralizes on the right side of the brain, indicating high levels of creativity and holistic synthesis (Cajete, 1994; McCarty, Lynch, Wallace, & Benally, 1991; Rhodes, 1988; Ross, 1989; Saville-Troike, 1984; Stokrocki, 1992; Witherspoon, 1995). Recently published neurological texts regarding Navajo learning style and brain function have added to the recipe regarding the importance of examining innate creativity and in-school art study. Rhodes (1990) puts forth that according to the two tests, *The Hemispheric Mode Indicator* and *Learning Style Inventory*, taken by his Navajo student participants, many Navajo learners are indeed right brained. Sixty-nine percent of student tested scored highest in the style quadrants that maintain concrete experience, active experimentation, and reflective observation as the most successful ways of learning. Tafoya (1981), a native of New Mexico, indicates that certain Native thinking is a result of the way elders want their children to learn to think: through metaphor and imagery by drawing their own conclusions as results of presentations. According to Cattey (1980), Navajo children, as an influence of their cultural upbringing, have a predisposition to visual skills and take visual approaches to their work and world.

While these studies are helpful to very specific areas of study such as ethnography, neurology, and anthropology, there are indications they should also be considered when planning a new visual art curriculum. A visual art program that takes these studies into account may better serve both the purposes of the state and the philosophy of the Navajo (and other Native American) students and may help to address a variety of educational issues.

Native Education and Education in Navajo Serving Schools

One issue that motivates this study is the extremely high Native American student dropout rate – the highest of all racial/ethnic groups. New Mexico’s state average of graduating Native American students is 20.2% (School Tree, 2000-2009). While studies show that boredom or family commitments may contribute to the poor graduation rates, another prevalent issue is the lack of significant content in school (Cajete, 1999; Coladarci, 1983; Julien & Ostertag, 1982; St. Germaine, 1995). Because of cultural discontinuity, it is difficult for young Natives to see the purpose in a high school education. Younger students – such as the fourth graders from the Gallup-McKinley County Schools of Ramah Elementary and David Skeet Elementary who are the focus of this research – are just learning about who they are and what their place is in their community and world through the vehicle of the public school structure. Studies show that the “Native American child falls behind grade level around the third and fourth grades” when he “...begins to know he is Native American and becomes conscious of the cultural differences” (East, 1982, p.2). Julia & Ostertag (1982) found that a student’s creativity level changes with each grade level. The question that arises from this is: Are there cultural resources embedded into the public school system which serves Navajo students to assist them in discovering their Navajo self parallel to assisting them in their *whole* education? If not, how can that be attained in the art education setting? While art making has been discussed as a part of Navajo everyday life, there is little literature to address it in the art classrooms that serve Navajo students.

Only recently have education specialists begun studying Indian education in efforts to make ethnographically relevant changes (LoRe, 1998). In 1972, Congress passed the Indian Education Act meant to focus efforts on bettering education offered to Native Americans and established the National Advisory Council on Indian Education, or NACIE (NACIE, 1981).

Later, in 1990, the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force was “chartered to summarize and make practical recommendations for action to be taken by educators, boards of education, public officials, state and local government, and federal government, affected tribes, parents, students, and others having a vital interest in the education of American Indians/Alaska Natives” (Charleston & King, 1991, p.1). Studies show, however, that public school systems serving Navajo students maintain a conflict in the teaching methodologies and styles some of the teachers practice and “betterment” of Indian education is often subject to interpretation. Reyhner (1999) notes that some teachers lower their expectations for Native student success because of documented Native American education failure rates. The dictating style subscribes to traditional Western technique and delivery (Blanchard, 1993; Rhodes, 1988). Some of the art classes taught in Navajo-serving schools do not demonstrate culturally relevant subject matter or practices and ultimately may be working against the students they serve (Saville-Troike, 1984). Teachers at Rough Rock Community School, a Navajo bilingual/bicultural elementary school, began re-incorporating cultural knowledge directly into the classroom using mural- and poster-making to re-enforce cultural interdisciplinary inquiry (Lipka & McCarty, 1994). This school also encouraged community members to learn traditional Navajo arts from classes that were held after school (Roessel, 1968). It should also be noted that this school is overseen by the Bureau of Indian Education, not the state. Nonetheless, the Navajo Studies Department at Rough Rock Community School received the Harvard Kennedy School of Government’s 1999 Honoring Nations Award, a national award that identifies, celebrates, and shares outstanding examples of tribal governance (Harvard, 1999).

While Rough Rock’s change in curriculum is a move in a culturally adequate direction, necessary changes still fail to permeate public schools attended by ninety percent of all school-

age Navajo children. In one study researchers used a survey to collect data regarding Navajo students' ease of Navajo-to-English speaking transition. Of the 107 out of 200 who returned the questionnaire, only nine percent reported that their teachers referenced Navajo language in the classroom (Rindone, 1988). While the goal of that study is not necessarily to motivate teachers to have their students create "Navajo art," the principle is the same with regard to identifying a cultural baseline for the students' reference. For the Navajo student, language and art are used in the same capacity and indeed both rely on the power of visualization, symbol, and metaphor. Moore (2003) points out that artwork, according to the Navajo artists she interviewed, is simply a part of Navajo life and speaks the language of the culture.

Navajo-Serving Education and Navajo Art

It wasn't until the Merriam Report and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 that Native American student artists were allowed to freely create their own artwork when the "boarding school ban was lifted on teaching art to Indian students" (Archuleta, 1994). Dorothy Dunn's "Studio", created at the Santa Fe Indian School, and a group of Kiowa watercolorists who were already established art practitioners at a tribal vocational college in Oklahoma, surfaced soon after (Archuleta, 1994). Cajete (1994) states, "All Tribal people engaged in the creation of artistically crafted forms" and "[The Indigenous artist] made the divine, as he and his people defined it, visible through his art" (p.149).



The Studio at Santa Fe Indian School

As previously mentioned, Navajo artists had been making art, without calling it so, many years prior to this. Navajo society is artistic in nature, and the people spend much time making

art. Some create the designs directly in their minds then translate them directly in to whatever medium they are working, making art alive and in the moment – part of the phenomenon life. There is a caring for the product, which in turn is a caring for the person who is to receive it. What is created becomes the tangible form of inner cultural expressions, a part of the spirit of the person doing the creation, and as reciprocation, a part of the person taking charge of its care. To the Navajo, this is an exchange of spiritual power to be respected and understood. Thus, great care must be taken when practicing in an art classroom (Cajete, 1994; LoRe, 1998; Moore, 2003; Witherspoon, 1977).

In her book *Architectures of Light*, Moore (2003) writes about Navajo beadworkers and their relationship to their art. They often speak of their techniques, the order in which they create designs through what they perceive around them, and how the work corresponds to who they are as a Navajo person piece after piece. This discourse typically occurs in open dialogue about “personal memories, associations, spirituality, and aesthetic sensibilities” (p.xvii). Some Navajo artists compare their art to a "rainbow, sunray, four seasons, and how 'mother earth changes color, as when spring comes' and 'she has a beautiful dress'" (p.179). They also speak of observing that which surrounds them and the phenomena that are woven into those spaces – processes of life and education – using the “multiple verbal and visual metaphors to build designs...” (p.5).

Ontological studies suggest that Navajo culture is based on balance and symmetry that can be seen in the art of the Navajo people (Moore, 2003; Witherspoon, 1995). Navajo art is evidence of their high capacity for creativity. A sense of the wholeness can be seen in each work, whether the piece is silversmithing, beadwork, or painting, “[A Navajo beadworker] dreams about a certain color and *has* to find that color for her baskets” (Moore, 2003, p.92). The Navajo



Navajo beadwork by Michael J. Largo (2005); used with permission of artist

call this balance *hozho*, or beauty and harmony in the whole of life (Witherspoon, 1995). Additionally, according to Stokrocki (1992), Navajo students have superior power of visual perception. If this is so, then it stands to reason that the educational system that graduates one of the lowest numbers of high school students in the entire United States should look into what its students' learning strengths are and how teachers and students can capitalize on those strengths.

Recent research has also shown that differences exist between the creativity exhibited by Native American students who live on or near the reservation, and those who live in more urban areas. It is as if separate cultures have been created in the two different areas. For those who create state standards, native students living in the urban areas would be more likely to “go with the flow,” experimenting with less traditional forms of art (such as sculpture or printmaking) in the public school art classroom because it may be closer to the educational culture in which they have been raised. Those remaining on or near the reservation would be less likely to be influenced because it would be considered “going against the cultural grain” they know. This second group of students, however, *would* be more likely to practice traditional-style arts. The resulting discussion indicates that the setting of the art classroom and the methods the teacher uses to encourage her students should rely on the culture within which the school is situated if the classroom practices are to be effective for the student body (Shutiva, 1991).

Educational writings regarding the learning settings provided in the predominantly Navajo-serving public schools indicate a less than conducive environment. Evidence collected

since the days of the first Indian schools assembled by the Bureau of Indian Education identify that the education was, and to a great degree still is, a blatant separation from traditional sources and at conflict with the Navajo Way, the system of beliefs and values customarily passed from grandparent to child among the Diné (Saville-Troike, 1984). While art-based learnings are passed in this capacity outside the school, the in-school art study offered today is thus: four fifty-minute drawing classes, one painting class, and one ceramics class offered in the high schools; a daily forty-five minute, nine-week rotation of general studio classes in the junior high schools; and a general studio class once a week for forty minutes at elementary and primary levels (Stokrocki, 1992). Educational specialist and researcher Mary Stokrocki notes that a very small number of primary schools invite elders or professional Navajo artists into the classroom to help maintain cultural attachment. She also cites teaching and learning differences in the art education classroom with regard to the methodologies of a Western-oriented instructor and a Navajo-based instructor in similar settings. Those who govern the educational system that serves predominantly Navajo areas may potentially lack this same vision. Navajo people have made it clear that they are extremely interested in supporting programs that work toward strengthening and preserving their culture (Reyhner, 1999; Witherspoon, 1968).

Art Education and Its Navajo Cultural Value

Up to this point, art educators have published little on the familial culture of young Navajo students and how Navajo cultural knowledge can contribute to meeting the needs of this young group of students in the art education classroom. In fact “culture” is a word that, among art educators, carries many meanings. However, “Visible and invisible attributes of culture can be used to study symbolic cultural production through art education” (Krug, 2003). Both Krug (2003) and Saville-Troike (1984) agree that there is a wide range of what culture can mean to

different people and it is the educator's responsibility to be proactive in regard to her/his students' artistic inquiry needs. Inquiry into cultural meanings, both to the student and in the art, brings us closer to having the ability to teach art classes more effectively.

As previously discussed, Navajo art is metaphoric and symbolic of a Diné person's cultural expression. It is into this system of aesthetic symbols – shape, motion, color, etc. – that we must take our inquiry of art and culture as it relates to improving art education for Navajo students. Navajo aesthetic representations can be seen in traditional arts like rug weaving and beadwork. However, traditional Navajo expression is against what is actually experienced in the standardized public school art room (Saville-Troike, 1984; Witherspoon, 1995).

Many art educators who have written about exploration into the cultural and personal ramifications of art and art making in the classroom have agreed that the art learning environment, when set up in a familiar and relevant way, can have positive outcomes for students. There is an agreement that art classrooms can be for self-realization, expression of potential and fulfillment, empowerment, and growth and development (Cajete, 1994; Grigsby, 1977; LoRe, 1998; Nelson, 2009). Cajete (1994) states, "Through the process of art making and the realization of the visioning process as a part of the educative process, great strides are possible in addressing the personal, social, and cultural disintegration that has become too much a part of the lives of many Indian people today" (p.144). Cajete and J. Eugene Grigsby, Jr. (1977) further agree about there is a link between the natural world of creating and the socio-cultural variables that are affected by this process, the contributions made to the Native culture, and the celebrating, symbolizing, and respecting of the cultural self and others. Gerbrands (cited in Chalmers 1996) observes that, "...the arts reinforce and pass on cultural values and...transmit, sustain, and change culture as well as decorate and enhance the environment" and "at various

times, artists, because of the impact of their work, have been identified as magicians, teachers, mythmakers, socio-therapists, interpreters, enhancers and decorators, ascribers of status, propagandists, and catalysts of social change" (p.28). For many Navajo people, in particular, art is a way to transform symbol and create a translation of the world into a language both familiar and synthesized. It serves as the voice to tell the mind how to navigate the natural universe as it exists today. For a young Diné person, art could serve as a guide through an unknown and insecure early life. To some, it could simply mean a sense of freedom to be allowed to work with and manipulate visual culture messages (Chalmers, 1996; LoRe, 1998).

Art making becomes a form of literacy for the student. Nelson (2009) writes that programs that feed the whole student cannot only demonstrate how learning happens, but go so far as to support reading proficiency. In 1978, Leona Zastrow conducted a study involving community art and artists of the Santa Clara Pueblo. Her research and findings resulted in a full art education curriculum for the grade schools that served the Pueblo children. Other art educators have added that the arts can teach students how and when to judge, how to approach and solve problems, and how to apply what we learn to our emotional selves. Each of these concepts entails a grasp of the non-literal, which is essential for any type of literacy, but is most evasive in the metaphor of visual literacy. Winner, Levy, Kaplan, and Rosenblatt (1989) suggest three steps in comprehending metaphor: "1) Detection of non-literal intent, 2) Detection of relation between what is said and meant, 3) Detection of unstated meaning" (p.54) – all of which can be applied to learning through art-making. In consideration of the three steps, traditional art is a form of literacy for Navajo students. Eisner (2002) has further created a list of ten lessons that the arts teach students. The list not only infuses the aforementioned but also is relevant to the young Navajo student in that it addresses relationships, metaphor, and a non-linear course of

forming and implementing solutions. To further elucidate the impact of art education in the classroom, Native American professor and Pueblo educational specialist Cajete (1994) says, "The ceremony of art touches the deepest realms of the psyche and the sacred dimension of the artistic creative process. This is the level that not only transforms something into art, but transforms the artist at the very core of being" (p.154).



Navajo rug by Mary H. Lee Begay; courtesy of Denver Art Museum (Lowell, 2005).

Finally, in a project study begun in 1994 entitled '*Ndahoo'aah*, which translates into "relearning/new learning," young Navajo students combined traditional art activities such as rug weaving and belt making with math and technology. The project resulted in a group of students whose cultural outlook was enhanced, whose self-esteem was raised, and who now hold a greater sense of dignity in their heritage. The students also engaged in beadwork and basketry, and were guided by Navajo community artist elders. Not only was this a pioneering project using the innate creative sensibilities of the Navajo people, but it is also

an example of the reciprocating element behind the Diné Philosophy of Education (Oliver, 2000).

Art, Education, and Research

Art benefits both the artist and the viewer. This is particularly important in the art education classroom where both making and seeing are at work. Making and seeing are activities which parallel concepts that the Navajo use in DPE – reciprocity and cycle. What a person puts into life – or a work of art – is what she/he will get in return. An artwork also says that what you put into me I will give back to both you and those who look at me.

Cajete (1994) has worked at integrating the epistemology of various Native American groups into mainstream school systems for many years. Indigenous instructors have found integration to be a familiar and salient way of ensuring success with their American Indian students. Researchers have further found that Western education needs to focus on the whole student for the sake of the student, and to better our selves-as-teachers and the service to which we have chosen to dedicate ourselves (Cajete, 1994; Chalmers, 1996; Nelson, 2009). Illinois art educator Nelson (2009) writes, "Principals can meet [the challenge of diversity and accountability] by making the development of the whole child their top priority, and that the arts can tend to the intellectual, physical, and emotional needs of learners" (p.12). This, again, is in tune with the Diné Philosophy of Education by maintaining the importance of the inclusion of art education for the whole of each being.

LoRe (1998) names seven foundations of Native educational philosophy. The fifth is the foundation of the artistic. He writes, "This allows one to symbolize knowledge, understanding, and feelings through images. It makes possible the opportunity to transcend time and culture. Art is seen as a primary source of teaching because it integrates and chronicles the internal process of learning" (p.197). In his dissertation (1998), he cites Mary Romero regarding traditional educational methods and epistemology stating that they "...provide[s] for reflection, ingenuity, and the ability to create with the hands thereby initiating a relationship with Mother Earth" (p.198). Westerly (2000) wrote that Arizona art educator and Navajo tribal member Allan Jim's approach is entirely wholistic and highly successful. Jim includes community and spiritual leaders as well as visual artists to conduct art classes where he is the Dean of Fine Arts at Grey Hills High School in Tuba City, AZ. Students at Grey Hills also research topics including

technology, geography and Native American history, which adds more understanding to the art creation.

While there is evidence regarding the importance of cultural relevance in art and education to the Native American student at home and in the public school, as well as the lack of its existence in the latter, further studies need to be conducted in this specialized field. In 1994, Enid Zimmerman of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) released a research agenda for the visual arts outlining goals and objectives for data that need to be acquired from the field in order to ensure Art Education's sustainability and effectiveness, while advancing theory and practice at all instructional levels. She noted that many of the studies, while useful, had not been replicated and follow-up was sparse. The NAEA felt that areas such as art classrooms that serve minority populations and art learning in non-school contexts needed further attention.

Zimmerman identified the following as key for generative questioning: Demographics, Conceptual Issues, Curriculum, Instruction, Instructional Settings, Student Learning, Program and Instructional Evaluation, and Teacher Education. Questions from the 1994 NAEA research agenda that inform my study include:

- "How do teachers' beliefs about the different aspects of education influence how they teach" (p.7)?
- "What teaching strategies promote linkages between making images and their metaphoric and symbolic meanings" (p.8)?
- "How are art teachers prepared to teach students from diverse populations" (p.9)?

Later, in 2005, the NAEA released a second agenda targeting fiscal years 2007-2010 and focusing specifically on learning, community, advocacy, and research and knowledge. Questions from the second agenda that inform my study include:

- How is student learning in art approached, accomplished, and measured when instruction is...focused on the study of visual and/or material culture; or issues-based or integrated?
- How can research be conducted across issues groups? What kinds of research collaborations and networks are possible within the NAEA?
- How might a diversity of research approaches contribute to our understanding of visual arts education? (NAEA, 2005).

In October of 2007, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) released a revised version of the *Visual Arts Education Standards and Benchmarks*. While this newest compilation of standards still makes no reference to focusing on Native American art and traditional art-making, it does require students to “Practice methods of reflection and self-evaluation of one’s own artwork” (p.VA5) and “Use narrative and/or symbolic elements in a piece of art” (p.VA6). Furthermore, K-4 Benchmark 6A (NMPED, 2007, October) references *experimentation* in cultural and historical arts.

Philosophies, Theories and Art Education

A study conducted by the Utah Arts Council (n.d.) attempts to answer the question “Why teach art?” The resulting document tells that art is a sign of culture referring to a person or cultural group and its history. Art can make a people’s values visible. The document also presents resolutions focusing the power of cultural metaphor. The text also asserts that visual art is a sustaining factor in the welfare and survival of a tribal community and that imagination, resourcefulness, and innovation must be included in grade school activities to affect more

positive impact. It suggests that a strong art program can benefit thinking and problem-solving skills; positive self-concept; enhanced interest in learning; intellectual, emotional, and physical development. Art teachers who contributed to the document indicated not only why art *should* be taught in public schools but also delineated why they *do* teach art.

Educational theorists write that experience is an unspoken, overlooked factor in the educational equation. The Diné Philosophy of Education uses experiential learning as a cornerstone to teaching and guiding a young Diné person. Diné parents and guardians often use collective experiences, ritual, customs, storytelling and art to pass down lessons learned to young people. Every experience has a value and ultimately drives the person in one direction or another. These experiences can then be owned by the person and be facilitated into an expression as part of the whole person. However, the experiencer needs a way to process the happening in order for it to gain value. For many in the Diné culture, seeing the experience in the form of an art piece *is* that process and is a product of environmental influences. Environmental influences help to broaden the experience of the whole person. Each of these parts makes up an educative development as a whole as each experience takes advantage of the artistic process for the young Diné student. For the Navajo student, learning always is and should be experiential as the product of their familiar culture (Cajete, 1994; Dewey, 1938; LoRe, 1998). The works of art then become tokens of and non-verbal reflections on life's experiences.

Theorists have also made connections between art and art making as experiential inquiry. Jackson (1998) writes that John Dewey's experiential theory articulated that people can glean the most from their experiences when situational and environmental conditions are at their optimum. Witherspoon (1977) and Moore (2003) write that Navajo artists create art as a result of the beauty they experience from their surroundings and actions, which shows why art is such a large

part of who a Navajo person is. Witherspoon further iterates that, “Art is a part of and reflection of a person's health, happiness, and harmony. Hozho is beauty and beauty is the combination of experiences” (p.151). One can also see the lack of harmony presented in a piece of art, thereby reflecting upon and understanding what may be out of balance in her/his life.

Art and art making have served as experiential references throughout history. Theorists Knowles and Thomas (2002) write that art has had an immense impact on socio-cultural make-ups for eons and describe art as “an alternative way of information gathering” (p.122). They further describe art as an action and ideal that is rooted into a culture, thus informing and inspiring those within the culture and those outside of it in “...synergistic and arresting ways” (p.122).

Navajo people make art a part of their lives (Witherspoon, 1977). In bringing traditional and contemporary Diné art into the Navajo-serving art classroom, art and art making help the Navajo student and the non-Navajo teacher to explore Diné identity and allow the students to become a greater part of the educational growth process. Teachers may need to gain a greater sense of the ethnography of their student body to be able to be more effective in the art classroom – to better grasp the cultural metaphors and truly know what questions to ask both the community and the student body. Artistic inquiry then becomes a valid process on many educational levels and may serve as a “reconstruction of unconscious mental events and thereby interven[ing] in a process that might otherwise have unwanted consequences” (Kaplan, 2000, p.93). The student-teacher relationship is one in which both are student and teacher through the artistic socio-cultural inquiry process. From this viewpoint, art and art making in the art education classroom become a collective inquiry that is multi-informed, multi-layered, and

multi-visional, where there exists a six-pronged intersection between mind, heart, student, teacher, art, and audience (Diaz, 2002; Knowles & Thomas, 2002; Moore, 2003).

CHAPTER 3 – STUDY METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS

In my experience, researchers utilize either qualitative research methods and methodologies or quantitative, but rarely both (Glesne, 2006). The design of this study utilized both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. Corrine Glesne (2006) put it best when she said that different “methodologies ask different questions” (p.8). Also, in order to place greater emphasis on the different aspects of the events that make up my study, I employed a blend of methodologies: ethnography – the study of a culture and cultural practices (Glesne, 2006); phenomenology – the study of events that occur in our every day worlds (van Manen, 1984); and arts-based research – the study of images to illustrate certain qualities that may be either inside or outside of the classroom experience (Eisner, 2005).

I placed considerable weight on the ethnographic aspects of my participants and their geographical location. Piquemal’s (2004) words helped me determine the importance of looking ethnographically first: “...teachers might adopt the stance of ethnographers aiming at learning about their students’ cultural identities, and exploring how these identities shape students’ learning styles and interaction patterns” (p.10).

The quantitative portion of this study consisted of the Visual Art Education Student Survey (Appendix B). The survey allowed me to distinguish a student who is being raised in and around Diné culture from those who have little to no experience with it. I wrote questions to gather information in three areas: the prevalent cultural background of the student’s home, art learning in the home, and art-making experiences in-school. Piquemal (2004) states the following:

Teaching is about developing a relationship with the students and reflecting on the implications of those relationships for students’ learning. In the context of a

diverse society, it becomes clear that the absence of such relationships often causes students from minority cultural groups to fail. (p.15)

The main purpose of the questionnaire was to determine which participants' answers and artwork would be usable during the analysis. It is sectioned into four parts where the first three parts are multiple-choice questions and the final part is free answer and is usable qualitatively.

The first set of multiple-choice questions, numbers one through five, focused on establishing the cultural background in which the student is being raised. The questions looked at the language spoken at home and the artwork that may or may not be produced in the home. The answers to these questions informed me as to how in-depth traditional art making is within the home setting.

The second set of multiple-choice questions, numbers six through ten, focused on establishing the student's hands-on experience with traditional art making in the home. Answers to these questions established how familiar the students were with making Navajo artwork in the home and who taught them the necessary skills.

The third set of multiple-choice questions, numbers eleven through twenty, focused on establishing the relationship between the student and the in-school art teacher, how that teacher relates to the student with reference to how the parent, grandparent, or guardian does, and the cultural saliency of the materials the teacher presents in class. This set of questions looked at and potentially presented a comparison between how the child learns art in the home using traditional methods of learning and how the teacher teaches art in the public school art classroom. It further explored how the student is learning in the art schoolroom relative to her/his Navajo ethnicity. I repeatedly assured the students that no one but me would read the answers and that no one

answer was correct with the hopes that the children would feel freer to answer the questions honestly and with greater thought.

The first three sets of questions served a quantitative purpose by taking a numerical snapshot of each classroom, its activities, and the students who were in the process of learning there.

Qualitative research practices include unique, atypical methodologies that allow for a deep, exploratory understanding of phenomena that occur in daily lives. There are no precise steps and inquiries tend to be continuous and incremental (Glesne, 2006). In utilizing a qualitative approach, I hoped to assess the quality of the Navajo cultural content and context art experiences in the classroom.

As such, the final set of unnumbered questions on the Visual Art Education Student Survey was the most applicable to the other qualitative methods used in this study discussed in the next sections. There are three questions that request a list of two free answers each. Individual questions on the questionnaire addressed what students learned about various aspects of art and themselves in their art class. Students had the option to answer in any number of ways, but the idea was to hear the students' voices without risking what they might consider "exposure" in front of others by conducting group or personal interviews (in which a parent or guardian would be required to accompany them). The second part of the last section was open ended. Students could add anything they would like regarding art learning at home or at school.

I designed the questions to try to "hear" each child's voice. Offering children an opportunity to respond to questions confidentially allows them tell their own stories in a real manner. I wanted to hear what they were telling me through not only their art, but also through their own written words. What they said in those words gave me a better view into their relations

with home and school worlds and how they speak the artistic language of their influences and their culture. By giving the student the chance to answer freely I'll have the opportunity to truly hear what they have to say. Their art and their words were direct reflections of their experiences. Through the answers to the free questions, as with their artwork, I hoped to learn how they felt in the context of a public school art class, their relationships with their teachers, and how they saw themselves within that workspace.

The principle reason for utilizing a Navajo perspective for this study was to gain a greater grasp of how a Navajo student might see the public school art classroom as either a foreign place or as a place to feel comfortable and free to express who they are and how they feel and think at that point in time.

From a phenomenological viewpoint, my study looked at a collection of events that occurred both in the home and in the classroom. As van Manen (1984) states, "What first of all characterizes phenomenological research is that it is always in the lifeworld in which you have to start" (p.ii). For this study, such events are art making at home, art making in school, the intersection of the two events and the life they create inside the public school art classroom. All student participants were expected to have prior knowledge of art making in the home as a result of a Navajo cultural upbringing. The teacher participants may or may not have had this prior knowledge which adds a second level to the study and which will be discussed later in this thesis. Those students who indicated in the survey that they did not have this knowledge were not eligible to participate in the study.

While I did not observe the art making activities in the home, I had the opportunity to observe the students during regular art class time. I conducted four observation periods: two at each school – Ramah Elementary School in Ramah, NM where the Native American fourth-

grade student population is 84% and David Skeet Elementary School in Vanderwagen, NM where the Native American fourth-grade student population is 100% (Appendix C).

Additionally, I created an observation tool based on an existing cultural analysis tool provided by the Office of Diné Culture, Language, and Community (Appendix D). According to Eisner (1981), phenomenological studying would fall under both scientific and artistic approaches to qualitative research. While the scientific approach to phenomenology focuses on the observation of behavior of a person or group, the artistic approach looks more specifically at the experience the participants have during the observation. As such, during the observations I did not only watch and note behavior of the teachers and the students, but attempted to discern how the students felt in the given situations and the way they appeared as a result of various behaviors of other students and the teacher's actions and words. I also looked at the art created as a result of the given topic and modeling. Additionally, at various points during the observations, I acted as more than an observer and emotionally allowed myself to become one of the student body looking through Navajo eyes to the best of my ability based on my own prior knowledge and use of the Diné Philosophy of Education. This activity was accomplished through a set of cultural markers created specifically to better understand the Navajo perspective of learning (see Appendix E). By taking this opportunity, my goal was to reveal the lived experience to other teachers and researchers (van Manen, 1984).

Additionally, in order to acquire a full range of both scientific and artistic approaches, I interviewed the art classroom teachers. Although many of my questions were based on the classroom observation, there were some issues I was already aware of that I addressed during our interview. I inquired about key points the teacher used to instruct the art lessons such as prior Navajo cultural training and objectives behind Navajo-related lesson plans. I also took the

opportunity to ask to view the teachers' syllabi and curricula. I felt it was important to hear the viewpoints and voices of *both* students and teachers in order to deliver a well-rounded story.

I also gathered data through documents and experiences I collected prior to this study. While I myself am not Navajo, I spent time among the Navajo people when I was a teacher in the local tribal college in Crownpoint – Navajo Technical College (NTC). While teaching there, I served on the Diné Philosophy of Education Committee, Curriculum Committee, and Assessment Committee for the NTC accreditation review. I also took two classes at the college: Navajo Language 101 and The Foundations of Navajo Culture 110. Each time we met for class or peer/colleague discussion, I learned more about the people, culture, and the Diné Philosophy of Education, as well as how to employ it in my own learning and teaching. Ultimately, I feel I gained more from them than they did from me. The awareness they gave me is a basis for the parts of this of the study.

In order to see what the children were thinking at the time of lesson delivery, I took photographs of the artwork that the children created during each observation time, as allowed. Each image that each child created spoke to what the student was feeling and attempting to say in response to whatever problem the teacher posed, as well as how she/he presented it. Each work of art was a solution and a story showing the relationship the students had with their teacher, their art, their culture, and themselves at that one particular point in time. While the most of the students themselves did not have the opportunity to tell me directly the story behind each drawing, painting, or other artistic creation, it was my personal interaction with the art piece that wove together the reciprocity of artist with viewer, thus working toward a deeper understanding of the use of the Diné Philosophy of Education in the art classroom.

Finally, I have viewed a DVD called *Old West Trading Posts, 100 Years of Barter and Trade* produced by Jonathon Williams (1995) about how art has played a significant role in the survival of the Navajo people since 1868. I see this as yet another way to get a concise outlook for what part art and art making play in the history of these amazing people. I also watched a DVD called *When Your Hands Are Tied*, a documentary by M.B. Hartle (2006) regarding the current issues that young people are facing on the reservation. This video made it clear that many of the educational concerns that arose in my previous research, and the motivators for them, are still concerns today.

CHAPTER 4 – DISCUSSION OF FIELD EXPERIENCES AND FINDINGS

During this study, I realized there are many levels of phenomenological complexity all occurring inside of any one given moment: the viewpoints of the teachers - both professionally and artistically, those of the students - both from the home environment and as a student in the classrooms being investigated, those that pertain to the traditional cultural practices and educational philosophies of the students being served by the school, as well as the dominant culture which places these students in the formalized art teaching situation. This section of my thesis is organized into three sections: Teacher Voice (Interviews with the two GMCS art teachers), Instructional Documentation, Classroom Observation, Student Voice, and Student Artwork. For clarification, “the community” is defined as the Navajo Nation and “community member” is defined as Navajo members in the immediate community.

Teacher Voice

In speaking with the art teachers regarding the nuances of the phenomenon, four themes emerged: their preparation coming into their present teaching positions, the level of familiarity they hold with Diné culture and the Diné Philosophy of Education, the establishment and use of Diné content within the context of their art classrooms, and the influence of their own personal artistic philosophies within their classrooms.

The art teacher interviewees gave me further insight regarding preparation for their positions and relationships with their present fourth-grade Navajo students. They began by telling me that, while they had mentors for previously held non-art teaching positions within GMCS, when they took up their current appointments as art teachers, they received no mentoring. Neither did they receive a curriculum upon which a solid foundation had already been established for this particular group of children. Both art programs were fledgling circa

2005 and had just received funding from the district to begin building their respective programs. While one of the teachers has since created a New Mexico Visual Arts Standards-based art education curriculum, the other is building the program curriculum class-by-class.

While neither art teacher is completely aware of whether the district offers mentorship assistance at this time, both informed me that the district has a cultural sensitivity training day. Of this training, one teacher stated, "...they taught you about the taboos about what to do and what not to teach, when not to tell Coyote stories, and bears are scary, and blah, blah, blah, to the Native American children..." However, both instructors had prior experience teaching Navajo children in this school district (one at the kindergarten level and the other at the jr. high school level) and used this knowledge in conjunction with personal observation to prepare themselves to address cultural issues in the art classroom. Both agree that they could have been more prepared and acknowledge that they conducted no prior research regarding Navajo art or ethnographic art making practices.

The teachers expressed generalities about aspects of the Navajo artistic culture when asked questions regarding specific points of knowledge. Both shared the opinion that art is an innate, natural activity for a Navajo child. They also agree that, when fused with mainstream art techniques and methods, they see a genuine potential for a Navajo child to take up art as a profession in adulthood. Additionally, while photography is not a traditional Navajo art making practice, one of the teachers interviewed spoke of integrating digital photos into one of the classes. He expressed that it fit well into his students' lives as an artistic medium and that they "...are experiencing their lives differently now that they have been taking digital cameras home week after week..."

The art teachers also agreed that there are recognizable differences between the ways Navajo and non-Navajo children approach art and art making. Both teachers stated that their Navajo students are very particular about detail and precision, and are much more comfortable with design and personal designing decisions than their non-Navajo classmates. They also indicated that, through observation, they have noticed that non-Navajo art students have a harder time initially engaging with an artistic activity and can be slower to become engrossed in the project. Both Teachers A and B posited that the reason for this difference is the cultural artistic enrichment that Navajo students experience in the home from a very early age via other family members.

When asked about their knowledge of DPE, the traditional four-step learning and teaching process of the Navajo people, neither art teacher could speak confidently about the philosophy. Each expressed what they believed to be parts of the system. One spoke of a respect for clans and family orientation, while the other mentioned connections through acting, being, and living. Both teachers spoke of knowing that DPE encompasses the idea that “things connect.” Both also admitted that, again, they need to do more research and inquired as to where information can be found. Because of their lack of more comprehensive knowledge regarding DPE, neither could address its inclusion in their art classroom activities.

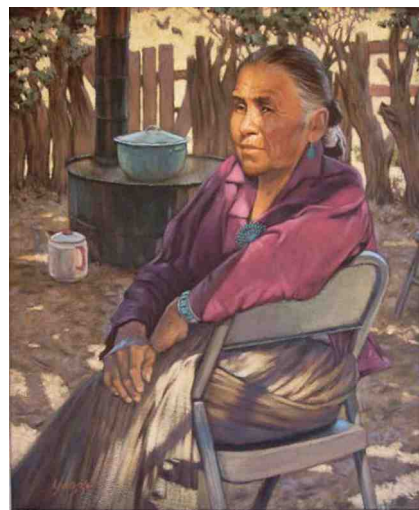
The same was true for self-evaluation of Navajo cultural content in the context of the art presented in their classrooms: one interviewee relies on parental feedback to determine inclusion of Diné content once an art project is complete, while the other mentions ethnographic connections to his students during class time if and when he recognizes them. We further discussed cultural inclusion in the form of traditional Navajo art making in the classroom. While the depth of DPE knowledge and a confidence in ethnographic understanding is admittedly

missing, the two art teachers make sincere efforts to include what is more well-known, such as beading and weaving. Both teachers offered that these activities are modeled by other teachers and community members who are more familiar with the practices.

The third theme that arose is how the art teachers create the learning environment for this particular group of students. Each teacher has personal preferences for how to reach outcomes expected of students by both the state and the community. While there were slight agreements, to a larger extent, their responses varied.

As previously stated, one of the art teachers interviewed works from a curriculum created after taking the current position, while the other works on a day-by-day basis. Teacher A feels a deep obligation to expose students to great artists of the world such as Vincent Van Gogh and Claude Monet, but also wants to include a broad spectrum of Native American arts as examples. This teacher teaches the importance of artistic fame as a point of inspiration for students. Teacher B uses Navajo art in comparison to arts from other ethnicities to explore style and conducts critique-oriented artistic/viewer experience discovery. However different these two approaches, they both rely on NM state standards to teach the technical aspects of art making and to bridge cultural gaps.

When we spoke of how they use Navajo artists as role models in the classroom, Teacher A discussed the field trip that select students participate in each year at her school. During this field trip, Navajo artists such as Bahe Whitethorne, Ed Singer, and Johnson Yazzie demonstrate their talents for the students at the Gallup Indian Cultural Center. Teacher B determines which role models to use by which artist



Johnson Yazzie, (n.d.)
Midday Rest



Bahe Whitethorne, Sr. (n.d.), *Untitled*

fits best with the goal of the art project. Both art teachers state they incorporate examples of Native American art from a variety of tribes around the United States into the classroom.

We also discussed using family and community artists in the classroom. One teacher remarked that he observed the students behave and respond differently when a community member came in to teach a traditional art making technique. He stated, "...they had someone else that was speaking more their language kind of, and they connected differently than they connected with me." The second teacher agrees saying about an in-class Navajo artist, "Then they feel that connection too." Additionally, both schools hold a "Culture Day" to which community and family members bring their own traditional art for all to see.

When asked about project and self reflection both teachers spoke of class discussions but



PDSA in the art classroom

wished they could do more and needed to expand on any type of reflection that was already happening. One teacher spoke of using project reflection as a confidence builder and to address problem-solving issues. Both dialogued about using the district mandated "Plan, Do, Act, Study" (PDSA) to grade student artwork.

A conversation about the tools for grading the effectiveness of the Navajo content the teachers included in the art activities elicited different responses once more. Teacher A spoke of content success as a determination of

whether the students had a familiarity with the project and whether they enjoyed making the art product or not. She added that there was also a level of effectiveness based on community and staff feedback. Teacher B indicated that Navajo content effectiveness is based on individual discussions with students, as well as a “Plus/Delta” system of whole classroom student participatory discourse. The Plus/Delta system allows students to consider the challenges of a project and the aspects of it that she/ he would change if given the opportunity to do the project over.

Instructional Documentation

Part of being able to discover Navajo cultural content in a typically non-Navajo directed art classroom is being able to decipher cultural attributes within the constitution of the instructor and the instruction. As such, I requested that each teacher allow me to examine the documents they use to run their classes: curricula, syllabi, and lesson plans for the presentations on the days of my visit. Neither teacher had a curriculum they could provide for this study.

Teacher A furnished a syllabus by which her class is being run throughout the 2009-2010 school year (Appendix F). She includes the state mandated technical standards as demonstrated by the section entitled “Elements & Principles of Art & Design Introduction & Review” with coordinating definitions. She also incorporates a list of artists upon which the students will model their projects. Teacher B does not have a syllabus that he currently employs.

As mentioned, only one teacher I spoke with regularly uses daily lesson plans. I collected lesson plans from Teacher A on both of the days I observed the classroom dynamics and relationships (Appendices G and H). Her lesson plans cover a full week and address between five and seven of the NM Visual Arts Standards at a time. The documents indicate a list of generative questions for the project at hand such as “does anyone have a birthday this month?” or, “how are

art and interior design alike?” The documents also indicate art project objective, materials and equipment, elements and principles of art, and higher order thinking skill goals. Further, the physical act of art making is broken down into four steps labeled as “Direct Instruction,” “Guided Practice,” “Independent Practice,” and “Assessment.”

Classroom Observation

To investigate the phenomenon of DPE and Navajo cultural inclusion in the Navajo-serving public school art classrooms in GMCS I conducted classroom observations. The observations gave me greater possibilities more deeply understand the teaching and classroom dynamics. Each visit shed new light as assorted events occurred. The following findings are a narrative of notes that I took during the first visits to each art classroom succeeded by a synthesis of observations as defined by the art classroom observation tool I designed for this study at the request of the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board (Appendix D).

First Visits

Art Classroom A

The class begins promptly at 9:35am on Tuesday September 22, 2009. Some of the students have already noticed my presence and inquire as to who I am. The teacher introduces me as a student at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. In response, one of the students says, “She’s *still* a student?” There is laughter and an affirmation that I am indeed *still* a student. The teacher invites me to describe my purpose in being with the class on this day and I then hand out the parental consent forms in the envelopes with my coded red marks and white stickers on the front indicating to whom they should be delivered as I talk to the students. The students, returning their attention at the teacher’s prompting, read aloud and in synchronicity the class mission statement:

“We will learn to be creative and use our imaginations

We will help and respect each other by being kind and following directions.

Work Hard! Don't give up! Do our best!”

The art teacher then introduces the class goal for the day. She models sketching an ice cream cone and discusses shadowing on a large sheet of white butcher paper taped to the whiteboard at the front of the room. From what I can tell all the Navajo children sit at one table – four to a table – while the three others in the class divide themselves between two other tables. She hands out blank sheets of white paper and instructs the students to sketch pictures of ice cream, cake, and cupcakes just like the one she just modeled. Someone asks if he should make a base for his cake. The answer is “yes.” The teacher then describes shadowing and the effect of directing light.

While the children begin to sketch their ice cream and cakes, the teacher walks from table to table quickly examining sketches and answering questions, then decides there should be music in the classroom. She walks to the record player and puts on a record to which all the students at the full table begin to sing “50 Nifty States from 13 Colonies” as they sketch their desserts. I can't help but see the irony of Native American children singing a song that suggests their colonial patriotism.

The teacher begins her circulations around the room again attending to students who have questions about the artist they are trying to emulate: Wayne Thiebaud. One of the students has an issue with the perspective of his cake. The teacher takes his hand and guides it with the pencil over the paper. She then draws what he does not yet see on the paper for him. Another student requests the same treatment and she obliges. Then another at the full table requests help and she

draws on her paper for her, and then, one final time for a fourth student. The Native American children at the full table then begin to help each other in group-fashion.

Once more the art teacher strides from table to table and hands out paint to paint the sketches. Students begin to paint and laugh and talk about *American Idol* and *Cake Master* as others request personal attention from the teacher. The students emulate what the teacher has shown them to do with the direction of light, perspective and dessert.

It is five minutes before students are to leave and they tarry about cleaning tables and putting away paints and brushes. They tear off smocks made of old adult-size button-up business shirts and replace chairs beneath tables. The art teacher tells the children not to forget to return their parental signed forms that I have given them. They then line up, wave good-bye to me, go out the door and are escorted by their homeroom teacher noisily down the ramp and on to their next class.

Art Classroom B

Class begins at 1:00 pm on Tuesday September 29, 2009 as the students rush in with great enthusiasm chattering and playing tricks on one another. There are twenty-six students scrambling for chairs and staring at me sitting in the back of the room. The art teacher is talking to everyone at various times while children ask for supplies and their portfolios. One student stands and helps hand out the oversized stapled envelopes that contain the term's work up to that point to each child in the class respective to the names drawn on the front of each one. Business goes on in every corner of the room along with laughter and bouts of showing off. Finally, the teacher turns off the lights to get their attention. He introduces me and I get to tell my purpose for visiting on this day. The same envelopes with similar red coded marks and white stickers on the fronts that were handed out in Classroom A are distributed to the students in Classroom B.

As I scramble around the large temporary studio building-room, I speak to some students in Navajo. The teacher hears and volunteers that he does not know any of the language. I return to my corner and he returns to teaching.

The art teacher describes the activities for the period. Today's project is lettering and he hands out what he describes as expensive pens he got for \$3.00 each at Butler's, admonishing the students to not keep or destroy them. The teacher emphasizes with great gestures that students should not color with them either. These pens are good calligraphic pens he has purchased just for them to use in class. Students get up and grab lined paper to practice on. The assignment is to write their names in calligraphy.

The instructor then goes to one table and models holding the pen and writing in an Old English style. He then goes to another table where a child is having difficulties getting the pen to write the way she wants it to and models the activity for her once more. The children at the far end of the room are talking and have since neglected the pens or writing in calligraphy at all, while at a corner table with a single child there is intense meditation and practice taking place on the ornamental writing. At another of the nine tables in the art room is a group of five giggling, drawing and stealing glances at me just to see if I am watching them in particular.

The teacher once again goes from one end of the room to the other checking progress and talking as he walks. The child who was having the initial difficulties calls for help again saying she just can't do this. He sits down alongside her and demonstrates individually. She says she will try harder. He gets up as another student shows he can do the assignment with both hands. This impresses the art teacher and he compliments the student for his ambidextrous abilities.

It is now getting close to the end of the class time and while there are only seven boys in the class, they seem to be the least focused on the task at hand. Soon the teacher has to call them

out individually for not paying attention. Each has begun to draw and color on their paper, as they were told not to.

Students begin to return the calligraphy pens and store their papers in their portfolios. The art teacher asks the students to make sure they return their envelopes next week. They actually have a month to do it, but he says he will keep reminding them. The homeroom teacher has now returned for them and is waiting inside the door. As they are lining up to leave and quiet again, the art teacher tells the class that he chose them for me to visit because they are his best class. He also says not to disappoint him or me and to behave better next time. Some of the students who pass by me say their thanks in Navajo and then leave at the end of the line.

Second Visits

Art Classroom A

On Thursday December 3, 2009, my second visit, the students in Classroom A are finishing a project they began the previous week: a 3-D model of an interior design as a place in which they would like to live: a miniature model of a room. According to the provided lesson plans, the instructor has



Art Classroom A

researched the NM Visual Arts Content Standards (#1 through #7) to address as indicated in the lesson plan (Appendix H). However, it is not indicated what Navajo Nation Cultural Standards are being addressed. I do not see any supplemental materials being used to enhance cultural meaning-making as requested by the community, but the lesson plans show evidence that

students are tasked to adapt the instructional content (interior decorating) to their own designs in the construction and adornment of their spaces.

The teacher encourages students to be creative and original to express the room they would like to have. She speaks of making the human figure in the piece to the correct size the child might be in the room, but does not explain what it meant to be “to scale.” While NM State Standards previously covered arise on the lesson plans, no links are verbally discussed in the classroom regarding past learning connections to new concepts, nor are art vocabulary terms written on the board as a re-emphasis. However, it does appear that sketching is reinforced during each project I have observed.

The art instructor speaks to students one-on-one as they need assistance. In doing so, she appropriates a proficient vocabulary and enunciation level to the student’s needs. It appears that most of the students understand what they are doing with this art project. In fact, a full class had been allotted to the completion of this project and many students finish their “rooms” before the end of class. At various times throughout the period, the teacher takes the time to attend to students who are still having difficulties with constructing pieces of the model. She takes time to model again the same way she previously modeled for those who needed extra assistance.

The products the students are expected to create are original pieces, but do not allow for uniqueness in structural design. All the completed pieces are the same size and shape. During the class, I observe no scaffolding with regard to terminology or technique and thirty minutes into the class, many of the students are finished and ready to begin the next project. Before doing so, the instructor asks the children to review their work and make sure all the elements are attached with hot glue. The art teacher carries over the use and manipulation of one of the

materials (aluminum foil) from the interior design project to the next: sculpting animals with plastic bottles, aluminum foil, and paper maché cloth.

Interactivity between students appears to be a key component in this art classroom while the teacher facilitates project completion. The Navajo girls at the four-person table partner to look at each other's work and make sure they contain all the required elements, then turn in the finished products. They point out who has what in their room as the instructor goes about asking final questions. She speeds through due to time constraints. The two students I worked with on the student survey (discussed later in "Student Voice" part of this section) come talk to me and explain their projects. Some students are already beginning the new animal sculpture project while others are still hot gluing elements of their rooms.

According to the lesson plan, the objectives of the project were met, with one exception. The furniture and human figures are not to scale as per the objective stated. The art teacher begins working concurrently with individual students on making the new animal sculpture, as many seem to want to move on to another project at that moment. When she finishes explaining the new project for the time being, she checks all the "rooms" for the required elements and puts them away to dry. All the students become synchronously re-engaged by the prospect of a new task when the art instructor returns to the front of the class to further discuss the next project. She speaks of physical balance and movement of the animal she models – a rhinoceros – and of thinking about how that can be achieved using the malleability of the



Thank you packages for the student participants.

aluminum foil for legs and/or arms. It feels as if the pacing of the instruction has come and gone very quickly as the class is once again finished.

I call over the two student participants I worked with and give them the gifts I purchased for them in appreciation for their time and information, and they are ecstatic. “Reciprocity is a cardinal rule of Navajo life, built into the clan system and everyday existence” (Moore, 2003, p.21). Another white envelope accompanies each package and is meant for the parents to say “thank you” to for their cooperation in assisting with my project. I also give the teacher supplies I purchased for her and more for the class as a whole, also in great appreciation. The students are excited to be able to work with the new materials I provided.

During the course of this instruction, the teacher has provided the hands-on materials that the students need to complete their projects. If a student requests something that is not readily available, she finds the item and furnishes it according to what is on hand. She provides activities that offer the student opportunity to immediately apply what is being taught. The art teacher shows students how to do a project, and then lets them do the work. She always attends to students who need assistance.

Teacher A shows no comprehensive review of the key art vocabulary or technical issues. Some of the concepts she discusses include what project elements should be present in the design, but she does not provide feedback or a reflection of what the “rooms” are or what the experience means to the students.

Art Classroom B

Before I visited Art Classroom B for the second time on Friday December 4, 2009, I received an email from Teacher B about changes in class structures. As a result of overcrowding, the principal had re-arranged the core curriculum classes, which then affected art classes. Many

of the original student participants were now scattered throughout the school in different classes and NOT in the same art class. (This also effected where the students were located when I came to the school to conduct the student survey. I had to collect them from three different new classes into the copy room of the main office where we sat behind a closed door on the floor as they took their surveys.) In the time prior to when the art teacher begins his 1:40 class, we discussed who would be in this class as compared to my first observation. He was not completely sure. Therefore, the following is both a second observation and a first.

While I recognize many faces from the prior arrangement as they come filing in with great energy, the new art class is still extremely large and active. Many of the students remember me and say their “hellos” upon seeing me sitting where I sat during my first visit. The art teacher begins class by re-introducing me and informing the students that the supplies I had purchased for the class as a whole have not arrived yet. They are disappointed and I feel as if I have let them down, as many people of authority have many Native American populations in the past. I will deliver the supplies when I am back through Gallup on December 18th.

On this visit the students are still working on a project begun the previous class period:

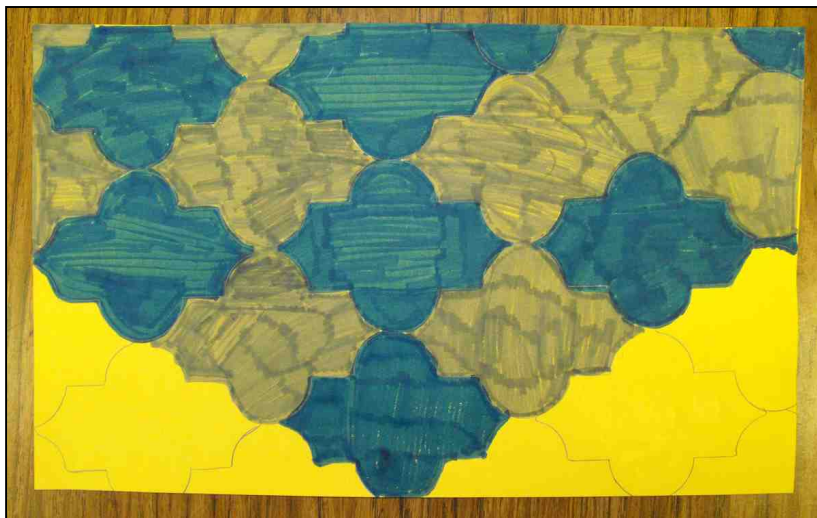


Figure 1

tessellations. The tables have varying sizes and colors of plastic shapes strewn about them like a playroom. Teacher B says he will provide me with a lesson plan via email. It does not come. Verbally he tells me that the students love to do

tessellations and that he has used this lesson previously. It helps with geometry and patterning he says.

I considered the tessellation piece (Figure 1) created by one of student participants and its possible connection to rug weaving. Weaving, like other traditional arts, reflects Navajo learning and teaching philosophy (Yohe, 2008). I suggest that, while there is patterning, the design is not original as the motif on a woven rug is. In traditional Navajo art, two pieces are seldom identical as Navajo art is created from the conversation between personal experience and connection to the cultural environment (Yohe, 2008). The colors are not indicative of anything in specific nor are the shapes or colors precisely indicative of Navajo culture, such as yellow for life or black for completion and reflection. Additionally, the shape used for the matrix looks English in style and too ornamental for a Navajo-influenced pattern.

The first part of the art classroom observation tool addresses preparation. This can be determined through exploration of the lesson plans. Since the teacher is not able to provide me with his, this determination is currently unknown. I cannot tell what level of preparation this instructor has put in to this lesson. Nor can I ascertain the NM Visual Arts Content Standards and Navajo Nation Cultural Standards that are being covered in this lesson. However, what he has



Art Classroom B

posted at the front of the class is indicative of what he is covering currently.

During instruction, the art teacher has many details to handle. However, in building the background of the concepts, I do

not hear him make any links to the students' cultural background as he re-introduces the project for the art period. He discusses varying color from shape to shape and altering direction of the matrix shape. If this is a link to what he has previously covered in class, he does not bring it up, but does consistently re-emphasize the three concepts of shape, color, and direction. Written on the board are coinciding vocabulary such as "movement," "rotate," and "symmetry."

Throughout the initial facilitation, Teacher B speaks very appropriately to the students for their proficiency level. Many students appear to grasp what he is requesting of them and show willingness to assume the project. Others seem bored with the explanation and become restless. He demonstrates one of the simpler shapes and how it creates a whole work of art through manipulation of direction and then embellishment with color and more patterns. He explains that if a matrix shape does not seem to work, students might then try another shape to begin with. One group of students at the table closest to where he is demonstrating is adamant about working with a more advanced pattern. He takes time to work with them explicitly.

At this point, students are free to experiment and work in groups if they choose. I can hear the myriad conversations that fill the room about the colors to use and how to twist and turn the plastic "Hs" and "Ts" to arrive at a pattern worth taking the time to trace and color. Some students get up to see what others are doing and how they are manipulating their shapes at other tables. The art teacher encourages the students to think aloud, but work quietly in their groups. He does not ask questions, but floats from table to table acting more as motivator than facilitator now.

This severely large class of about thirty students makes it difficult to offer opportunity for advantageous discussions. It feels as if the goal is to complete the project without incident. Grouping configurations support collaboration and peer-input at most tables. However, there is

one group of three students that appears to be cramped into the computer station area next to where I am sitting. They have very little room to work and eventually give up trying to complete the assignment and turn in what they have. While many are content to work in their groups, others constantly vie for the teacher's attention. While many of the students express an understanding of the activity as a physical task, there is no meaning-making discussed. Others struggle with the assignment and ask for my help. I assist one young man sitting closest to me, but it does not appear that he grasps the idea of problem solving through manipulating the original shape to make it fit into itself as a piece of traced artwork. Others do not care about the assignment any more now.

According to my observations, the object of this assignment is to create a piece of tessellation artwork through handling, placing, and tracing around a plastic shape. While this seems like a simple goal, the art instructor does not directly state this purpose. I can tell that a couple of students get frustrated because they do not understand *why* they are doing the twisting, turning, and tracing. The art learning objective, however, is supported by the task they are attempting. Many students remain engaged and on task for nearly the duration of class time. Only one group of students, two at one table and two at another, stop creating their art and begin to misbehave. Two young men have gotten up and are playing ninja with each other while two young ladies have decided it would be fun to tip



Art Classroom B.

themselves over while still in their chairs. The pacing of this lesson appears to be too slow for most and the out-of-line students are reprimanded for their behavior.

During the period of this art class the students are provided with all the necessary materials to complete the project. The three bulk boxes of Crayola markers are open and contain at least twenty each of nearly ten colors. Legal size canary yellow paper is stacked on a cart for students to grab at will. However, pencils seem to be in short supply alongside erasers. And, there is an abundance of tessellation shapes on each table of every size and color for students to experiment with. Students do not take notes or write anything in reference to technical concepts, but as the teacher continues to work with certain tables a little at a time, he demonstrates and re-demonstrates through listening and making in front of questioning and concentrating eyes.

Nearing the end of the class time, students begin to turn in their tessellations and replace markers in the large Crayola boxes. One young lady who is one of my student participants asks that I take a photo of her artwork and keep it for my project. She also gifts me with a tiny piece of crystal that she found in her own back yard. One student folds up and gives me her tessellation on which she has written "Go Lobos Go." Another student has traced a drawing of a tattoo-like rose within a heart. In a whisper, she asks Teacher B my name and then writes on her tracing: "To: Ms. Pierce." She comes over to where I am sitting, hands me the drawing, gives me a hug and shyly goes back to her seat. I have already given out the personal art supplies to my student participants one-on-one. As the students line up to wait for their escort to the next class, the other student participants who were able to avoid the classroom re-assignments come to me and give me hugs for the "thank you" gifts. They are happy to receive the packages and I hope they will continue to contribute to their creativity and identity molding.

Student Voice

Because a teacher cannot teach without students, it was equally important to hear the voices of the fourth-graders in the art classrooms that took part in this study. I am excited to hear what the students have to contribute. Throughout the two art classrooms in the two schools, thirty-three students were in attendance the day I distributed the parental consent forms. The forms apprised the parents and the students of the study that I was conducting, and requested parental and student permission for the student to take part in the survey as well as allow me to take photos of her/his artwork. Of the students who received consent forms, eleven returned the forms. Of those who returned the forms, seven agreed to and were given parental permission to participate. Only one parent refused to allow photos to be taken of the child’s artwork. On the day of the survey in the second school, one of the permitted participants had been picked up early and missed being able to participate in the survey (which also disqualified him from further participation in the study). The following table is the result of Part I of the questionnaires administered On October 27, 2009 at School A and October 30, 2009 at School B:

Table I

Part I: Determination of At Home Navajo Environment (n=6)

	Yes	No	Sometimes	Can't Say	Not Sure
Child being raised by Navajo family members	3	2	1	n/a	n/a
Child is spoken to in Navajo in the home	4	1	1	n/a	n/a
Parental figures in the home participate in traditional Navajo activities	2	3	0	0	1
Child is actively being taught about Navajo culture in the home	5	1	0	0	0
Parental figures in the home were taught traditional Navajo art through generational avenues	4	0	1	0	1

Table I shows that five out of six of the questionnaires taken were usable as determined by the number of affirmative answers in an overall percentage of the questions in Part I. Affirmative answers include “yes” and “sometimes.” It further elucidates that most of the children – by a five to one margin – are actively being taught about their culture in the home. These five students were therefore eligible to continue in the study as participants. The following tables are results of Part II and Part III:

Table II

Part II: Investigation of Navajo Art Making Influence in the Home Environment (n=5)

	Yes	No	Most of the Time	Sometimes	Not Sure
Parental figures in the home actively make traditional Navajo art in the home	4	1	n/a	0	0
Parental figures in the home actively teach children traditional Navajo art	2	1	0	2	n/a
Parental figures in the home allow child to make her/his own traditional Navajo art in the home	1	3	1	0	n/a
Child practices her/his own traditional Navajo art before showing to parent figures	2	3	0	0	n/a
Parent figures tell stories while working on traditional Navajo art with child	2	2	1	0	n/a

Table II shows a majority of the participants’ parents actively make traditional Navajo art in the home. It further indicates that, while traditional art making practices and Navajo stories are dynamically being passed down to successive generations, this particular age may not be the age at which the parents are prepared to allow the children to create the work on their own yet.

Table III

Part III: Investigation of In-School Art Making Dynamics (n=5)

	Disagree a lot	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Agree a lot
Art teacher teaches child like Navajo parental figures	2	2	0	1	0
Art teacher uses Navajo culture to teach art class	1	3	1	0	0
Art teacher models, then allows child to try before doing actual project	1	0	0	2	2
Art teacher allows child to make traditional Navajo art in class	2	1	1	1	0
Art teacher makes connections to previous lessons	1	0	3	1	0
Art teacher actively listens to child	0	1	0	4	0
Art teacher shows art made by Navajo artists	1	2	1	0	1
Art teacher allows Navajo elders to teach classes	1	3	1	0	0
Child enjoys her/his art class	1	0	0	1	3
Child learns about her-/himself Navajo identity in art class	0	2	1	1	1

Table III illustrates the relationship between student and teacher in the formal art education class setting as the student perceives it. From a majority of the participants' perspectives, the art teachers are attentive in their listening skills and model the expectations of the project before allowing students to create the product. However, they also agreed that their teachers do NOT use Navajo culture in their art classroom, nor do they allow their students to make traditional Navajo art in the art classroom.

Part IV of the student questionnaires consisted of three free answer questions and one free answer box. When asked to recall two projects the students learned to make in their fourth-grade art class, no two responses were identical. Students' responses were:

- "put shape on the box"
- "make pumkeens"
- "I learned to make the triangle"
- "Oregami"
- "compass designs"
- "The pumpkin and broom"

I built on this line of questioning by inquiring about learning Navajo culture in art class. The three students who responded wrote these answers: "we have not yet", "Navajo *and* English," and "I am not sure about the questions."

Next, I asked the students what they learned about themselves as Navajo people in art class. Students' replies were:

- "he help use"
- "Yes I learned about things that he taught me in art class"
- "I'm good at art and I know a lot more stuff about art than I use to."
- "I haven't learn anything about my self yet"

While the last section on the questionnaire gave the students complete freedom to write about anything they wished to add, only two students made the addition. One student directly wrote, "have no more to say," and the other excitedly but simply wrote, "Yes!"

Student Artwork

One of the most rewarding experiences that comes from art produced by students is how it can influence them to undertake any of several avenues of further creation: more art or building/exploring of the self, for example. During my data collection I had the fortune to take photos of artwork produced by two of my student participants.



Figure 2

After examination, I concluded there was very little Navajo content contained in this art. The most significant piece is the plastic beaded necklace, but only slightly so because the

The children's images, with the exception of Figure 2, were in the process of being finished when I came for my second observation. Therefore, I was privy to the nuances and predilections of the children and the instruction of the project. So, to assist with the arts-based analysis, I referenced the art making teachings I was given in the Navajo household to which I previously belonged in Crownpoint, New Mexico.



Figure 3

content of the pendant that is hanging at the end of the beads suggests an emulation of a European artist's work, the work of Paul Klee whom the project was based on.

The 3D room design (Figures 3 & 4) feels like a product rather than an art piece. I wonder about the *purpose* of each part and why the student chose to make what she made. These are aspects of the Diné Philosophy of Education that can be used to motivate a child to self inquire and become more familiar with the subject she/he is



Figure 4

being taught as well as the surroundings she/he is a part of. The young lady who created this piece described it to me. She described it as the space that is her room and she is sitting at her computer there. I asked what she was doing in the space and she replied that she was playing a game. "What game?" I asked. After deep deliberation, she responded, "A fun game," then smiled and allowed me to snap a photo of the artwork before she ran back to her table.

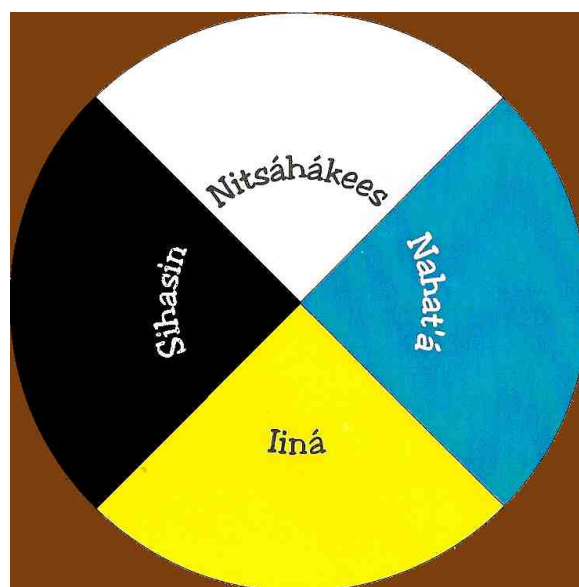
This section documents my experiences in two art classrooms that are representative of the formal in-school art education offered to Navajo students and communities by the Gallup McKinley County Schools district and with students who represent the fourth-grade Diné students who attend these classes. My fieldwork experiences led me to realize that answering the question of *how* DPE aspects are being used in these two art classrooms within the GMCS district should begin with *whether* DPE and cultural content are being used. The answer to this is not simple as I discovered a certain level of the philosophy being employed unintentionally. I found that there is a complex relationship that exists in these classrooms between art, culture,

teachers, and students. I also found that art instructors in this district have unique opportunities to influence the education of young Diné students, but may not be taking advantage of this challenge. The data collected, while small, have the potential to point to a more enriched art education program through identification of areas that require further development. Based on my experiences I have made suggestions (Appendix J).

CHAPTER 5 – REFLECTIONS AND ANALYSES

This study takes a look at the quality of art education offered in two classes in the Gallup McKinley County Schools district and examination of how Navajo content and context are included in those classes, how the student sees that content within the context of the class, and how the traditional Navajo teaching process is included in these art classrooms by the art teachers. I began by observing and interviewing the teachers of these two art classes. I also surveyed Navajo students in the classes to better understand the inclusion of Navajo materials and cultural markers in the classrooms. Finally, I looked at some student artwork produced during my second observations of these classes. Through a synthesis of this data, I am able to answer the question that drives this study: In what ways does Navajo students' in-school art education incorporate DPE in the Gallup-McKinley County Schools system that exists on and near the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation?

I first gained a more concise definition of what the Diné Philosophy of Education is. DPE is a set of values that work together in the making of a Navajo person's life and education. There are four steps to the process: 1) *Nitsáhákees*, 2) *Nahat'á*, 3) *Iiná*, and 4) *Sihasin*, which mean thinking, planning, implementing/life, and completion/reflection, respectively. Parents and grandparents teach their children using this stepping-stone process. Each color represents a direction in the circular cycle beginning with white ("Nitsáhákees") and moving clockwise. The DPE process facilitates independence and



Diné Philosophy of Education model,
M. Haskie - 2002

creativity in thinking and provides a self-confidence that is taken into adulthood while experiencing and demonstrating growth (Cajete, 1994; Rhodes, 1988; Saville-Troike, 1984; Witherspoon, 1995). Integral to the depth and consideration of this process is the effect it has had on the Diné culture as a whole. As this method is used, a person learns to provide for and survive against obstacles that face her/him within life to live in balance and harmony in the world as a whole. Many of the young Navajo students I met when I taught at Navajo Technical College helped me to realize that in the K-12 education setting little is done to support cultural self-realization. Unfortunately, years of public school education have overlooked the use of DPE in teaching, even in cases where the majority of public school students are Navajo, born and raised on or near the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation.

In speaking with the participants representing the art educators of the Gallup McKinley County Schools system, my analysis of their viewpoints indicates that they, too, are not consciously aware of this ethnographic style of teaching. Nor does the district prepare them to qualitatively address the sensitive area of visual art education to Navajo children through the DPE teaching methodology. While there are cultural inclusions in the teacher orientation event, they do not address the importance of using Navajo ways to teach Navajo students using generations of epistemological best practices. Furthermore, teachers are unaware of resolved agreements between the Navajo Nation and NMPED.

Art instructors of GMCS recognize there are differences between the ways Navajo and non-Navajo students approach art making purely through their own classroom observations. This one insight could have implications on the way other teachers perceive their Native American art students' abilities and possibility for breadth, as well as the quality of art education afforded them through this perspective. Additionally, teaching young Navajo students to explore who they

are through a natural medium such as art making develops self-actualization of strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the student develops a genuine sense of self and self-worth thereby promoting integrity and self-confidence through reflection (Grigsby, 1977). In my synthesis of the teachers' interview responses and their documents, I came to realize, however, that the two teachers did not act on their individual classroom observations. The one participant who actively uses a four-step lesson plan layout constructs it as she found it, but the filled-in blanks are indicative of neither a structural understanding of the DPE process nor how to employ it in the classroom. Additionally, the syllabus points to strictly standards-based content devoid of Navajo cultural inclusion such as identification of purpose behind process, scaffolding, and reflection on one's decisions during art making.

Both teachers model the project product and how to achieve that product. This has a direct effect on the children's products. "Learners deploy what their instructors explain and demonstrate to produce meaningful and engaging works of art" (Hetland, L., Winner, E., Veenema, S., & Sheridan, K., 2007, p.v). A child learns by emulating a teacher or parent. If what the students are making in art class has no meaning for them, then they are merely copying, not meaning-making or reaching higher-order thinking skill levels. What makes Navajo teaching stand apart is that the meaning of the task is also addressed. While the art teachers explained how a piece of art is achieved, they did not explain connections and meaning behind process, an essential component to teaching Navajo children, as in the act of storytelling, which the students collectively agree is not happening in their art classrooms. "Understanding the depth of relationships and significance of participation in all aspects of life are keys to American Indian education" (Cajete, 1994, p.26).

Student survey data reveals that while a large percentage of them enjoy her/his art class, they are not learning to make meaning of themselves as Navajo people or otherwise. Herein is the true question of the quality of the current art education delivery as it pertains to a strengthening and expression of the self. Students are not seeing the connection between their cultural lives and their in-school art lives, which I discern as a missed opportunity. “Knowledge about how the brain works tells us that connections and associations are happening outside our conscious awareness (or outside our memory of awareness) all the time and are influencing our behavior and emotions” (Kaplan, 2000, p.93). There also appears to be a disconnection from what the art teachers feel they are doing and what the Navajo children perceive. For example, while the art teachers purport they use Navajo artists in the classroom, students indicate the opposite and may in fact be having trouble identifying with the role models that *are* being presented. Furthermore, art projects most remembered by the student participants are non-Navajo centered in content and context.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSIONS

In light of the issues in Navajo art education, I drew upon the discussed research regarding Navajo educational philosophy, Navajo learning style and brain function, Navajo visual art and Navajo education, and studies conducted on the educational systems that serve a predominantly Navajo student population, as well as applicable research agendas and educational theories to understand issues of art education in Navajo settings. This study will support teachers in comprehending the connection between the Navajo learning style, philosophy of education, and the in-school art study of public schools that exist near and on the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation. Art educators must understand the connection between how Navajo students learn and how studying art in school should be reflective of the Navajo educational philosophy. Finally, as a result of this new acquisition of knowledge, awareness of and approach to educational style and philosophy as it pertains to the curricula and teaching practices of art teachers in Navajo-serving public schools may improve. Teaching techniques and methodologies need to be revisited and re-examined in order to offer the best public in-school art study programs to Navajo students.

Familiar cultural activities such as art and art-making are tremendous parts of what make up an effective public school environment for learning in the life of young Navajo children who are at the edge of inquiry as to who they are in relationship to themselves, their families, their communities and the world as a whole. Traditional Diné art is created out of respect for and observation of a person's surroundings and necessities, as a result of the relationship one has with her/his spiritual and cultural self, and is an expression thereof. For the younger generation it can be a tool toward multiple ends: self-exploration, cultural learning, metaphoric understanding, and visual or other forms of literacy. Unfortunately, however, few studies have been done that

relate natural artistic activity of the Diné people to the learning needs of the young Diné person in the public schools that serve them.

This study was designed to utilize both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Methods included survey, interview, classroom observation, artwork analysis, and document review. Methodologies included ethnography, phenomenology, and arts-based research which contributed to the perspectives of the study. Using multiple approaches allowed me to triangulate data sources and verifiable information (Glesne, 2006). I have hopes that this study is but the beginning of a trend in the progress toward a collection of culturally relevant material for the underserved Navajo public school art education student. Because the scope of this project has the capacity to enlarge the way I and other artist-researcher-teachers see art education as it is presented to young Navajo students, I hope to maintain the eyes of one who uses the Diné philosophy of life and learning, or DPE, to be able to bring the Diné cultural visions to fruition for those who have little knowledge of the philosophy's use and purpose, thus enlightening what may be possible and proposed.

Throughout my study, I was often torn between understanding what is not happening and seeing what is. The art education classroom presents a challenge for any student-teacher relationship to grow, but may be the easiest place to find possibilities for that relationship. Core courses such as social studies or math, especially Eurocentricized subject matter, are not taught in the Navajo home as blatantly and objectively as they are in the public school, whereas art making is typically taught in the home and has practical application. Many reservation-raised Navajo students are exposed to traditional arts making from the day they enter the world. Thus, the art class becomes the most natural place to create a familiar learning environment for a

Navajo student through connecting that innate ability and use of the Diné educational philosophy serving in the traditional-influenced Navajo home.

I found very little Navajo cultural content and context in art classrooms I visited. The PDSA and Plus/Delta activities appear to be effective in that they teach the child to continually revisit the task at hand which is part of indigenous educational processes (see image on p.34). Cajete (1994) states of the reflective practice of American Indian education, “It recognizes and incorporates the principles of cycles within cycles (there are deeper levels of meaning to be found in every learning/teaching process)” (p.29). Evidence of use of PDSA was on the wall of one art instructor’s art room, but not the other. Unfortunately, I did not see this in daily practice during either of my classroom observations at either of the schools I visited. Additionally, both teachers admitted to not using this method with any regularity.

What evidence I saw of the use of the DPE process was seemingly unintentional since both instructors acknowledged they did not know what DPE was. One of the traits of a quality teaching style for Navajo students is establishing a relationship between subject and artist. Even today, many professional Navajo sandpainters understand the connection between the art they create and the potential effects of that art on both artist and viewer. They routinely take part in a traditional practice such as the Blessing Way ceremony to avoid including unintentional spiritual subject matter in their artwork (Bahti, 2009). This type of relationship could not be seen in either classroom and therefore cannot be said to be present or consistent throughout the district. In fact, of the twenty-eight DPE and cultural markers approved by the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board for this study (Appendix E), only three were employed unanimously:

- Teacher demonstrates or models a difficult technique and then let the students try on it her/his own (experiential)

- Teacher does not single out students who do not volunteer
- Students are allowed to work in groups if they choose to

Overall, this study shows that there is next to no evidence that the Diné Philosophy of Education and cultural content exists in the two art education classrooms I investigated in the Gallup McKinley County Schools system. The quality and consistency of what may be perceived as use of DPE appears purely accidental. One teacher considered it through hindsight during the interview and the other only showed fragments of it in the documents given me to investigate. I did not witness use of DPE teaching methods or cultural relevancy in process during the observations. Student participants agree that there is a cultural gap between how they are taught at home and how they are taught in art class and the students further indicate that a building of the cultural self through in-school art making is non-existent. In answer to this, Dewey (1938) states:

“The educator is responsible for a knowledge of individuals and for a knowledge of subject-matter that will enable activities to be selected which lend themselves to social organization, an organization in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute something, and in which the activities in which all participate are the chief carrier of control” (p.56).

The encounters my participants described, an arts-based analysis, and the history, literature and videos I experienced, helped me to realize that the part of the public school system that serves our region’s Native Americans, Navajo in specific, needs to take a look at how it serves this population. Navajo students should experience relevant cultural content in all subject areas if the school exists on or near the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation. Many of these schools have a large Navajo student population. The GMCS district has over eighty percent Native

American alone! Is this group of students receiving the very best education, in this instance art education, that is available to them through us as art educators? Both the Navajo communities and those committees at the state level have worked together in the past to arrive at suitable resolutions regarding public schools that serve Navajo students to this end. This study shows that these resolutions are not being honored, as teachers are not aware of the resolutions and their inclusions. This study further shows that art instructors are not receiving the training they need to support a subject area that Navajo culture shows is sacred to its people: expression of a cultural nexus through image making.

Appendix A

Generative Questions in Relationship to Methodology

	Ethnography	Phenomenology	Arts-Based
What is the dynamic between a Navajo student and her/his art teacher?		X	
What prior knowledge does the Navajo student bring into the art classroom?	X		
How does the art teacher utilize Navajo content in art class?		X	
How do Navajo students respond to the content or lack of content in the art classroom?		X	
What sort of Navajo content do Navajo students respond with artistically?	X	X	
What sort of Navajo context does the art teacher put the topics into during class presentation or modeling?	X	X	X
What sort of Navajo community resources does the art teacher use for art class?	X		X
How well is the art teacher prepared to teach art to Navajo students and what prior coursework or prior knowledge does she/he have regarding Navajo art and Navajo culture?	X		X
How familiar is the teacher with the Dine Philosophy of Education?	X		
What parts of Navajo culture does the art teacher use to prepare art class coursework for Navajo students?	X		X

Appendix B

Visual Art Education Student Survey

Please circle the answer that you think is applies most to YOU. There are no right or wrong answers. You do not have to answer a question if it makes you feel uncomfortable. No one will see your answers except for me, so please be honest. Thank you for your time. Your answers are going to help me write my paper for school!

1. I am being brought up in a home by Navajo parents, grandparents, or guardians.
Yes No Sometimes
 2. My parents, grandparents, or guardians speak to me in Navajo.
Yes No Sometimes
 3. My parents, grandparents, or guardians participate in traditional Navajo ceremonies.
Yes No Sometimes Can't Say Not Sure
 4. My parents, grandparents, or guardians teach me about Navajo culture.
Yes No Sometimes Can't Say Not Sure
 5. My parents, grandparents, or guardians were taught how to make jewelry, weave rugs, do beadwork, or make sandpaintings by their parents, grandparents, or guardians.
Yes No Sometimes Can't Say Not Sure
-
6. My parents, grandparents, or guardians make jewelry, weave rugs, do beadwork, make sandpaintings, or do some other form of art now.
Yes No Sometimes Not Sure
 7. My parents, grandparents, or guardians teach me how to make jewelry, weave rugs, do beadwork, or make sandpaintings.
Yes No Most of the time Sometimes
 8. My parents, grandparents, or guardians allow me to make jewelry, weave rugs, do beadwork, or make sandpaintings at home.
Yes No Most of the time Sometimes
 9. I practice my jewelry making, beadwork, rug weaving, or sandpainting I do at home before I show them to my parents, grandparents, or guardians.
Yes No Most of the time Sometimes
 10. My parents, grandparents, or guardians tell stories their parents, grandparents, or guardians told them while we work on our art together.
Yes No Most of the time Sometimes
-

11. At school, my art teacher teaches me like my parents, grandparents, or guardians teach me.
Disagree a lot Disagree Not sure Agree Agree a lot
12. At school, my art teacher uses Navajo culture in his/her lessons to teach art class.
Disagree a lot Disagree Not sure Agree Agree a lot
13. At school, my art teacher shows us how to make something and lets us try making it alone before we turn it.
Disagree a lot Disagree Not sure Agree Agree a lot
14. At school, my art teacher lets us make jewelry, beadwork, rug weavings, or sandpaintings in class.
Disagree a lot Disagree Not sure Agree Agree a lot
15. At school, the lessons my art teacher teaches us builds on or connects to lessons he/she taught us before.
Disagree a lot Disagree Not sure Agree Agree a lot
16. At school, my art teacher listens to what I have to say.
Disagree a lot Disagree Not sure Agree Agree a lot
17. At school, my art teacher shows us art work made by Navajo artists.
Disagree a lot Disagree Not sure Agree Agree a lot
18. At school, my art teacher lets elder Navajo guests teach our class.
Disagree a lot Disagree Not sure Agree Agree a lot
19. I enjoy coming to my art class at school.
Disagree a lot Disagree Not sure Agree Agree a lot
20. I learn a lot about myself as a Navajo person in my art class at school.
Disagree a lot Disagree Not sure Agree Agree a lot
-

Write 2 things you have learned to make in your art class at school:

Write 2 things you have learned about Navajo culture in your art class at school:

Write 2 things you have learned about yourself from making art in your art class at school:

If there is anything else you would like to tell me about your art learning at home, or your art learning in school, please write it here. Remember – No one but me will see your paper. Thank you for all your help. Enjoy your art making!

Appendix C

Student Populations of Ramah Elementary and David Skeet Elementary, 2009

Ramah Elementary

Total Male / Female	American Indian Alaskan Native	Asian Pacific Islander	Hispanic	African American	Caucasian
School	21 14 / 7	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	4 3 / 1
District Avg	40.3 20.6 / 19.7	2.0 1.0 / 1.0	10.1 5.2 / 4.9	2.0 1.0 / 1.0	7.8 4.1 / 3.7
State Avg	45.2 7.5 / 7.4	3.1 1.6 / 1.5	35.4 18.2 / 17.2	4.1 2.0 / 2.1	23.7 12.0 / 11.7

David Skeet Elementary

Total Male / Female	American Indian Alaskan Native	Asian Pacific Islander	Hispanic	African American	Caucasian
School	55 20 / 35	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0	0 0 / 0
District Avg	40.3 20.6 / 19.7	2.0 1.0 / 1.0	10.1 5.2 / 4.9	2.0 1.0 / 1.0	7.8 4.1 / 3.7
State Avg	45.2 7.5 / 7.4	3.1 1.6 / 1.5	35.4 18.2 / 17.2	4.1 2.0 / 2.1	23.7 12.0 / 11.7

Appendix D

Dine Serving Public School Art Classroom Observation Tool, adapted from the Dine Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (OCDLC, n.d.)

Fall _____ Spring _____

Instruction Observer: _____
 Observation Protocol School: _____
 Date: _____ Time: _____
 Grade: _____ Period: _____

NM State Standards: _____
 Benchmarks: _____

Navajo Nation Culture Standards: _____
 Subject: _____ Topic: _____

Highly Evident.....Not Evident	Comments:	Score
4 3 2 1 0 N/A		
I. Preparation		
1. Clearly defined content objectives for students.		
2. Clearly defined language and artistic objectives for students.		
3. Content concepts appropriate for age and educational background level of students.		
4. Supplemental material used to a high degree, making the lesson clear and meaningful (e.g. take home handouts, websites, role models, books, articles, visuals).		
5. Adaptation of content (e.g. text, imagery, assignment) to all levels of student proficiency.		
6. Meaningful activities that integrate lesson concepts (e.g. surveys, letter writing, simulations, constructing models) with the art language and art practice opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking.		

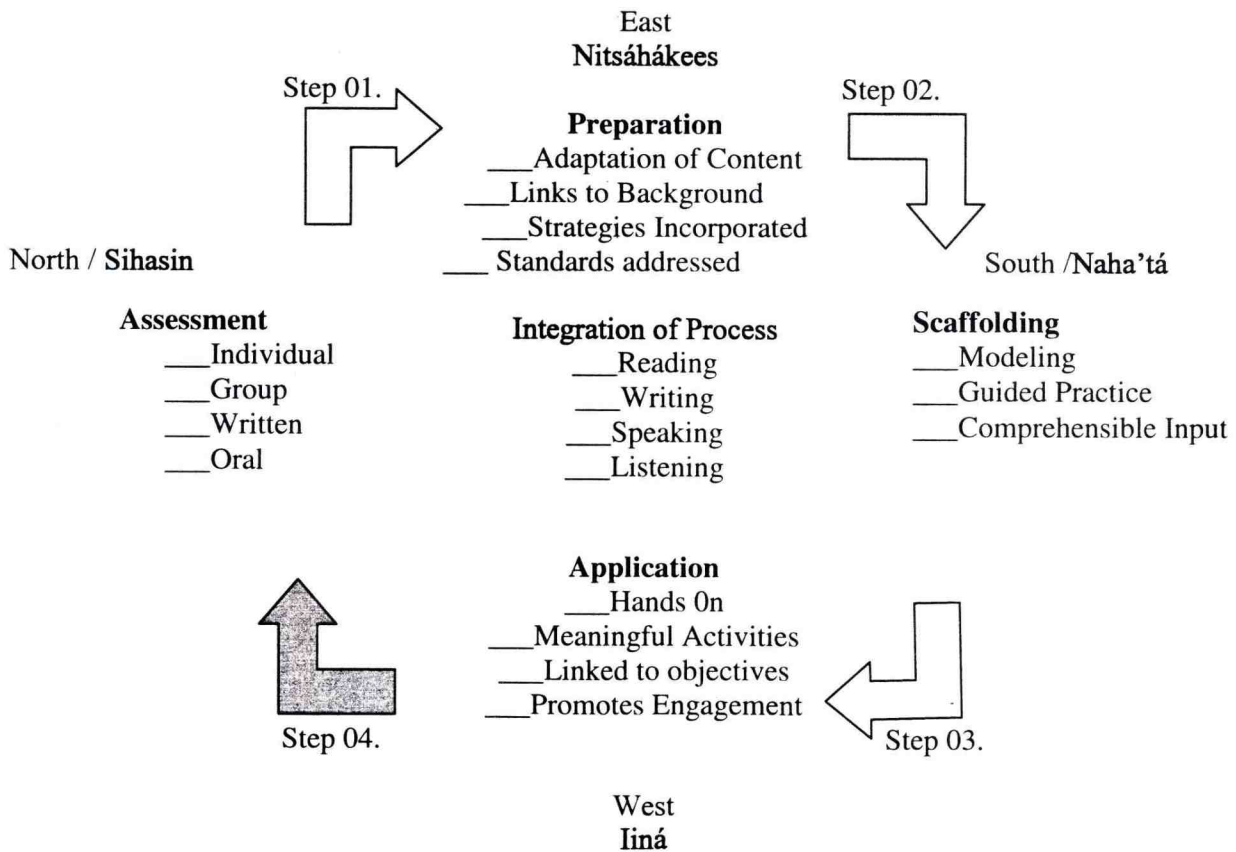
<u>Overall Preparation observations:</u>		<u>Total:</u>
II.A. Instruction (Building Background)		
7. Concepts explicitly linked to students' background.		
8. Links explicitly made between past learning and new concepts.		
9. Key art vocabulary emphasized (e.g. introduced, written or shown, repeated, and highlighted for students to see/recall).		
<u>Overall II.A. Instruction (Building Background) observations:</u>		<u>Total:</u>
II.B. Instruction (Comprehensible Input)		
10. Speech appropriate for student's proficiency level (e.g. slower rate and enunciation, and simpler sentence structure for beginners).		
11. Explanation of academic task clear.		
12. Uses a variety of techniques to make content concepts clear (e.g. modeling visuals, hands-on, activities, demonstration, gestures, body language).		
<u>Overall II.B. Instruction (Comprehensible Input) observations:</u>		<u>Total:</u>

II.C. Instruction (Strategies)		
13. Provides ample opportunities for students to use creative approaches and art making strategies.		
14. Consistent use of scaffolding techniques throughout lesson, assisting and supporting students' understanding such as thinking aloud or material experimentation.		
15. Teacher uses a variety of question types, including those that promote higher-order thinking skills throughout the lesson (e.g. literal, metaphorical, analytical, and interpretive questions).		
<u>Overall II.C. Instruction (Strategies) observations:</u>		<u>Total:</u>
II.D. Instruction (Interactions)		
16. Frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion between teacher/student and among students, encouraging elaborated responses to and about lesson concepts.		
17. Grouping configurations support art language, art making, and content objectives of the lesson.		
18. Consistently provides sufficient wait time for students' response during presentation and during activities.		
19. Ample opportunities for students to clarify key concepts.		
<u>Overall II.D. Instruction (Interactions) observations:</u>		<u>Total:</u>

II.E. Instruction (Lesson Delivery)		
20. Content objectives clearly supported by lesson delivery		
21. Art learning objective clearly supported by lesson delivery.		
22. Students engaged approximately 90% to 100% of the period.		
23. Pacing of the lesson appropriate to the students' ability level.		
<u>Overall II.E. Instruction (Lesson Delivery) observations:</u>		<u>Total:</u>
II.F. Instruction (Practice/ Application)		
23. Provides hands-on materials and/or manipulatives for students to practice using new content knowledge.		
24. Provides activities for students to apply content, art language, and art making knowledge in the classroom.		
25. Uses activities that integrate all art practice skills (e.g. writing, listening, speaking, experimenting, and making).		
<u>Overall II.F. Instruction (Practice/ Application) observations:</u>		<u>Total:</u>
III. Review/Assessment		
27. Comprehensive review of key art vocabulary.		

28. Comprehensive review of key art and art making concepts.		
29. Regularly provides feedback to students on their output (e.g. language, content, work).		
30. Conducts assessment of student synthesizing and learning of all lesson objectives (e.g. spot checking, group/response) throughout lesson.		
<u>Overall Review/Assessment observations:</u>		<u>Total:</u>

Model for observation basis (OCDLC, n.d.):



Appendix E

DPE and Cultural Markers

- Color association (with direction)
- Direction distinction and meaning
- Seasonal application and those activities and appropriateness of it
- Topic of the image and its relevance to Dine culture
- Cyclical patterning of presentation and thought process
- Use of DPE cycle in class presentation (Nitsahakees, Nahata, Iina, Sihasin)
- Lesson plan uses DPE cycle (preparation)
- Syllabi uses DPE cycle (preparation)
- Curriculum uses DPE cycle (preparation)
- Teacher talks about clans, family, or relatives (k'e)
- Teacher use Navajo language words (Dine Bizaad)
- Teacher allows students time to think about and plan out their art pieces (process, building)
- Teacher uses metaphor in her/his introduction to the topic or at any time during the class (storytelling, student association, connection)
- Teacher demonstrates or models a difficult technique and then let the students try on it her/his own (experiential)
- Teacher does not single out students who do not volunteer
- Teacher does not expect immediate answers to questions, but allows students time to contemplate (Nitsahakees)
- Teacher does not insist that students speak and nor does she/he become impatient when they don't
- Teacher does not correct students' artwork or point out one's work as special over another's
- Teacher interacts with the students closely and in a guidance capacity (k'e)
- Students are allowed to work in groups if they choose to
- Teacher describes the art project in parts related to the whole
- Teacher asks students to focus on personal experiences, environment, and/or generalities (Sihasin)
- If doing a subject study (still life), teacher talks about the relationship of light and dark, foreground and background, and all to the subject
- Teacher talks about relationship of subject to artist
- Teacher utilizes community elders in the art presentation and creation
- Teacher presents Navajo artists as role models
- Teacher lets the students explore traditional Navajo arts
- Teacher does not talk negatively about what *could* happen (Ex: Don't do that or you'll get hurt.)

Appendix F

Art Syllabus-2009-2010

-Art Teacher

First Week: Class Rules, Procedures, Mission Statements, Art Portfolios & Sketch Books

August-December 2009

Elements & Principles of Art & Design Introduction & Review

Line, Shape, Color, Value, Form, Space, Texture

, Rhythm, Balance, Movement, Harmony, Variety, Unity, Pattern

Line: Marker drawings, painting, paper collage, trading cards, visual journaling

Shape: Anatomy and human proportions and body parts, geometric shapes, measurement, Olympic figures and symbols, trading cards, crazy hats, visual journaling

Color: Paper collage, painting, color wheel, mixing colors, trading cards, tie dye, visual journaling

Value: Cut and paste, charcoal, oil pastels, magazine cut outs, sketch books, visual journaling

Form: Clay and paper sculptures, wire sculptures, plaster mask or figures, button design, logo design

Space: Stamp design, 2-dimensional cards, trading cards, visual journaling

Texture: Rubbings, collage, trading cards, coin design, visual journaling

January-May 2010

Student's main focus will be on learning about and creating art based on the styles of various Famous Artists both past and present.

Pollock

Monet

Van Gogh

Wayne Thiebud

Allan Houser

Da Vinci

Mondrian

Picasso

Martin Handford

Kevin Red Star

Wood

Seurat

O'Keefe


RC Gorman

Bill Reid

**5th Graders will design and paint a mural to hang on the front of the school*

Appendix G

Elementary Weekly ART Lesson Plan

<p>Teacher's Name: </p>	<p>Grade/Specialty: ART</p>	<p>Quarter: Quarter 1</p>	<p>Week of: Sept. 21-25, 2009 Continue Wayne Thiebaud Cakes/Color in Art</p>
<p>Standards Addressed: (What do you want students to know and be able to do?)</p>	<p>#1 Learn and develop the essential skills and technical demands unique to visual arts. #2 Use Visual Arts to express ideas. #3 Integrate understanding of visual arts by seeking connections and parallels among art disciplines as well as all other content areas. #4 Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of the creative process. #5 Observe, discuss, analyze, and make critical judgments about artistic works.</p>		
<p>Guiding Questions: (What would your students care or want to know about this topic? What "big" questions will generate discussion about this topic?)</p>	<p>Does anyone have a birthday this month? Are you going to have a birthday cake? Can a pretty cake or some kind of candy or food be represented as ART? (Who watches "Cake Boss" or "Ace of Cakes" on TV? One person who liked to represent food in art was Wayne Thiebaud. He became interested in art during high school while doodling and drawing cartoons when recuperation from a sports injury. He started his art career as a commercial artist and sign painter. Later, after working as a food preparer, he became fascinated with cafeteria and convenience food displays and began painting pictures of food.</p>		

<p>Kid Friendly Objective:</p>	<p>ART: Students will become familiar with the work of Wayne Thiebaud. They will learn how to draw a circle in perspective and practice shading and color blending using colored tempera paint.</p> <p>Students will think of their favorite treat or dessert and then draw and paint it in the style of Wayne Thiebaud. They will take care to use shading so as to make the paintings more realistic and some may choose to take a slice out, giving a glimpse at the flavor and number of layers inside. (if painting a cake)</p> <p>All desserts must be “delicious and would cost \$8 to \$10 dollars in a fancy restaurant.</p> <p>Materials and Equipment: Students will look as samples of Wayne Thiebaud’s paintings and make preliminary sketches in their sketch books before starting on the final painting.</p>
<p>Lesson Motivator (The Hook) What student needs, interest, and prior learning are a foundation for these lessons?</p>	<p>ART: All kids like eating sweets, and so looking at ART that represents food and goodies will be interesting and fun. Being able to design their own cake, pie, goodie; or ice cream picture using their favorite desserts and colors will help them understand why artist paint certain things and also why people like to look at art. It may be because it is beautiful or it may remind them of happy events.</p> <p><u>Elements of Art: Line, Color, Shape, Space, Texture, Value, Form</u></p> <p><u>Principles of Art: Rhythm, Balance, Movement, Contrast, Emphasis, Pattern, Unity,</u></p>

<p>High Yield/ ELL Strategies:</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identifying similarities and differences. <input type="checkbox"/> Summarizing and note taking. <input type="checkbox"/> Reinforcing effort and providing recognition. <input type="checkbox"/> Homework and practice. <input type="checkbox"/> Nonlinguistic representations. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Learning <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Setting objectives and providing feedback. <input type="checkbox"/> Generating and testing hypothesis. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Questions, cues, and advance organizers.</p> <p>Vocabulary: Commercial Artist, sign painter, convenience food displays,</p>
<p>Higher Order thinking Levels of students</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Knowledge- <i>Recalling basic facts</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comprehension- <i>Understanding the idea</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Application- <i>Using facts to find solutions to problems</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Analysis- <i>Examining parts in relationship to the whole</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Synthesis- <i>Creating new or original ideas or products</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evaluation- <i>Judging the value of ideas or products</i></p>
<p>Direct Instruction (Say) Day 1 and 2</p>	<p>Learning Activities (What engaged and worthwhile learning activities and task will your students complete? How will they build knowledge and skills; learn independently and with others? In what ways is this lesson challenging, authentic, and multidisciplinary? How can the use of technology support student learning?)</p> <p>Art History: Study of artist Wayne Theibaud. . Instructions: Students will look at sample of art and then make their own Wayne Theibaud style painting. They will choose their favorite dessert or goodie to use as the subject in the painting. They will make it look as realistic as possible and use shading and realistic colorings. Demonstration: Teacher will show samples of art and demonstrate a sample picture of her favorite treat.</p>

<p>Guided Practice (See) Day1 and 2</p>	<p>Check for Understanding: Help students generate ideas for designs. Show samples and help transfer designs to paper. Help students solve problems with shading and proportion</p>
<p>Group/Individual/Independent Practice (Do) Day 1 and 2</p>	<p>Teacher will help and observe where needed. Encourage students to make their paintings look “Delicious” and realistic. Teacher will give suggestions and help with questions and problems.</p>
<p>Assessment: How will you know that your students have reached the lesson goal/standard? How will students assess themselves?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Formal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informal <input type="checkbox"/> Anecdotal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Observation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Performance <input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p>
<p>Closure: (Method)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Summary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restate Objective <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> How did we do? <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Classroom PDSA and Plus Delta</p>

Appendix H

Elementary Weekly ART Lesson Plan

<p>Teacher's Name: [REDACTED]</p>	<p>Grade/Specialty: ART</p>	<p>Quarter: 2 Week 5</p>	<p>Week of: Nov. 16-20, 2009 Interior Design 3-Dimensional Design</p>
<p>Standards Addressed: (What do you want students to know and be able to do?)</p>	<p><u>Art Standard #1:</u> Learn and develop the essential skills and technical demands unique to visual arts. <u>Art Standard #2:</u> Use visual arts to express ideas. <u>Art Standard #3:</u> Integrate understanding of visual arts by seeking connections and parallels among art disciplines as well as all other content areas. <u>Art Standard #4:</u> Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of the creative process. <u>Art Standard #5:</u> Observe, discuss, analyze, and make critical judgments about artistic works. <u>Art Standard #6:</u> Show increased awareness of diverse peoples and cultures through visual arts. <u>Art Standard #7:</u> Demonstrate knowledge about how technology and invention have historically influenced artists and offered new possibility for expression.</p>		
<p>Guiding Questions: (What would your students care or want to know about this topic? What "big" questions will generate discussion about this topic?)</p>	<p>Has anyone ever watched a home decorating show on TV? What do home decorators do? What is an interior designer? How are art and interior design alike. (both use elements and principles of design) Have you ever wanted to design your own room?</p>		

<p>Kid Friendly Objective:</p>	<p>ART: Students will design and make a miniature model of a room. They will choose</p>
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	<p><u>wall color and floor covering as well as what furniture will go in the room and where the windows and doors will be. They will accessorize the room with art work, plants, rugs, pillows, etc. They will make furniture to scale and an aluminum person to scale.</u></p>
<p>Lesson Motivator (The Hook) What student needs, interest, and prior learning are a foundation for these lessons?</p>	<p>ART: Students will discuss interior design. Students will discuss and observe various interior designers and examples of various room designs. Students will experiment with various materials to make the furniture, wall coverings, floor coverings, etc. Elements of Art: Line, Color, Shape, Space, Texture, Form, Emphasis Principles of Art: Rhythm, Balance, Movement, Contrast, Emphasis, Pattern, Rhythm, Unity,</p>
<p>High Yield/ ELL Strategies:</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Identifying similarities and differences. <input type="checkbox"/> Summarizing and note taking. <input type="checkbox"/> Reinforcing effort and providing recognition. <input type="checkbox"/> Homework and practice. <input type="checkbox"/> Nonlinguistic representations. <input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Setting objectives and providing feedback. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Generating and testing hypothesis. <input type="checkbox"/> Questions, cues, and advance organizers. Vocabulary: Interior Design, three dimensional, miniature model, making things to scale.</p>
<p>Higher Order thinking Levels of students</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge- Recalling basic facts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comprehension- Understanding the idea <input type="checkbox"/> Application- Using facts to find solutions to problems <input type="checkbox"/> Analysis- Examining parts in relationship to the whole <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Synthesis- Creating new or original ideas or products <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation- Judging the value of ideas or products</p>
<p>Direct Instruction (Say) Day 1 and 2</p>	<p>Learning Activities (What engaged and worthwhile learning activities and task will your students complete? How will they build knowledge and skills; learn independently and with others? In what ways is this lesson challenging, authentic, and multidisciplinary? How can the use of technology support student learning?) Art History: Show clips from and talk about various popular interior design shows. Instructions: Have students observe a demonstration on how to make the room model and how to make furniture. They will also be shown all available materials to use for this projects. Demonstration: Teacher will demonstrate how to cut and fold paper for room, as well as furniture.</p>
<p>Guided Practice</p>	

<p>(See) Day1 and 2</p>	<p>Check for Understanding: Teacher will observe and monitor student work.</p>
<p>Group/Individual/Independent Practice (Do) Day 1 and 2</p>	<p>Students will sketch ideas for room in their sketch books. Then they will start on their miniature model by adding wall covering and floor covering. On Day 2 students continue working on the furniture as well as accessories.</p>
<p>Assessment: How will you know that your students have reached the lesson goal/standard? How will students assess themselves?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Formal <input type="checkbox"/> Informal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anecdotal x <input type="checkbox"/> Observation <input type="checkbox"/> Performance <input type="checkbox"/> Other:</p> <p>Teacher will observe student work and several rooms will be chosen to be evaluated by the whole class using the four steps of art criticism. Describe: Describe the what you liked about your room and the interior design. Analyze: What personality characteristics of the artist does it portray? Why did the artist use specific colors or materials? Interpret: Give your impression of how designing a room made you feel. Decide: What would you do differently?</p>
<p>Closure: (Method)</p>	<p>x <input type="checkbox"/> Summary x <input type="checkbox"/> Restate Objective x <input type="checkbox"/> How did we do? <input type="checkbox"/> Other: PDSA/ Plus – Delta /Concensograms.</p>

Appendix I

As I continue to research effective teaching and learning methods as they pertain to Navajo students' art making into the higher grades, I hope to create a resource for other teachers to utilize. What I have experienced in this project may better inform the art teachers who presently work with Navajo students and the administrators who structure the educational system. This study is also meant to shed some light on best practices as well as areas where quality of art education may be in question and where Navajo education supervisors may see it as a useful instrument. Through this thesis, I hope to open avenues of dialogue between art teachers, Navajo community members, Navajo artists, and public school organizers fueled by the idea of critical pedagogical persistence through artistic inquiry, experience, discovery, and reflection.

In 2003, the American Indian Higher Education Consortium began a project for Indigenous Evaluation Framing for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) areas funded by the National Science Foundation. The project was undertaken to synthesize indigenous ways of knowing and Eurocentric evaluation practices (Nichols, 2006). The impact of this framework can now be found on the AIHEC website. As I received my approval from the Navajo Nation IRB to begin my fieldwork in August 2009, NMPED released its own supplementary evaluation rubric for Native American arts and cultural resources being used in New Mexico public school classrooms (Appendix J). The purpose of the tool is to establish a wealth of quality materials for NM Arts Education instruction and may be found by accessing the NMPED Humanities Bureau website (NMPED, 2009).

Following is a short list of suggestions and a sample syllabus that may be considered as opportunities for program improvement and broad student success. While they incorporate a specific state and public school serving area, these programmatic suggestions should by no

means be considered limited to New Mexico or the Navajo Nation. Through my work with grants and other funding opportunities (National Endowment for the Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts, NM Arts Council, etc), I am positive that monies can be found for endeavors such as these:

- Create a resource network for NM art education teachers with a focus group for those who primarily serve Native American students
- Establish a community based art learning network of Navajo members willing to guest teach in the art classroom
- Create a set of curricula, syllabi, and lesson plans that have been approved by both the NN and NMPED for implementation into the arts classrooms that serve primarily Navajo students
- Create art classes where Navajo art making and artists comprise the theme of class while still addressing state visual arts standards
- Create a whole school curriculum where art making is a learning tool for each subject (for example: a Navajo visual arts charter school); or thematic integration into other core content areas
- Create a gallery or Memorandum of Agreement with a Gallup gallery to *regularly* show students' Navajo-based artwork (with artist statements) alongside practicing Navajo artists; advertise by sending home flyers with students and on school & district websites
- Consider using a consultant who acts as a liaison between the art classroom, NN, and NMPED (transparency and accountability)
- Establish a device that can be regularly visited for input into the school art education activities such as an on-going working group that discusses cultural aspects that should

play key roles in the classroom (for example: DPE) and which involves community members, administrators, teachers, and students

- Create and initiate a teacher/student success program involving the following:
 - A 2-year teacher mentorship program with a Navajo reservation-born/raised art maker or facilitator as mentor
 - Provide art teachers with a course regarding DPE and culture including the Diné Culture Content Standards for Students (ODCLC, 2000)
 - Provide art teachers with a course or materials regarding Navajo art and art making practices to promote familiarity
 - Provide art teachers with a basic Navajo language course, if they are not already familiar with the language
 - Attach program completion steps to state instructor tier program

Sample Cross Standards-based Syllabus

Goals	NM Visual Art Standard	Navajo Nation Education Standard	Objectives
Goal 1	Standard 1: Learn and develop skills and meet technical demands unique to dance, music, theatre/drama and visual arts	Standard 1. CULTURE – Natsáhákees: Culturally-knowledgeable Navajo children are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their people, history and land.	Introduce students to a wide range of artist's tools (Western and Navajo) and materials that they will be using over the course of the term. Talk about metaphors, meanings, and purposes behind the tools. Experiment with tools.
Goal 2	Standard 2: Use dance, music, theatre/drama and visual arts to express ideas.	Standard 2. CULTURE – Nahat'á: Culturally-knowledgeable Navajo students are able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local community foundations from which to draw and achieve personal and academic success.	Plan with students what projects they will be doing over the course of the term and how they can express ideas and self through those projects. Integrate tools covered in Goal 1. Talk about how artists they know make the art they do as well as present other local artists they are not familiar with.
Goal 3	Standard 3: Integrate understanding of visual and performing arts by seeking connections and parallels among arts disciplines as well as other content areas.	Standard 3. CULTURE – Iiná: Culturally-knowledgeable Navajo students are able to actively participate in various cultural events and activities within their environment.	Apply knowledge of Navajo & other local artists and introduce "outside artists" and techniques by comparison. Discuss and practice style and meaning making they see in their home or community. Introduce relationship of artist to art. Integrate tools and plans from Goals 1 & 2.
Goal 4	Standard 4: Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of the creative process.	Standard 4. CULTURE – Sihasin: Culturally-knowledgeable Navajo students demonstrate and express an awareness and appreciation for spatial relationships and processes; concentrate on interaction of all elements in the world around them utilizing cultural knowledge and understanding the concept of mitsáhákees, hahat'á, Iiná, dóó sihasin.	Apply knowledge of all art learning engaged in to this point. Allow students to explore dimensional relationships through cultural exploration. Revisit Goals 1, 2, & 3 for reinforcement.

Goals	NM Visual Art Standard	Navajo Nation Education Standard	Objectives
Goal 5	<p>Standard 5: Observe, discuss, analyze and make critical judgments about artistic works.</p>	<p>Standard 4. CULTURE – Sihasin: Culturally-knowledgeable Navajo students demonstrate and express an awareness and appreciation for spatial relationships and processes; concentrate on interaction of all elements in the world around them utilizing cultural knowledge and understanding the concept of nitsáhákees, hahat’á, Iiná, dóó sihasin.</p>	<p>Continue with Goal 4. Students learn to critique their own work through a set of questions based on reflection of the project and self during the project.</p>
Goal 6	<p>Standard 6: Show increased awareness of diverse peoples and cultures through visual and performing arts.</p>	<p>Standards 5. COMMUNICATION – Listening and Speaking: Culturally knowledgeable Navajo students will engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings, emotions, exchange opinions in the Navajo language and integrate Protection Way Teachings and its relevancy and effectiveness.</p>	<p>Introduce what it means to have a critique. Emphasize art to artist relationship. Emphasize learning through feedback. Organize and carry out a critique of the term's work as a group. Students should learn something about other students through their artwork.</p>
Goal 7	<p>Standard 7: Demonstrate knowledge about how technology and invention have historically influenced artists and offered new possibilities for expression.</p>	<p>Standard 6. COMMUNICATION – Writing and Reading: Culturally knowledgeable Navajo students are able to communicate in written Navajo language and engage in active cultural learning activities based on traditional Navajo principles and values.</p>	<p>Introduce the artist statement its relationship to the art and the artist. Reinforce the artist's relationship to her/his art.</p>
Goal 8	<p>Standard 8: Contribute to communities by sharing expertise in dance, music, theatre/drama and visual arts and by participating in the activities of cultural institutions.</p>	<p>Standard 7. COMMUNICATION – Viewing and Presenting: Culturally knowledgeable Navajo students will use a variety of visual media and resources to gather, evaluate and synthesize information and to communicate with others.</p>	<p>Organize and carry out a gallery opening in the community for the children and their art. Accompany pieces with artist statement written by students. Student presents work at show.</p>

Appendix J



**Suggested Evaluation Criteria for
Native American Arts and Culture Instructional Materials**

Material Type: _____ Title: _____

Publisher/Author: _____

Criteria <i>(Check the appropriate rating)</i>	Consistently High Quality	Sometimes Medium Quality	Rarely or Never Low Quality
Broad Characteristics			
1. The material is current, accurate and free from error.			
2. The material is developmentally and age level appropriate.			
3. The material avoids stereotyping, discrimination, bias and prejudice; and is gender equitable.			
4. The material is culturally appropriate and sensitive to the various taboos of individual tribes.			
5. The material reflects the diverse experiences that relate to Native American groups or individuals.			
Instruction, Learning and Evaluation			
6. The material is of high quality and contains rigorous educational content.			
7. Information is shared in a sequential and logically developed holistic approach.			
8. The material supports various learning styles.			
9. The material is appropriate for students from diverse social or cultural backgrounds.			
10. The material promotes student self-esteem and character development			
11. The material includes a variety of hands-on/multi-sensory activities.			
12. The material engages student and allows for active and authentic participation.			
13. The material encourages students to evaluate their own thinking.			
14. The material promotes problem solving or critical thinking and/or logic.			
15. The material contains sufficient guided practice exercises (opportunities to apply skills and knowledge).			
16. The material contains sufficient independent practice exercises (opportunities to apply skills and knowledge).			
17. The material provides opportunities to monitor and evaluate student learning through multiple modalities.			
Art Samples			
18. The material includes authentic examples of Native American culture (literature, history, performing and visual arts).			



**Suggested Evaluation Criteria for
Native American Arts and Culture Instructional Materials**

Criteria <i>(Check the appropriate rating)</i>	Consistently High Quality	Sometimes Medium Quality	Rarely or Never Low Quality
19. The material contains authentic examples from various Native American cultures that demonstrate diversity in the interpretation of art.			
20. The material includes New Mexico Native American arts and culture.			
21. The material includes some work from the non-Native American perspective for the purpose of comparison and contrast.			
Resources			
22. The material includes additional resources (i.e. glossary, bibliography, table of contents, illustrations and an appendix).			
23. The material contains suggested readings and other multimedia resources (i.e. audio/visual, technical, visual and performing arts).			
24. The material encourages the use of multimedia applications (computer literacy, media literacy, film making, story telling and/or information literacy).			
Total			

Evaluation <i>(Check the appropriate rating)</i>	Consistently High Quality	Sometimes Medium Quality	Rarely or Never Low Quality	Comments
1. Rate the material's consistency with the relevant NM Content Standards and Benchmarks.				
2. Rate the material's accuracy and completeness in its coverage of its stated curriculum area.				
3. Rate the material's appropriateness and ease of use for various learning styles and goals.				
4. Rate the material's presentation quality (appearance, layout, use of illustrations, etc.)				
5. Rate the teacher resources and supplementary materials.				
6. Rate the student resources and supplementary materials.				

This material is recommended for use based on the above criteria. (Please circle one)	Yes	No
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